

Battle of Milne Bay 80 years on . . . and the tale of a gunner's Bren

AUSTRALIAN Shooter

August 2022
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THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS

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OUR CWM PROGRAM A 30-YEAR SUCCESS STORY - 64

FIREARMS

- 16 M-Appeal**
Mauser's M18 Stainless rifle cements a glowing reputation, writes Con Kapralos
- 56 What's in a name**
Beretta's Ultraleggero shotgun worth a look, says Ben Unten
- 68 Living the Dream**
Revamped FX air rifle better than ever, says Neil Wheatley

HUNTING

- 38 Improvisation saves the day**
Expect the unexpected when hunting, warns Sam Garro
- 46 Access all areas**
Opening up new hunting land is a matter of tact, claims Joseph Nugent

PRODUCTS

- 42 AceBeam search light**
- 50 Hornady Quick Trickle**
- 62 GTX boots by Lowa**
- 70 TSP X chassis**

AND MORE

- 20 Grey area**
Illegal gun number 'steady' for a decade
- 24 80th Anniversary**
The Battle of Milne Bay - and a gunner's Bren
- 28 Foxing clever**
Chasing redcoats with a 20-gauge isn't for everyone but Leon Wright has done it for years
- 32 Memories are made of this**
- 34 Importance of cartridge selection**
- 54 The ethical carnivore**
- 58 Comfort zone**
Douglas Riach's hunting and camping tips for 'old bucks'
- 64 Happy Anniversary**
Our CWM program a 30-year success story, writes Rachael Oxborrow
- 66 Canada facing government 'freeze'**
- 74 First-time fallow**
Joe Norris recalls a landmark weekend

REGULARS

- 6 National News
- 7 Letters
- 7 Insurance Q&A
- 8 Open Season
- 10 Clay Target Q&A
- 12 Top Shots
- 77 SSAA Shop
- 78 Competition News
- 81 Competitions
- 82 Jumbunna



Our August cover - see page 64

NEXT ISSUE

Webley & Scott's 900XS shotgun is a value-for-money clay option that's more than just entry level due to its adjustable comb and clever balancing system. Our reviewer reckoned: "It would make a satisfying sporter shotgun and enable owners to record more than credible scores in both Sporting or Skeet."

Seasoned shooter John Hill has advice for those thinking of buying guns on the second-hand market and says if at all possible try before you buy as firing a rifle over a secure rest at a paper target will soon reveal any shortcomings while if a shotgun doesn't pattern where it aims, don't buy it.

The Accurate Mag 700 flat-top chassis has been inspired and developed from military standards to fulfil the needs of hunters and long-range shooters. At first glance the stock displays strong similarities to the popular M4 and AR-style platform which in the US has a particularly strong influence in design.



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The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia membership is unlike any other. If you encounter a fellow SSAA member in the wild you've found a kindred spirit, you're talking to someone with shared values, someone who enjoys their chosen sport of target shooting or pastime of recreational hunting and wants to see our fraternity continue to grow and prosper.

And prosper it has! This past month the number of shooters and hunters who call themselves a SSAA state or territory member has ticked over the 210,000 mark and continues to climb as our true strength in numbers makes us the nation's leading and largest sports shooting body. With our size and reach comes a wide variety of benefits and services our members have available to them, including more than 440 clubs and ranges across the country which cater to all types of target shooting and branches of conservation volunteers in most regions who contribute in meaningful ways to the longevity of the country's landscape, native wildlife and vegetation.

Our flagship *Australian Shooter* magazine and periodicals *Australian Junior Shooter* and *Australian Women's Shooter* are included with SSAA membership and these provide us with entertainment, information and updates on our hobby, our sport, our recreation and pastime. The strong digital presence also includes newsletters to keep members informed, SSAA TV YouTube and various social media channels with videos and stories on competition shooting, hunting, firearms maintenance and more. There's also a great choice of paid-for publications Association members can buy with discount including *Great Australian Outdoors*, *Australian Hunter* and *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*.

Being a SSAA member goes beyond our publications though and gives access to \$20 million of public liability, personal accident and \$75,000 life insurance when

participating in a shooting-related activity. SSAA General Insurance Brokers also offer cover for your home and contents, car, boat, caravan, business or farm and then there's the new SSAA Mutual Members Firearms offering secure and affordable long-term cover for firearms and fixed accessories, a service costing members just \$35 a year for \$25,000 of coverage.

But at its core the purpose of the SSAA remains the same today as it did on its inception in 1948. The Association promotes the shooting sports and protects firearm owners' interests through a number of direct and indirect strategies aimed at creating respect, awareness and goodwill which involves having a presence in Australian federal parliament to liaise and communicate with elected leaders and departments affecting our sport. We also adopt a global approach with the Association maintaining official Non-Government Organisation status within the United Nations and being a contributing founding member of the World Forum on Shooting Activities.

It also embraces grassroots initiatives such as the SSAA Farmer Assist Program which aims to link our skilled hunters with landowners in need of pest control, while the award-winning *Field to Fork* cookbook series serves as a useful promotional tool and conversation starter outside the shooting fraternity and the *Journalists' Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports* helps us set the record straight with those reporting the subject in the media.

This latest membership milestone only strengthens the kindred spirit which draws us together and shares our story but, first and foremost, credit for that ever-rising number must go to those at local level who support and encourage new members, tirelessly run competitions, trek through National Parks for the good of the environment and coach the future of this sport, our juniors.

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Message in a bottle

REGARDING THE BUSHCRAFT & Survival column by Peter Bindon (*Shooter*, February 2022) about the use of plastic pill containers for condiments, foodstuffs and edible oils, I spent a large part of my life in the plastics industry with Shell Chemicals, mainly working with polypropylene and some polyethylene.

Almost certainly Peter's pill containers will be made from polyethylene (PE), maybe polypropylene (PP) and either should be suitable for all the above contents. To check it's PE, place an empty container in fresh water, maybe with a minuscule amount of detergent to break the water tension, and push it under the surface, ensuring no air bubbles cling to it. If it returns to the surface it's most likely PE, although PP will also rise as both have a lower specific gravity than fresh water. Screw caps are also most likely to be PE or PP.

David Williams, NSW

Tightening their grip

IT SEEMS THE Western Australian government - who already put great effort into making life difficult for firearm owners and anyone considering becoming a licensed firearm owner - has now embarked on yet another 'review' of the laws as apparently the existing ones are out of date and need 'updating'. While this may sound good to those who see gun ownership as the great

evil, others more reasonable view this sort of thing as nothing more than yet another chance to squeeze that little bit harder.

While 'gun crime' is always their favourite reason for these 'reviews' to protect public safety of course, we're never given the small but important details such as how much gun-related crime is actually committed by legally licensed firearm owners. Of course if that was made known maybe the argument would lose its bite?

Sadly, like so many things these days, commonsense and honesty go out the window when social engineering, mainly from left-leaning governments, become the most important thing and fairness is left a very long way behind.

Name and address supplied

Suits me to a T

A FEW YEARS ago I attended a friendly interclub shoot using .22 rimfires on novelty targets and was inspired by a member in his 80s who shot a possible score. Being the competitive type, I resolved to buy a quality .22LR which could shoot sub-MOA and had 10-round capacity. After some research I settled on the Browning T-Bolt.

It seemed to have the potential to shoot well providing I added a good rimfire scope with parallax adjustment. From earlier competitive shooting, eliminating scope drift with parallax was essential as the 10 to 100-yard distances have the greatest margin.

Not long after my purchase I read John Dunn's T-Bolt review in your February 2020 magazine which suggested mediocre performance in grouping, however all ammunition he tested was Winchester. I bought a range of brands to see which shot best and Winchester performed worst, with similar results to John's (some rounds were expensive Match).

The eventual winner was CCI High Velocity Match with one-hole groups at 50 yards relatively common and for hunting, their 38gr Mini-Mag shot groups not much bigger. So my message to members is research widely, choose scopes to allow your best performance and, for rimfires, test a selection of brands as .22 rifles can be fussy. The Browning T-Bolt met my expectations with only a little trigger adjustment and smoothing out some minor machine burring.

Keith Flynn, via email



Insurance Q&A

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QTo supplement my income during the past few months I've started a small home-based business. Do I need any insurance cover for this type of enterprise?

ARunning a business from home carries risks not necessarily automatically covered by your home and contents policy and there are a few things you need to consider, particularly if you have visiting customers

or suppliers. Public and product liability insurance can provide cover for things such as injury and product malfunction. You'll also need to disclose to your home and contents insurer that you run a business from home as they may not be willing to continue to cover you while a business is being conducted from the home and their cover may not be adequate to protect your business equipment and stock. As sole

proprietor, having personal injury insurance and income protection should also be considered. These insurances can be tailored to your business needs and SSAA Insurance Brokers can help you understand the details and provide free quotes. For more information contact us on 1800 808 608 or visit www.ssaib.com.au



The advice offered in this column is of a general nature and does not allow for individual situations. SSAAIB recommends that you obtain professional advice before proceeding with any insurance investment. SSAAIB accepts no liability for any actions by an individual to change their insurance plans without seeking professional advice.

Breeding out a problem . . . and can it be done?

When it comes to creating a magic bullet to solve pest problems, scientists at the CSIRO are investigating advanced technologies and have recently explored the community's attitudes to the use of gene technology. Their focus was to determine community support regarding their use on feral cats and they found almost 90 per cent of Australians would be supportive.

With feral cats killing 1.8 billion native Australian animals every year, this species would certainly be an ideal target for a new type of genetic technology using genome editing (CRISPR-Cas9) called 'gene drive'. Theoretically gene drive could be used to suppress populations of invasive pests though its potential use in vertebrates such as feral cats is at least 10 years away. Gene drive is an application of synthetic biology which the CSIRO has invested in to build greater scientific capability within Australia during the past five years.

So how does this gene drive technology work to control invasive species? It does so by influencing the likelihood of offspring to inherit a certain genetic trait. An enzyme called Cas9 can be used to cut DNA and potentially deliver instructions to shed the Y chromosome which would virtually guarantee a feral cat's offspring would only be male and with each generation this would result in a sex imbalance tipped in favour of males resulting in fewer females to reproduce.

One common misconception and fear is gene drive may affect other species upon its release though scientists through their research efforts can conclusively rule this

out. A single gene drive released into the environment targeting feral cats could certainly provide some reprieve for our native wildlife currently under the strain of predation and while the benefits of such technology are significant, it's fair to say the community would doubtless feel cautious about its deployment.

Social acceptability is a key issue and the CSIRO understands they need to gain social licence in order to deploy such new tools. To this end they appreciate early social research can help inform progress by building a shared understanding of societal expectations including technology development, risk perceptions and public awareness on the importance of the research. To do this they set out to uncover the contextual and psychological factors which might influence public attitudes and concerns towards gene drive.

The report: *Public perspectives towards using gene drive for invasive species management in Australia* shares results from 3823 Australians polled as a representative sample of the population. The survey posed various questions to help understand what made gene drive technology more or less favourable. They tested several hypotheses such as whether cat owners would be more concerned about the consequences of gene drive or people with feral cat problems in their local area would be more supportive of feral cat management, using either gene drive or traditional pest control methods.

Overall the majority of survey participants were in favour of using gene drive technology with almost 68 per cent sup-



Public enemy: Australians would be in favour of feral cats being controlled by gene drive.

portive or strongly supportive and only a fraction (10 per cent) indicating little or no support for its development. When it came to when and where to implement this technology, 64 per cent were comfortable with its release within 5km and another 13 per cent within a broader 20km range while a small number felt more comfortable with a buffer exceeding 100km.

What we can take from this is for a species such as feral cats, gene drive-type technologies would be widely accepted and pest managers nationwide would certainly be creating a wish-list of species they'd like targeted with the technology. But one thing's for sure: This is a long-term game. The 'daughterless carp' project was conceived in 1995 and has since fallen by the wayside as time has passed with research now focused instead on a biological control agent (herpes virus).

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Q I mainly shoot Sporting Clays but recently picked up a friend's Trap gun with what's called a 'Monte Carlo' stock. I really liked how it felt and thought it may be the solution to some trouble I was having seeing targets but was told this type of shotgun with that stock isn't suitable for Sporting Clays. Can you explain why?

Frances Robinson, Qld.

A No I can't explain why your friend would say that - he's wrong. What he's probably referring to is traditional Sporting shotguns never had a Monte Carlo stock but these days you'll find many of them on firearms being used for this discipline. For the uninitiated a Monte Carlo stock has a cutaway piece of wood shaped roughly like quarter of a circle, generally a few centimetres before the comb of the stock meets the butt. The height of the piece of wood that's removed can vary from just a few millimetres up to 50mm or more.

The advantage of this type of stock is mainly felt by taller shooters with a longer neck. A conventional stock without the Monte Carlo cutaway can often mean the butt or recoil pad sits at an angle and height on their shoulder which doesn't let them place their head on the comb comfortably under their cheekbone. In theory, provided the butt is placed in the same position on the shooter's shoulder, the Monte Carlo-designed stock will allow the head to remain more erect therefore aiding better target acquisition which I rate the number one fundamental to master in shotgun shooting.

If you're technically minded, by now you'd be picturing this type of stock on your 40-year-old over-and-under with standard

flat-rib barrel and wondering: 'With all that extra wood on top of the comb, how will this work?' It can be difficult and as you'll notice with many later-model shotguns with Monte Carlo stocks, they'll also have the benefit of higher ribs on top of their barrels to further aid better visuals on the target. The problem I've seen with many people who've tried putting 'custom-made' Monte Carlo stocks on their older model flat-rib shotguns is they start mounting the gun lower and lower on their shoulder, defeating the purpose of why they bought this type of stock in the first place. Don't do this!

Traditional Monte Carlo stocks had what's called a 'parallel comb' which means the angle of the comb runs at the same angle of the barrels until the cutaway section begins. This angle of what's known as 'drop' is crucial to get right. Zero drop from front to back of the comb - as described in the traditional Monte Carlo Trap stock above - doesn't suit everyone. Historically Sporting Clays shotguns have 20mm of drop from front to back as this can aid fast gun mount when required, such as in field shooting or when the target must be called for when the gun isn't allowed to be pre-mounted on your shoulder, yet this doesn't mean a Monte Carlo-type stock can't be used. Many manufacturers now offer this configuration stock as an option but, as stated, it's often aided by a higher rib on the barrels.

Now back to your friend's statement that the shotgun wasn't suitable for Sporting Clays. Even if your buddy wasn't referring to the type of stock he thought wasn't suitable, he may also be shocked to learn how many of the world's best Sporting Clays shooters are using Trap stocks and barrels

to master their sport. The days of one type of shotgun being 'pigeonholed' for just one type of discipline are long gone.

The popular clay target discipline of American Skeet probably provides the best example of this. Forty years ago the most popular Skeet gun in this country was a 66cm barrel, lightweight 3kg shotgun. These days most of the world's top competitors in this discipline use at least 75cm barrels with overall gun weight that would be at home on any Trap range. So if you're a big person or simply have a longer neck, a Monte Carlo stock may very well be the answer.



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Got a question - ask our **TOP SHOTS?**

• John Dunn • Paul Miller • Greg Riemer • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

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Q I've just bought a shotgun with screw-in chokes and the manual says 'Do not use steel shot' on the three-quarter and full choke tubes. Why is this as some of my shooting mates reckon it's fine to use steel shot in these tighter chokes?

Mick, NSW

A This is a *crucially* important safety issue in the world of shotgunning. Manufacturers always tell us you should restrict the use of steel shot to shotguns proofed for steel shot use and then only up to half choke, unless the tighter chokes are specifically designed and built of steel that can withstand the higher pressures generated by steel shot in tighter chokes.

Steel shot is lighter than lead shot in any comparable shot size. It's also very much harder than lead which means it doesn't deform anywhere near as much as lead as it travels up the barrel and out the muzzle. I'm simplifying this but lead is more 'forgiving' from a pressure point of view than steel shot. Lead is also seen as better ballistically as it weighs more per pellet size. The other side of the story is that steel shot being so much harder means, as a rule of thumb, a steel shot charge through a half choke tends to pattern like a full choke with lead shot.

Steel shot was introduced as an alternative to lead in the US when it was found lead poisoning was said to be occurring in waterfowl that graze along the bottom of some of the swamps being shot over with lead. The jury is still out on what is a very complex subject but please tell your mates not to shoot steel shot in anything more than half chokes for their own safety and that of anyone nearby. Stay safe and shoot safe.

Paul Miller



Sambar are tough customers and accurate shot placement is absolutely crucial.

Q I recently moved to southern NSW and want to get into sambar hunting but everyone I talk to has a different idea about what the best calibres are. I'm told there are minimum calibre restrictions or recommendations in place in both NSW and Victoria and would like to know what cartridges you consider most suitable.

Gary Morgan, NSW

A Unfortunately there's no pat answer to your question. The minimum calibre for hunting sambar in Victoria is a .270 firing a 130-grain projectile and that's a good place to start on both sides of the border. With high quality copper projectiles such as those produced by Outer Edge this is a deadly combination and from there the only way is up.

Over the years I've used a swag of different calibres on sambar including the 7x57, .308 Win, .30-06, .300 Win Mag, .35 Whelen, .375 H&H, .458 Win Mag, .45/70 and a .54

calibre muzzle loader. All of them worked, some better than others but regardless of calibre the most important consideration was hitting the target in the right place with a suitable projectile at a sensible range. Sambar deer are tough and incredibly resilient animals capable of carrying misplaced shots a long way so for fast humane kills accurate shot placement is vital.

If recoil isn't an issue and you only want to hunt sambar I recommend the .375 H&H and if you want to include some of the other deer species found in that part of the world then take your pick between the .30-06 or one of the .300 Magnums. Reloading with premium quality hunting bullets is highly recommended here.

John Dunn



Q There was an article in the Top Shots section of your May 2022 magazine on a shotgun which is very similar to one I inherited from my grandfather. I've included some photos showing the markings on the gun and wondered if you could give me some information on it and a rough idea of its worth.

Bri McManus, via email

A The proof marks reveal your shotgun was made in Belgium by Liege gun-makers group Armes et Munitions (Arms and Ammunition) in 1926 as indicated by the date code 'e'. The stamped 12-65 in a horseshoe tells us it's a 12-gauge gun with

65mm chambers which has been proofed with smokeless cartridges. Modern guns usually have 70mm and sometimes 76mm chambers so be sure not to fire it with any cartridges longer than 65mm (2½").

These old guns were popular for many years and lots of them remain in use, especially those of later manufacture with 70mm chambers. Each barrel of your gun has been choked from a bore diameter of 18.5mm down to 18.3mm. The 'star over AE' is the mark of the person who proof-tested the gun prior to it being sold, the stylised 'Lion over PV' stamp also says the gun was proofed with smokeless powder and the 1kg554 is the weight of the barrels (1554 grams).

I assume your old gun has exposed hammers (the photos don't show this) and its value would depend very much on the condition of the barrel interiors and whether someone was interested in buying it. With good smooth barrels and a tight action they usually sell at auction for around \$100-\$200 although hammerless guns sometimes fetch more, depending on condition of course.

Geoff Smith



Q As most of us know, reloading powders are in very short supply and shotgun powder is impossible to obtain. I've heard ADI won't manufacture any shotgun powder because of climatic conditions and importing powder from overseas works out to be too expensive. Does anyone know the real reason for this shortage? We can still buy factory loads so I often wonder if this powder 'shortage' is a way and means of trying to stop [us] reloading ammunition.

Norman Lee, via email

A Since my reply to a question from Dave in Top Shots (*Shooter*, April 2022) and following my article 'Keep your powder dry' (*Shooter*, July 2021) I have no knowledge of any improvement in the situation, especially with regard to ADI pistol and shotgun powders. That is, ADI have ceased to produce the APS range of pistol and shotgun powders 'for the foreseeable future' (their words).

I'm guessing that apart from the original difficulties faced in the development and production of these powders, another factor may be one of economics in that Australia was to be the only market for the APS range of propellants. Rifle powders on the other hand are regularly produced however transportation issues make their availability to shops unreliable.

Yes the pandemic has caused supply problems globally. Everything is in short supply yet the current problems we're facing with reloading components started well before the pandemic. Panic buying in the lead-up to the US federal elections has had a flow-on effect on the supply chain here too.

Rod Pascoe



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Mauser's M18 Stainless rifle cements a glowing reputation, says Con Kapralos

From longarms specifically for military contracts to some of the finest commercially made hunting rifles based on the M98 action, Mauser have fans the world over. Current sporting rifles based on the M98 action out of the factory in Isny, Germany are testament to the enduring design initiated by Peter Paul Mauser more than 100 years ago and are arguably the pinnacle for shooters craving the best.

Yet for rifle manufacturers to survive they must cater to all sectors of the market and avoiding the 'entry-level' or 'budget' brackets is done at their peril. Of course, manufacturers who turn out custom rifles will continue to prosper but for commercial operators like Mauser, which is part of the Blaser & Sauer conglomerate, their M18 released in 2018 was the perfect pitch into that 'entry-level' market.

When the M18 was released the .223 Remington chambering was not in the initial cartridge line-up but demand quickly changed that. In the past four years various models have been released and one of the most successful has been the M18 Stainless so when local distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies sent *Australian Shooter* one for review in .223 Remington it was eagerly received.

At a glance

The Mauser M18 Stainless is a full-size bolt-action repeater with a push-feed action and sporter weight barrel, the receiver and barrel made from stainless steel and mated to a dark-grey polymer stock. The .223 Remington calibre supplied has a four-shot detachable box magazine and was fitted with a SIG Sauer Whiskey 3 in 4-12x50 optic in Nikko Stirling Zero Lok one-piece rings/bases, the test rifle weighing 3.1kg bare with overall length of 1055mm.

Receiver

This is made from cylindrical stainless steel bar stock and maintains a circular profile, the exception being a flat segment halfway across the bridge which makes for a good-sized ejection port but also offers some protection from debris falling into the action. The receiver top is drilled and tapped to accept Remington 700-style bases with the front receiver-ring mounting area maintaining a round profile while the rear receiver-ring top is slightly curved.

The left of the receiver tube is quite bare with only the serial number 'Mauser 18' engraved into the surface and the bolt-release lever positioned at the rear-left flank. On the right only the front receiver ring has markings, namely the Mauser logo, country and year of manufacture along with proof marks.

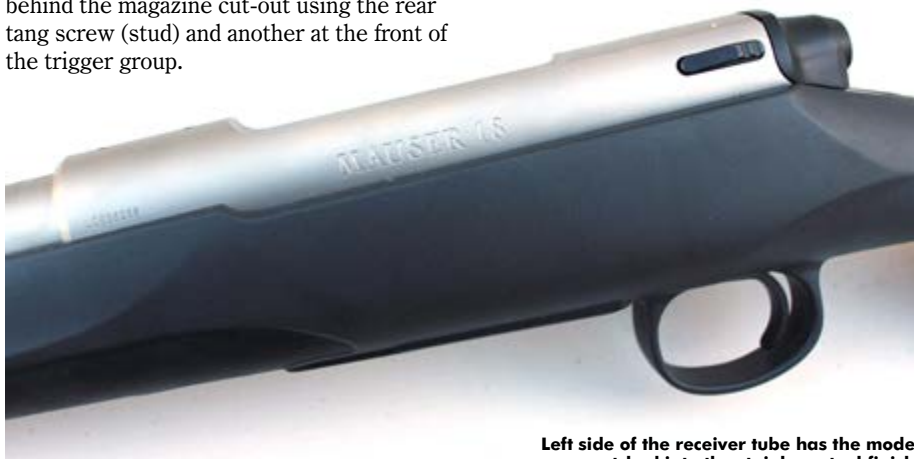
The underside of the receiver maintains that circular profile with a cut-out to accept the detachable box magazine and a slot milled into the base of the front receiver ring which mates up with a steel recoil lug in the floor of the stock. The trigger group is affixed to the receiver body directly behind the magazine cut-out using the rear tang screw (stud) and another at the front of the trigger group.

Three-piece M18 bolt with three-lug bolt-head and straight bolt-handle.



Bolt

Quite a few modern longarms use a bolt which works on a push-feed system to chamber and eject rounds and the Mauser M18 is one of them. While traditional Mauser followers cite the dual opposing lugs, claw extractor and control round feed 'a la' M98, it makes complete sense for the M18 to deviate from this. The fat round bolt body is 182mm long and 19mm wide with a three-lugged bolt head offering a 60-degree lift and slick cycling. Case extraction and ejection is via two plunger ejectors through the bolt face and a claw extractor recessed into one of the locking lugs.



Left side of the receiver tube has the model etched into the stainless-steel finish.

The triggerguard is integral to stock design and made from the same material.



The rear of the bolt has a separate steel segment to accept the straight steel bolt handle which terminates with an oversize polymer knob, the bolt finished with a polymer shroud which also incorporates a recessed segment to allow visual inspection of whether the firing pin is cocked or not with a red collar showing 'cocked'.

Trigger, safety and magazine

The trigger unit is fully adjustable from 0.8-1.9kg using an Allen key through a small hole in the base of the trigger blade, trigger pull crisp and clean without drag or over-travel and at a factory setting of 1.4kg was spot-on for testing. The safety is a three-position affair just behind the bolt handle notch and operates in a linear fashion via a knurled lever with the rear position locking the bolt and trigger. The middle position allows the bolt to be cycled while keeping the trigger locked and the forward position enables the rifle to be fired as indicated by a small red dot on the stock, the safety easy to access with the thumb and silent in operation.

The magazine is of a modern polymer detachable box design and holds four cartridges in .223 Remington calibre though oddly is also marked with the .222 Remington calibre. It has a section of the rear blocked off to accept the short cartridge and loaded cartridges sit in a staggered manner, though what didn't appeal was loading the magazine as cartridges couldn't be 'top-loaded' with each having to be pressed down the front of the polymer follower and slid into the magazine. This four-shot capacity and fiddly loading is something Mauser should address.

Barrel

Stainless-steel and of a sporter profile it's 560mm long (22") and is made using the cold-hammer forging process. In .223 Remington it has a one-in-10" rate of twist which seems an oddity as traditionally this



calibre relies on a one-in-12" but modern trends have seen the 8" and 9" twists prevail for their ability to shoot heavier bullets. A 10" twist in .223 would be interesting and should be good up to 70-grain bullet weights but only range testing would verify that.

The barrel is screwed into the receiver, a positive trait considering Mauser/Sauer use a heat friction fitting method for installing barrels in some of their models. The muzzle is threaded M15x1 to accept compatible accessories and has a cap to protect the threading, the crown finished in a slight concave manner conducive to accuracy.

Stock

The dark grey unit complements the stainless barrelled action well and is designed around a classical American pattern devoid of cheekpieces or combs with a fullish pistol grip and ambidextrous palmswells. Grip around the pistol and fore-ends is accentuated by the use of black rubber inserts which feel positive in the hands with the

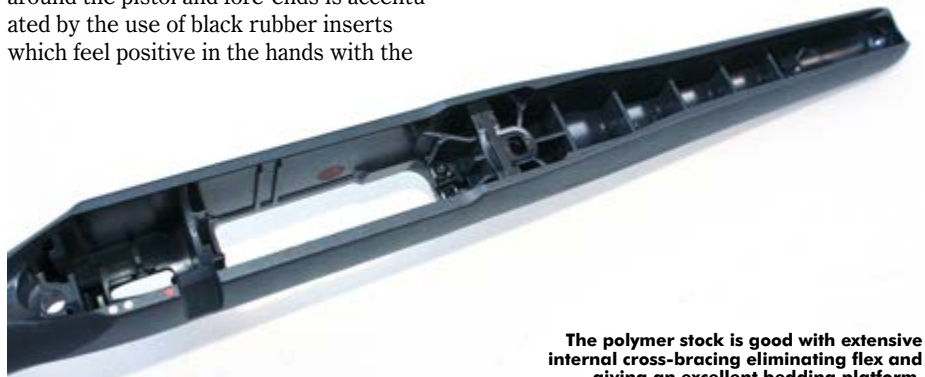


Action with straight bolt-handle and safety lever.

slim fore-end shape pleasing. The stock has the triggerguard integral and magazine release button fitted into the underside just forward of the magazine well cut-out.

Blued sling-swivel studs are fitted to the underside of the fore-end and toe of the buttstock while one of the M18's most discernable features is the removable recoil pad. Pressing the two 'Mauser' tabs either side of the buttstock the recoil pad can be removed to expose a cavity of sorts. The pad is a sorbothane material, excellent in reducing recoil and I liked this concept which never gave any issues while removing and refitting the pad.

Inletting of the stock is neat with a steel recoil lug affixed into one of the main polymer braces in front of the magazine well, this lug mating with a slot milled into the underside of the receiver for a positive bedding platform and free-floating barrel.



The polymer stock is good with extensive internal cross-bracing eliminating flex and giving an excellent bedding platform.

M-Appeal

The rear of the receiver bears directly on the polymer stock around the tang and rear action screw platform, the barrelled action anchored to the stock by two screw studs which are actually captive to the receiver underside. They accept countersunk nuts which are tightened by an 'H5' Allen key, another way of attaching a stock to the barrelled action.

At the range

The rifle was fitted with a neat SIG Sauer 4-12x50 optic in Nikko Stirling Zero-Lock mounting hardware, distributor OSA also supplying hunting loads in .223 Remington from PPU, Hornady, Buffalo River and GECO. Two other factory loads with heavier bullet weights were sourced in the Winchester 64gr Power-Point and Sellier & Bellot 69-grain Match load and considering 1 MOA is roughly 29mm at 100m and 1.5 MOA is 44mm at 100m, the review rifle shot all groups bar one into 1.5 MOA or less.

All factory hunting loads were in the 55-64 grain bullet weight (with only the target load at 69 grains) and it's worth trying as many different loads then stick with a couple which shoot consistently and accurately. Any of the factory loads in the accompanying table would fit the bill as a small game load out to 250m, anything further pushing the bounds of ethical hunting with the .223. This rifle seemed to shoot best with Winchester 64-grain Power-Point and Hornady 55-grain Spire Point (as a hunting load) and performed even better with the 69-grain Sellier & Bellot Match. An astute handloader should easily be able to produce clover-leaf groups by carefully adjusting powder charges and bullet-seating depths for maximum accuracy.

Summary

Adding the .223 Remington calibre to Mauser's M18 line-up has been well received, especially in Australia where this rifle is just the ticket for small game enthusiasts or farmers after a reliable pest control firearm. The M18 Stainless is available in other select calibres but in .223 Remington has an RRP of around \$1570. It's a rifle to take what Australian hunting climates can dish out and keep on delivering with great accuracy and reliability. More at www.ossaaustralia.com.au ●



The rifle fitted with a SIG Sauer Whiskey 3 in 4-12x50 in Nikko Stirling Zero Lok one-piece rings/bases.

Specifications:

Rifle: Mauser M18 Stainless

Action: Bolt-action, push-feed (three-lug bolt, 60-degree bolt lift)

Trigger: Single-stage, adjustable from 0.9-1.8kg

Calibre: .223 Remington (tested) also available in .308 Win, .30-06 Sptr, .300 Win Mag

Capacity: Four rounds (.223 Rem) detachable box magazine; other calibres: five rounds (.308 Win/.30-06 Sptr); four rounds (.300 Win Mag)

Barrel: Sporter weight, cold-hammer forged, 560mm for standard calibres, 610mm for Magnum calibre, muzzle threaded for accessories (M15x1)

Sights: Open, drilled and tapped to accept Rem 700-style bases

Barrel/action finish: Stainless steel

Stock: Dark grey polymer with black 'soft-grip' inserts

Weight: 3.1kg Standard, 3.2kg Magnum

Length: 1055mm Standard, 1120mm Magnum

RRP: \$1570

Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies

Mauser M18 Stainless .223 Remington – Accuracy testing at 100m			
Ammunition	Best group (mm)	Worst group (mm)	Average group (mm)*
PPU Rifle Line 55gr Soft-Point	21	50	35
Buffalo River 55gr Sierra Game King	24	36	31
GECO 56gr Express	22	36	32
Hornady 55gr Spire Point	13	38	26
Winchester 64gr Power-Point	15	28	23
Sellier & Bellot 69gr Match	18	22	20

* Average group calculated from five 3-shot groups at 100m from a benchrest.

The recoil pad does its job well, especially in heavier calibres.





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RRP \$3,495





Grey area

Illegal gun number 'steady' for a decade

John Maxwell

Somewhere out there in the illicit 'grey market' are 260,000 guns (250,000 longarms and 10,000 handguns) which, if not already in the hands of criminals, soon could be. Really? This estimate of the number of guns in Australia's illicit grey market dates back a decade and despite a succession of gun busts, seizures and amnesties hasn't officially become even one gun smaller. Yet it's repeated almost as gospel by numerous media outlets and other reports.

"More than 260,000 guns are in circulation across Australia amid a national gun amnesty launched to keep firearms out of the community," News Ltd reported in February in an article headlined 'Terrifying number of illegal guns in Australia'.

And from Melbourne's *Herald Sun* earlier this year came: "The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) estimates more than 260,000 firearms are circulating in the country's illicit firearms market." The story claimed Melbourne streets had been flooded with illegal firearms which were being used to carry out high-level drug trafficking, violent robberies and murders. And so it goes on.

The SSAA has always been sceptical about the claim of 260,000 illicit firearms and the reverence which this unsubstantiated estimate is afforded. The Association's Tim Bannister questioned the number's origin

when he was a councillor on the Office of Home Affairs' Commonwealth Firearms Advisory Committee. Labor's Jason Clare admitted the number was determined internally from a 'guestimate' by one department which was then taken up by another department - there was no scientific basis on the formation of the number.

So what exactly is the grey market? Well, it's all those guns which remained unregistered during implementation of the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) following the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy. In its report on *Illicit Firearms in Australia* released in October 2016, ACIC said most grey market firearms were unlikely to be held for the purpose of violent crime but, if stolen, were unlikely to be reported.

"Many members of the community still possess grey market firearms because they didn't surrender these during the 1996-97 gun buyback," the report says. Yet the actual illicit market comprises other guns - those stolen from legitimate owners, illegal imports and ones manufactured illegally, including by the emerging technology of 3D printing.

Around the turn of the century some 5000 cheap Chinese handguns were legally imported, deactivated to minimum standard and sold without requiring the purchaser to possess a handgun licence, permitted through a legal loophole (now

closed) in Queensland law. Many of those guns were restored to working condition and remain out there.

And what about all those Chinese SKS rifles imported pre-1996 of which reputedly only a fraction were surrendered, leaving thousands or tens of thousands still out there? Police occasionally bust criminals and others with SKS rifles but not in the numbers which could support claims of a vast arsenal of self-loading rifles in the community.

In its 2016 report ACIC said based on available data it conservatively estimated there were 260,000 firearms in the domestic illicit market. "This estimate is based on a range of intelligence sources including firearm importation figures and seizure trends over time," it said. ACIC stressed this was an estimate and the exact extent of the Australian illicit firearms market could not be determined as no historical data existed on the number of guns prior to implementation of the NFA.

It said the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated the global illicit market was 10 to 20 per cent of the number of firearms in the lawful market and on that basis Australia's illicit market could contain somewhere between 300,000 and 600,000 firearms. But ACIC's figure of 260,000 illicit guns wasn't new as that very same number features in the 2012 Final



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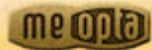
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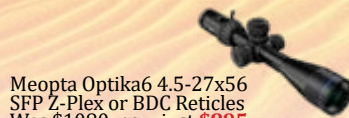
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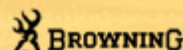
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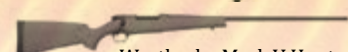
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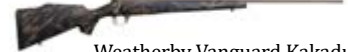
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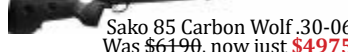
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PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Grey area - Illegal gun number 'steady' for a decade

Report of the National Investigation into the Illegal Firearms Market. That investigation was conducted by the Australian Crime Commission, forerunner to ACIC and successor to the National Crime Authority. Then Labor Home Affairs Minister Jason Clare told parliament a conservative estimate was there were more than 250,000 longarms and 10,000 handguns in the illicit firearms market.

The Minister made a number of points: At that time there were more than 2.75 million registered firearms held by more than 730,000 individual firearm licence holders (it's now a lot more). Shooters appreciate that guns are long-lived with the oldest firearm traced by the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) being a functioning revolver made in 1888.

ACC's assessment of the illicit market was informed by its trace program in which it examined the provenance of 3186 guns seized by Australian law enforcement agencies. Of those, 44 per cent had not been surrendered or registered post-1996, 12 per cent were stolen or the subject of staged theft, illegal importation accounted for 0.5 per cent although experience since then has shown criminals are very serious about acquiring guns from overseas, especially the US. Underlining the difficulty of tracing illicit firearms, for a third (33.5 per cent) the method of diversion could not be determined.

So a little bit about criminals and guns. Crooks are interested in any guns though some more than others, handguns due to their concealability and allure being especially prized but even a single-shot .22 rifle could be used to enforce a drug debt or rob a pharmacy. Many criminals don't know much about guns, a fact underlined to this writer when reporting a trial in the UK some years ago in which a couple of low-level crooks stole a shotgun from a country

house, sawed off the barrel and stock then used it in a hold-up. That shotgun was a Purdey and a cheap one on the second-hand market might set you back \$20,000.

That the Australian firearms grey market is substantial is demonstrated by the number of guns surrendered in various state and national amnesties:

- According to research by the Federal Parliament, as of 2017 there had been 28 assorted gun amnesties across states and territories since Port Arthur.
 - The 2003 national handgun buyback resulted in the surrender of 68,727 handguns nationally. Technically this wasn't an amnesty as it was directed at legally-owned guns with their owners compensated.
 - The first national gun amnesty since the NFA of 1996-97 ran from July 1 to September 30, 2017 and resulted in the surrender of 51,461 firearms, almost half (24,965) in NSW. That's in addition to 67,323 surrendered in three earlier state amnesties.
 - So far, more than 10,000 guns have been surrendered across the nation in the current permanent amnesty which started in July of last year.
 - Police routinely take guns from criminals - one here, a few there but larger numbers are seized in targeted operations against groups such as outlaw motorcycle gangs.
- Last December the Australian Federal Police said their National Anti-Gangs Squad had seized 99 firearms from bikie gangs in 2020-21 and 51 in 2019-20.

You'd think all that would make a dent in the national illicit arsenal but not according to ACIC which stands by that 260,000. "There are a number of variables involved in reaching this assessment and ACIC continues to review this estimation as more definitive information becomes available," an ACIC spokesperson told *Australian Shooter*. "While the size of the illicit firearm

market cannot be definitively measured, based on available data ACIC conservatively estimates there are 260,000 firearms (250,000 long-arms and 10,000 handguns) in the domestic illicit market." The spokesperson said the estimate was based on a range of intelligence sources including historical and updated firearm importation figures and seizure trends since the 2013 release of this estimation. "ACIC has not observed a significant change in the market since the 2016 *Illicit Firearms in Australia* report was released."

With the national firearms amnesty well under way, there's another issue not at all canvassed in the numerous media reports around the country, many parroting the figure of 260,000 illicit guns. So what does success really look like? That's a point well made in a Federal Parliament discussion paper released ahead of the 2017 amnesty. As desirable as it would be for criminals to hand in their guns, the government had no expectation they'd do so. What do get handed in are a lot of antiques and heirlooms with imagery of the piles of surrendered firearms typically showing air rifles and old .22 calibre rifles along with much smaller numbers of military rifles and handguns.

These clearly fill out the numbers and justify assertions the amnesties are removing large numbers of firearms from the community. "Given the standard refrain is to 'get guns off the street' and reduce their availability, it's tempting to assume that amnesties which result in people mainly handing in antiques, replicas or unwanted heirlooms are less successful than amnesties which see modern handguns and military-style weapons being surrendered," the discussion paper admits. ●





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The Battle of **Milne Bay** - and a gunner's Bren

Chris Redlich

Often overshadowed by the legend of Kokoda is an equally significant battle for Australia's defence against the Imperial Japanese forces at Milne Bay in 1942 and this month marks the 80th anniversary of the conflict which my grandfather survived. When World War Two broke out, the Australian economy was still recovering from the Great Depression of the 1930s and a level of prosperity had the nation on course for a strong future. The general public was also revelling in a sense of peace brought on by a false security which comes with living on the opposite side of the world's troubles.

Little did they know a melting point of broken-down diplomacy had spilled over into the Pacific region, resulting in Japan awakening a 'sleeping giant' by brazenly bombing the US naval fleet docked at Pearl Harbour. Whether we liked or not we could no longer take our freedom for granted and prepared for a fight close to home, as the war Britain had been waging against German forces in the far-flung regions of Europe and North Africa for the previous two years had edged closer to Australia.

Japan made a good start and within months numerous colonial and sovereign strongholds of the Pacific fell like dominoes to the new enemy. Many of our 2nd AIF (Australian Imperial Force) men, including my great uncle, were already fighting and dying for the motherland (see Gallant 'Rat', *Australian Shooter*, May 2020) on foreign soil but now the garrison force of our militiamen was expected to repel the Japanese ranks knocking on our door.

A 3RAR soldier armed with the 7.62 NATO Bren during the Indonesian Confrontation in 1965.



The battle

The soldiers of C Company 61st Battalion arrived at Milne Bay on the south-eastern tip of New Guinea on July 15, 1942, disappointed to discover it wasn't the tropical paradise it was made out to be. The wave of heat and humidity after leaving a cooler Aussie winter hit them like a hot, wet blanket and mosquitoes were an unwelcome greeting party which hampered them relentlessly and the only predictable thing about the weather was its unpredictability.

Many were struck early by disease and succumbed to malaria, dysentery and tropical ulcers, a popular Milne Bay anecdote being: "If ever the world needed an enema, they'd have pushed it in at Milne Bay!" It was a fitting description that wouldn't have been contested by those who served there. Conditions were bad but not as hostile as what lay ahead so Milne Force began to prepare defences under the command of experienced Australian Lieutenant-General Cyril Clowes.

Milne Forces' primary objective was to defend the airstrips at Milne Bay and deny the Japanese a launching site for air and sea support in any further advances. Milne Force consisted of around 8100 Australian and 1350 US personnel and interestingly, General Clowes positioned the inexperienced militiamen from the 9th, 25th and 61st Battalions forwardmost in the defensive position to absorb the initial wave of the Japanese attack with the AIF men of 18th Brigade (many of whom had just returned from Middle Eastern theatres) in reserve for any counter-attack should the Japanese breach the Allied line.

My grandfather, Reg McQuillan, was the eldest of two siblings and by all accounts a typically carefree young fella of the era who worked hard as a slaughterman and loved sport, excelling in his local club cricket and hockey teams. When the call came for volunteers to raise the second AIF at the outbreak of WWII, Reg was keen to throw his hat in the ring and help his fellow countrymen.

My great grandfather on the other hand, a World War One veteran of the French campaign, had no intension of signing any documents that would release his young son to serve. After three long years in Europe, great-grandfather Frank had seen his fair share of battlefield horror and wanted the best for his only boy. Yet months before Japan even entered the war our country had alternate plans for grandpa's immediate future and in June 1941 Reg became a conscript to Australia's Militia Force (AMF).

Preparing for war

Originally Australia's militia units were purely a defensive force, limited within our coastal borders and not to be deployed offshore but due to the real danger Japan

was posing, the government redefined the definition of 'border defence' to include neighbouring territories such as New Guinea which meant militiamen would be deployed offshore and involved in active service to face the threat. Reg was posted to the 61st Battalion (Queensland Cameron Highlanders) of 7th Brigade and conducted an accelerated form of infantry training which by comparison wasn't as advanced as their brethren AIF soldiers' drills but relevant nonetheless.

Grandpa told me of their weapons training and route marches of ridiculous distances from Brisbane to Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast. "If some of the conscripts had been in bad shape before we started, they were certainly fit by the end," he said. As time wasn't on their side they were the best-prepared homegrown soldiers available for the monumental task which lay ahead. Poorly clad in cotton desert uniforms and trained in the basics of jungle warfare, the men of Milne Force set sail for New Guinea and grandpa said goodbye to his future wife Veronica (my late grandmother), for what realistically could've been the last time.

The Battle of Milne Bay - and a gunner's Bren

The infantry units' firepower was bolstered on land by Australian and US artillery while the tireless and brave airmen of the RAAF helped protect the force from above. As per standard operating procedures, the infantrymen began the arduous task of 'digging-in' their defensive positions and numerous patrols were conducted to gather a strategic footprint of the area before an expected invasion in August by Japanese marines of the SNLF (Special Naval Landing Force).

Prior to his death in 2011 I'd pestered grandpa to recount some of his memories from Milne Bay and just two weeks before passing he handed me a notebook with a brief outline of his battle experience and despite being advanced in years the memories he penned were as clear as ever to him. Although he'd spent several months at Milne Bay the battle lasted two weeks and the brief recollections I'm sharing here are drawn directly from his handwritten accounts amid the peak of battle:

"We were then told to withdraw back to No.3 strip, we took up position on the other side of the airstrip. The Japanese attacked the strip the next night. All hell broke loose and our fellows and other companies opened up with Bren, mortars and .50-cal machine gun. That left quite a number of Japanese dead on the airstrip.

"By daylight the Japanese had withdrawn. The 9th, 10th and 12th AIF Battalions from the Middle East took over and went through mopping-up the strays. They were a great help. After that night the Japanese retreated and we used to go out on listening posts to make sure the Japanese did not return. On the first night we went into action we lost our platoon commander, Lt King. That was a great loss as he was a great platoon leader. I was in 14 Platoon."

Although not mentioned in his memoir, I clearly recall grandpa telling me how he witnessed platoon commander Lieutenant King being shot in the throat while returning fire from the cover of a coconut

tree and the brave stretcher-bearer who went to his aid under heavy fire to help stem the loss of blood, sadly in vain. For an officer trying to assess a battlefield perspective, the probability of being shot while not maintaining a low profile was high due to the large volume of rifle and machinegun fire from both sides.

The Aussies gallantly absorbed and withheld numerous waves of attacks with the fiercest of fighting at No.3 strip. Grandpa told me each Japanese assault was launched to the sound of bugle calls and blood-curdling battle cries from seemingly endless amounts of men and as fast they died there appeared to be more taking their place.

By early September the remnants of the Japanese invasion force was in full retreat and despite the Allied victory the casualty list from both sides was high, Japan's numbering in the thousands. Not to be forgotten, grandpa made mention of some wonderful support from the New Guinea indigenous population known affectionately as the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' and their contribution to the Allied effort at Milne Bay.

As a young boy I learned that Reg's role as section gunner armed with a Bren gun was to provide his section with fire support and he recalled that while on patrol they were shot at by Japanese snipers strapped to the top of coconut trees. I also remember him telling me how he immediately returned fire with an accurate burst from the Bren, killing one of the snipers as he hung from the tree. This ploy by Japanese snipers was a desperate kamikaze-style tactic used to great effect against Australian soldiers, knowing full well that once they fired their position was a giveaway which would result in instant retaliation.

Bren Gun Mk. 1

The name Bren is derived from Czechoslovakian designers Brno and their partnership with Enfield Arms Manufacturing. It's a gas-operated light

Reg's pre-war hockey jersey with him seated centre of the team photo.



Australian soldier in New Guinea with a Bren gun and typical cotton uniform not suited to the jungle environment.



The Battle of Milne Bay - and a gunner's Bren



Studio photo of grandpa Reg, a proud Milne Bay veteran, and his medals.

machinegun (LMG) identifiable by a cone-shaped flash suppressor, offset sights and distinct 30-round overhead curved magazine. Starting production in the mid-1930s the Bren became the mainstay LMG weapon for most Commonwealth forces, replacing the outdated and notoriously unreliable Lewis gun. It was chambered in .303 calibre and although providing a modest 500rpm rate of fire it became known for its accuracy and was successful in all theatres of use.

The gun included a folding bipod for prone use but could also be mounted to a tripod or vehicle and while enabling effective bursts of fire out to 500m, lying prone the Bren could also be shouldered or shot from the hip with great effect at close quarters upon enemy contact.

Like all firearms with many working parts they require regular maintenance but the Bren provided soldiers welcomed reliability in harsh conditions. So successful was it that in the 1950s it was rechambered in 7.62x51 NATO and used by various forces around the world up until the 1990s. British infantry soldiers used the Bren in its latter guise during the Falklands War of 1982 while Australian infantry carried the .303 Bren to the Korean War and the 7.62 NATO variant during the Indonesian Confrontation in the mid-1960s.

In summary

Although my grandfather never made a fuss about his war duties, it's the Australian nation which owe men and women such as himself a huge debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice made for

us and this country we call home. I've been a sponge for knowledge since I was a boy yet he'd only tell me bits and pieces when comfortable and the stories he shared are now etched in my memory. There was no bravado or embellishment, only raw emotion when he revealed how scared he was and as an impressionable young boy I hailed my grandpa a hero - and they all were - but the reality is he and his mates were terrified and literally fighting for their lives against a fanatical enemy in hellish conditions.

Those gallant 'chocos' (which militiamen were referred to) didn't wilt under the heat of battle and earned a new respect from their AIF brothers. Importantly, the Allied victory at Milne Bay marked the first defeat in 400 years for Japanese forces on land, a milestone my grandfather was proud to be part of. Despite returning to Australia by hospital ship due to malaria, Reg enjoyed a happy and fruitful married life after the conflict and regarded every day on Australian soil after his horrific war experience as a blessing and reason to smile.



C Company 61st Battalion OIC Captain Ken 'Soapie' Campbell in the turret of a bogged Japanese light tank after the battle.

Chris's most treasured possessions - his grandfather's battlefield dog-tags and hand-written memoir.



• Acknowledgements: Lithgow Small Arms Museum; *The 61st Battalion* by James Watt; Australian War Memorial; *Milne Bay 1942* by Clive Baker and Greg Knight; *Turning Point* by Michael Veitch; *A Bastard of a Place* by Peter Brune. ●



Australian Bren as used by Chris's grandfather in New Guinea. Note 30-round overhead curved magazine.

Foxing clever

Chasing redcoats with a 20-gauge isn't for everyone but Leon Wright has done it for years



The smart hunter continues to call even after taking one fox as, often during the summer/autumn period, several will hunt together.

The moon was still up as I parked my 4x4 by the creek bed and, expecting a mozzie onslaught as soon as I opened the door, I applied a liberal coating of repellent to what bare skin I had exposed. Mosquito-borne diseases are common in our area and not to be taken lightly. For the first time since the start of the year I was after foxes (calling that is) and have done quite a bit of spotlighting for them in response to several requests from farmer friends.

Checking to make sure I had everything in order - gun, ammo, camera - I headed to where I was confident I'd be able to pick up the odd fox. Since last time here the extent in growth of the clumps of sweet briar was a stark reminder the fox inflicts more damage than that weed does to our native marsupials and birds. Catholic in its tastes, the old fox happily dines on the fruits of the sweet briar which is plainly obvious by all the seeds you see in their droppings.

On selecting a likely looking berth by the dry creek I climbed on a handy log which gave me the advantage of being able to see out over the surrounding high grass, as one thing I've noticed about foxes over the years is they rarely look up when answering your call. The shrill screech of the Scotch Predator, though soft at first, made a few nearby roos interrupt their grazing and gaze intently in my direction so I increased the volume, made the call sound a bit more distressing then tapered it off to a fate-accepting cry.

And it worked as movement among some sweet briar heralded the arrival of the night's first redcoat. As is often the case the

fox wandered in nonchalantly, expecting to find an easy meal and clearly wasn't counting on running into a load of No.3 shot coming the other way. At a mere 15m he collapsed at the sound of the shot and closer inspection showed it to be a large male.

Buoyed by my early success I took a couple of quick photos and went in search of more. I'd have scored at the next stand too if it wasn't for a few kangaroos taking offence at my call routine and rapidly heading off, taking with them a fox coming into my stand. Muttering to myself I broke open the shotgun, climbed off the log and went looking for another position to call from. The next location just screamed 'fox'

with high stands of phalaris everywhere and I knew about 100m away was sweet briar. The reaction to my calling was instantaneous as a youngster came trotting straight in, head down as usual before falling to a ridiculously easy shot at 15m.

I was about to step off the log when I noticed slight movement a couple of metres away from the downed fox. It was hard to distinguish it through the thick scrub so I gently emitted a couple of soft whines from the Predator and out popped another fox. With a cartridge still left in the under-and-over I quickly dropped him too which goes to show that even though you've already taken a fox it pays to keep calling, as early



At 15m this young predator was easy pickings for the 20-gauge.

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Foxing clever

in the year they often hunt together and are not deterred by the sound of gunfire.

Next day I was out again and with dawn just breaking and crows on the move I took up where I left off the previous day, working the Predator softly at first in case there was a fox nearby in what was an incredible amount of cover. This was no situation for a rifle but perfect for a shotgun, even the Beretta 20-gauge I was using. Yes I know it's touted as being for women and youngsters but I've lost count of the rabbits and foxes I've taken with this smooth-handling shotgun.

Its light weight is a blessing when a day's hunting requires a long stint in the field, a blessing I was grateful for before this hunt was over. I often wonder if those pundits and armchair experts who regularly knock the 20-gauge have ever actually used one for hunting, as I've relied on mine for quite a while and after extensive field experience have found the difference between the 20-gauge and 12-gauge barely noticeable.

On receiving no response from the soft sound of the Predator I increased the volume, finishing off with a couple of desperate wails in case there was a nearby fox needing a little more encouragement. One problem in hunting foxes around my home range is the terrain is so flat and just because you're facing the breeze doesn't mean they'll come in that way, they can appear from any direction and it wouldn't be the first time one had approached downwind.

A slight rustling sound had me checking to my left and sure enough there was a fox no more than 10m away. Being a 'mollydooker' (left-hander) I was caught flat-footed with the 20-gauge pointing to



The Scotch Predator caller brings foxes into striking distance of Leon's Beretta under-and-over 20-gauge.

my right so had to switch and shoot off my right shoulder, all this going on as he stared intently at me probably wondering what the hell I was up to. Successfully completing the turnaround I brought the 20-gauge to my right shoulder, fired and scored the day's first redcoat in prime condition, having clearly been living well on the local wildlife.

I tried a few more areas without success as I walked casually into the wind and even standing on any convenient log to call wouldn't afford me the luxury of a better field of view, such was the density of weeds. The bush around me was a mess, choked with Bathurst burr up to at least 1½m in most places and even taller in some. There were clumps of sweet briar a good 2m high and full of berries and

judging by the fox scat they were dining well on it, so all of that combined with clumps of roo grass made me happy I'd chosen to hunt with the shotgun.

After a bit more searching I found an easy log to climb on which gave me the best chance of spotting any incoming fox, though I was taken by surprise when a large dog fox burst through the scrub and rushed straight in as soon as I'd started using the Predator. We were both taken aback as I was still working the call when he came to an abrupt crouching standstill no further than seven paces away, staring with unblinking eyes at the camouflaged figure in front of him.

Realising any sudden movement would cost me the target, I slowly lowered the caller and grasped the butt end of the shotgun, inwardly grateful for the fact I'd chosen to wear camo gloves. With his eyes fixed on me I gradually brought the 20-gauge around and fired as soon as I'd raised it high enough. At seven paces even a load of No.3 shot from a 20-gauge is emphatic and I dropped him on the spot, a magnificent example of a fox if there is such a thing, well fed and sporting a beautiful coat.

It was about now my relaxing morning fox hunt came to a close and as I was putting the camera in my bag I noticed my keys were missing. A thorough search of my pack produced nothing as did all the scratching around in the undergrowth so with no mobile phone (I refuse to have one) there was only one option left - a 10km trek to a friend's farm to ring my brother to bring my spare keys. When relating the tale of woe to my wife later all I received was a mumbled: "You're a danger to be let loose in the bush." She might be right. ●



No.3 shot is Leon's chosen load for foxes as their skins are much thinner during warmer months.

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Memories are made of this

Peter Turner

As a boy in the early 1960s I'd hear stories of my dad Colin Turner and his brother Ernie's hunting exploits around the creeks and paddocks of Shelbourne in central Victoria. As Ernie would pick off rabbits in the distance with his Anschütz .22LR, dad would quickly despatch any vermin attempting to make a run for it with his Belgian-made side-by-side .410 shotgun from Liege.

By the time I became involved (in the mid-'60s) the expeditions were usually ferreting ones along the Goulburn River. As I'd squat poised and listening for that magical sound of a rabbit bolting below the earth's surface, dad would prop with the .410 cocked in anticipation of a bunny slipping through a net or sneaking out of a concealed or missed hole, a role made redundant in later years by my whippet Brno.

The last shots dad fired with that gun were in the early 1980s when I gazed in awe as he rolled a fox on the run as we stalked our way around the hills on private property at Rheola in central Victoria. For half of the past 40 years that gun was

confined to the back of dad's wardrobe and in later years my gun safe where I'd occasionally take it out and mount it, just like I did as a boy when I was home alone.

Dad's war service medals and the .410 shotgun are really the only tangible items I have to stimulate the fond memories I retain. I had the medals professionally mounted after his death and they're prominently displayed where I proudly give them more than a passing glance at least once a day. About a year ago the thought crossed my mind to restore his shotgun and, as fate would have it, I stumbled upon a stockmaker offering his skills on a gun club Facebook page. The project was quickly up and running after my initial contact with the stockmaker but unfortunately stalled somewhat due to COVID restrictions.

Believe me we're not talking about a gun of any significance other than sentimental value. It has a 30" barrel and walnut stock as did similar circa 1920s firearms and I've known from the start I was over-capitalising on the restoration but that's of no relevance. I've been prepared to pay whatever's required just to have this modest firearm restored to a condition which would make me proud to share it with whoever's interested and have an heirloom to pick up regularly and fondly reflect on.

A dapper Colin Turner
in hunting mode.



I'm thrilled by the craftsmanship produced by both the stockmaker and gunsmith who completely understood my brief and magnificently restored the relic to its former glory. I plan to use the gun only twice before I permanently retire it to a mere conversation piece and will more than likely enjoy one run busting a clay or two at the gun club before it has its final outing.

The intention is to walk a creek on my own somewhere around Castlemaine and bowl over a rabbit or two. Dad won't be there of course but I bet I'll feel his presence as this century-old lightweight piece of artillery magically transports me back to my childhood. I genuinely thank Louis Carpenter at L.J. Carpenter Stockmaker and Panos Papachristoforos at Boss Action Services for their mighty achievement - you'll find them both on Facebook. ●

Peter's mother helps out
collecting some of the
rabbits taken.



The stylish old shotgun restored
to its former glory.

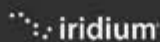


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Importance of cartridge selection

John Hill

I had completed an extensive ammunition test with my .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire-chambered rifle trying to find the cartridge which best suited it as, regardless of whether a rifle is rimfire or centrefire, it's usually the case that one or two particular brands of ammo will give better accuracy than others. The same applies to handloading as some reloads shoot better than others and the reasons for this can be many and varied.

There was no need to conduct a similar test with my .22 Long Rifle rifles as it had already been done. There are three in my gun safe - an old BSA single-shot with peep sight, an equally old Lithgow Model 12 repeater fitted with a 3-9x36 variable scope and a near-new heavy-barrelled CZ Model 453 which wears a 4-16x40 scope with adjustable objective.

All three shoot extremely well on one type of ammunition (Eley high-velocity hollow-points) and I've yet to see a rifle which doesn't shoot well with this ammo. Four 'bricks' of Eleys were bought a few years ago and should last me quite some time as my rimfire use isn't great. Sadly this accurate, hard-hitting ammunition is for whatever reason no longer available so it was a smart move to have stocked up when I did.

When my sponsored junior SSAA member gave me a packet of Winchester Power Points as a gift, it so happened this rimfire ammo proved one of the best examples you could hope to encounter when trying to explain why some cartridges shoot well in one rifle and not so good in another. Using these cartridges in my Lithgow I was surprised to see they shot all over the place - at 50m they grouped around 2 to

3 Minutes of Angle (MOA) which is most unlike any Power Points I'd used previously. You may well ask: 'What did you expect from a rifle as old as a Lithgow Model 12?' Well my old rifle's in remarkably fine condition and the barrel, in particular, is as good or better than many new rifles.

When slugging the Lithgow's barrel (pushing a lead bullet through the bore with a cleaning rod) the drag of the bullet as it passes through the rifling is smooth and uniform all the way to the muzzle - it slugs the way you'd expect of a top-quality target barrel. Using Eley high-velocity hollow-points the old rifle consistently shoots around MOA at 50m, so why should the Power Points not shoot with similar accuracy as they have in the past?

On showing the Power Point target to my son he noticed some of the bullets were 'keyholing' and, on closer inspection, I could see they weren't actually going through the target sideways but were tending to make oval-shaped holes instead of round ones. For a bullet to behave in such a manner is a clear indication it's not stabilising due to insufficient spin.

It was time to check bullet diameters with a micrometer which solved the mystery with diameters varying from 0.223" down to 0.221" and the occasional one slightly smaller. The poor accuracy and keyholing problems were obviously caused by undersized bullets stripping in the rifling and not receiving enough spin to properly stabilise after leaving the muzzle. You may think the Lithgow could have an oversized barrel but that's easily disproved by measuring the bullet used to slug the barrel.



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Importance of cartridge selection

Another important aspect of slugging a rifle barrel (apart from checking the bore for parallelism) is that by measuring the slug with a micrometer, both the bore and groove diameters of a barrel can be easily ascertained. The Lithgow's rifling measures 0.223" in the grooves and 0.219" in the bore which are perfectly normal for a rimfire barrel. These sizes indicate the undersize Power Point bullets were engaging the rifling by only one-thousandth of an inch or half the depth of the rifling lands - no wonder they were shearing on their way to the muzzle.

On the other hand my CZ's barrel is quite different and its groove diameter is 0.221" which is mighty tight for a .22-calibre barrel. I've checked a number of CZ rimfire barrels and all had very tight barrels of similar dimensions to mine. Needless to say the Power Point cartridges with the undersize bullets shot quite well in the CZ with no stripping in the rifling and good accuracy.

I had some older Power Points in my ammo locker and measuring the bullets with the micrometer showed them to be significantly different. All these bullets measured a consistent 0.224" which, to my way of thinking, is standard size for .22-calibre bullets whether they be lead or copper-jacketed (the bullets in the Eley cartridges also measure 0.224"). Most bullet and cartridge manufacturers have various quality control measures so their products are kept within specific tolerances but it seems some work to closer tolerances than others.

If we look closely at the other end of a rimfire cartridge we find there are considerable differences in the thickness of case rims. Long Rifle rims vary in thickness from about 0.038" to 0.042" with rim thickness varying from make to make and batch to batch and unless you have the means to measure it you'll never tell the thick ones from the thin.

So what does rim thickness have to do with the average rimfire shooter? It means that just changing ammunition can cause an increase or decrease in headspace. With any rimfire, neat headspacing is most desirable as it allows the breech face to lock-up close behind the case head which prevents the rim from swelling when the round is fired. I recall an old single-shot rifle of mine which blew out a case rim due to excessive headspace, the result being a badly bent extractor and split fore-end so headspace must be kept to close limits if trouble is to be avoided.

My CZ rifle has been factory headspaced so the bolt closes firmly on a thick-rimmed case and freely on a thin one and while the old Lithgow would normally have fairly sloppy headspace after so many years of



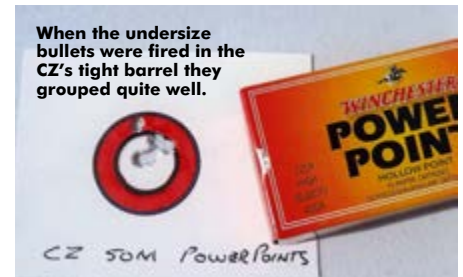
wear and tear, it has had a spacing washer fitted to the bolt and now headspaces like the CZ, closing firmly on those thicker rims.

Some rimfire benchrest shooters select ammunition according to rim thickness, believing rim variations affect uniform primer ignition and therefore accuracy of the cartridges. But if a shooter chooses ammo by variations in rim thickness, bullet diameters and perhaps overall weight as well, there would be few rounds left to use. You can indulge in such theories to extremes but then again, those who do so are often the ones who win prizes.

My descriptions have been fairly technical and included lots of bullet, barrel and rim sizes all in imperial measurements. Our corner of the shooting world hasn't really gone metric due to the large quantity of US-based gear available, all of which is made and still referred to in imperial units so a few common guidelines may help some readers better grasp the various dimensions quoted:

- 0.224" is the nominal standard groove size for a .22-calibre barrel. Due to manufacturing tolerances groove size can be anywhere from 0.221 to 0.225". Rimfire barrels tend to be slightly smaller (as with my CZ) whereas centrefires are, or should be, closer to 0.224". A 0.221" barrel in a centrefire could create dangerous breech pressures.

- According to slug measurements my Lithgow barrel has a groove diameter of 0.223" and bore diameter of 0.219" which means the depth of the rifling is 0.002" or two-thousandths of an inch. A human hair is approximately that thickness so those



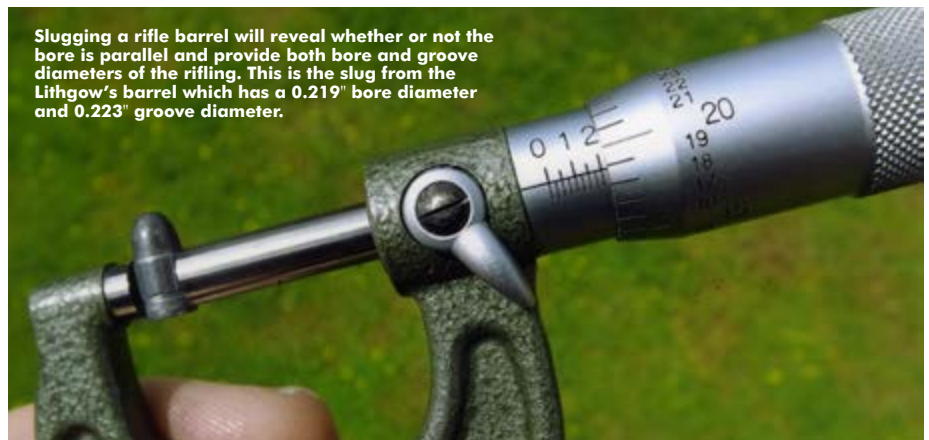
undersize 0.221" Power Point bullets were only engaging the rifling by half a hair and that's why they were stripping on their way to the muzzle.

- As stated .22LR rims vary from 0.038 to 0.042" in thickness - 1mm is equivalent to 0.040" or forty-thousandths of an inch so think of thick rims as 1mm plus a hair while thin rims are 1mm minus a hair.

So now it should be clear to all that a well-made rifle will have barrel tolerances of considerably less than the thickness of a hair and be headspaced to the thickness of one or two hairs, that's why we pay big money for good rifles and get what we pay for when buying a cheap one.

But back to the focus of selecting suitable ammunition for a particular rifle. The previously mentioned Power Points were hopeless in one rifle yet shot perfectly well in another as that batch had an odd characteristic which suited the CZ but not the Lithgow and I can't think of a better example as to why some rifles favour or reject a certain batch of ammo. If a cartridge is to perform well it must be physically compatible with the rifle it's fired in and only by testing numerous brands of ammunition can we hope to sort out the good from the bad.

Remember when you do settle on a good cartridge it might be wise to buy as much of that batch as you can afford and, of course, that you're reasonably allowed to own. After all the next batch may not be the same and could even be loaded with undersize bullets. ●





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Improvisation saves the day

Expect the unexpected when hunting, warns Sam Garro

Despite the pre-planning and preparation put into an outing and making allowances for possible mechanical mishaps along the way, things can still go awry irrespective if your vehicle is new or has a few miles on the speedo. Yet so long as the issue can be satisfactorily dealt with and everyone returns home safely, that's what's important as, all things being equal, a return trip can be made another time. A good 18 months had passed since we made arrangements to revisit the sheep property a half day's drive from Melbourne so the trip came highly anticipated.

The ongoing dry

Although large areas of Queensland and north-eastern NSW finally received significant welcome rain to once more turn the paddocks green and fill the dams, parts of the western and central state where we were heading had yet to receive any decent rainfall. The odd shower was quickly soaked up by the dry earth and insufficient to promote any medium to longer-term growth.

The countryside was in a sorry state with red dust, hardly a blade of grass, dried-up creek beds and shallow dams. The remnant stunted saltbush together with strategically placed grain feeder bins near the dams just about sustained the reduced flocks of sheep though oddly, kangaroos were in greater numbers than previous visits as they bounded across the flat scrub in small groups.



Sheep around a feeder grain bin.

Locating game

While it's always good to be out appreciating the open spaces and all that nature has to offer, our chances of scoring a few rabbits and the odd pig seemed slim but as always, we remained optimistic as a trip's not over until it's over. By mid-afternoon camp was set up and we were soon checking out likely rabbit spots, at the same time keeping a keen eye out for those distant dark shapes with a rounded rump.

The isolated and slightly elevated red soil mounds riddled with rabbit warrens showed signs of activity - evident by the trailing freshly dug soil flicked out of the holes - but during the next three days few rabbits were spotted. They weren't the only noticeable absentees from the scene, whether just before daybreak, during the day or evening the familiar sights and sounds of galahs, cockatoos, magpies, kookaburras and opportunist crows were eerily missing.



Sam with a couple of rabbits taken with the Brno 2 .22LR.

Some success

Late in the afternoon I managed to drop a couple of rabbits sitting just outside the brush at 50m with my .22LR Brno 2 but apart from crossing a mob of emus it was pretty uneventful. Next morning my mate drove the dusty tracks as I opted to open and close the gates from paddock to paddock. After visiting a couple of dams holding minimal water (more of a muddy soup) and driving extensively on the property, we managed to bag a further three bunnies in similar fashion before heading back to camp, hardly a great result for our efforts. This time the Sako A1 222 Rem HB rifle was used to head-shoot them as they were outside the 22LR's range.

Mechanical dilemma

Back at camp and reaching for my sunglasses on the ute floor I spied a small puddle of green fluid on the mat and initially thought it was liquid from a brake or clutch line but on inspection it turned out to be coolant leaking from the ruptured core in the heater unit under the dash. A moment of panic kicked in before we calmed down to try and resolve the problem. It had been a while but a couple of us remembered we could bypass the heating system by running a length of hose from the motor outlet to inlet through which

the water flowed - but we'd need a 5-6" diameter piece of metal pipe and a metre-long hose with slightly wider diameter. We carried all manner of spares including a grinder and cutting disc which later came in handy but not the parts we needed.

The four of us went rummaging around the shearing shed for possible parts and just as we were about to give up on finding anything of use, Greg came up with an old retro-type chair from the kitchen attached to the shed. After some head-scratching he

pointed to the legs made of hollow tubing and unbelievably the right diameter - talk about thinking outside the square.

A fuel siphon hose which fitted proved inadequate as hot water from the engine quickly softened the plastic then to our good fortune a length of heavy-duty water hose in a corner of the shed did the trick. The grinder cut the required length of chair tubing and the hose was fitted with no apparent leaks though every few kilometres we stopped to check.



Rabbits in dry conditions among drought-tolerant scrub.

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Carry on hunting

The fix enabled us to move around the property though the vehicle was driven at reduced speed to avoid high-pressure build-up in the motor that might rupture the hose. The following day we visited a couple of paddocks which had been lightly flooded a few months back from the adjacent billabong where some green pickings remained - the only place on the entire property - mobs of kangaroos descending on the paddocks in late afternoon to nibble on the short growth.

That evening and the following night just before dark we glassed two separate and unrelated groups of pigs, in the first instance a sow with six half-grown or medium-size all-black young and in the second a black sow with eight black and white spotted suckers. While we pondered how the drought-like conditions sustained them we were nonetheless encouraged to see them and two of the medium pigs were dropped on the run at distance and the rest let go. We also spotlighted at night and managed to take a few more but they just weren't out and about.

Rabbits in good shape

The dozen or so rabbits we bagged for the trip were in surprisingly fine condition with a layer of fat alongside the kidneys as when grass or green feed is short, rabbits tend to resort to alternatives such as tree bark, roots and various hardy shrubs to survive. In *The Rabbit King* by Catherine Watson, which describes the days when rabbits were in plague proportions, some of the best examples which were also exported overseas were harvested from the Nullarbor Plains where they fed on abundant drought-resistant saltbush.

The terrain we were hunting held similar vegetation with stretches of saltbush which likely contributed to their fine condition, so back at camp they were hung in an enclosed homemade game net to cool in the shade overnight before being stowed in the fridge/freezer, a method which has worked well down the years.



Greg, Peter and Alex - mechanical issue resolved through improvisation.

Greg with one of the medium-size pigs.



A mob of young pigs in the open.

Measure of a trip

While the improvised vehicle fix worked on the property, for the long trip home a proper replacement hose was bought at the first garage (I won't mention the cost). Every trip is different, conditions change with each passing season as

does the availability of game and things happen beyond your control, yet to me the measure of a journey lies in appreciating the experience in good company and a safe return home. On a positive note some decent rain fell the day after we left - let's hope they have a lot more. ●



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Beam me up!

Portable searchlight a powerful asset, says Geoff Smith

X-Hunter's online shop sent *Australian Shooter* the new AceBeam battery-powered searchlight for review. It seems inappropriate to call this a 'torch' since it's breathtakingly powerful for a small handheld unit. About 40 years ago while teaching a part-time TAFE course in lighting, I predicted to students that solid state devices would soon revolutionise the efficiency and size of light sources but even so, modern developments have ridiculously exceeded what could then have been imagined. Thomas Edison would be astonished by today's light-emitting diode (LED) appliances and the ones used in the AceBeam are no exception.

The SI base measure of light intensity is the Candela (Cd) and from this is derived other aspects including the Lumen (Lm, light flow) and Lux (Lx, illumination). Although it's beyond the scope of this article to explain these in detail, the Candela was derived from a 'standard candle' (some readers may remember 'candlepower') and has, with modern technology, been redefined to be precisely reproducible.



The business end contains eight LEDs in individual reflectors.

Intensity drives the lumens out and the number arriving per unit area provides the illumination required to render objects visible (all relate back to the relative sensitivity of the human eye). The subject lantern is claimed to produce a maximum of

180,000 Cd enabling a beam throw of 800m and on maximum setting at a distance of 10m, I measured 1790 Lx which equates to a beam intensity of 179,000 Cd. This, despite being a crude test, places the quoted figures 'in the ballpark'.

This isn't a spotlight but rather has a wider beam angle of 120 degrees through which it pours out a staggering 40,000 Lm on maximum setting and by way of contrast, our old 40-watt domestic incandescent lightbulb produced about 600 Lm. The colour temperature of this light source is 'Cool White' or 6500 Kelvin (K), although the AceBeam range also contains a 'warmer' 5000K light source.

The light source consists of eight individual Cree XHP70.S light emitting diodes mounted in a cluster of highly polished reflectors behind a hardened dual anti-reflective coated glass bezel. These combine to produce an exceptional beam whose intensity is adjustable in six output steps - on maximum output the LED junctions operate at 85 degrees C, meaning care must be taken to avoid burns to the user or nearby flammable materials.

Physically the AceBeam weighs 697 grams, is 130mm long and the body tapers from 75mm in diameter at the front to a 53mm diameter body. It's made from 6061-T66 grade aluminium that's been hard anodised in black and is supplied with an anodised handle which attaches to the body with a 1/4" UNC screw.



Overall view.



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Beam me up!

The on-off switch has a safety lock which when pushed forward prevents operation (in use it can lock the setting). Pressing the switch once turns the light on, pressing again delivers the second level of light up and so on until peak brightness is reached. At maximum brightness, holding the button down causes it to cycle slowly through the various stages so the desired one can be selected.

When used at a particular setting, turning off then back on brings it to the previous setting and pressing the switch on three times in rapid succession activates the strobe mode, which is certainly an attention-grabber but could also spark some interesting scientific applications such as photographing moving objects.

The internal 10.8-volt 4.25 amp-hour lithium-ion battery is recharged via a Type C USB port and from flat, charging time is 1.8 hours although the unit will be up to 90 per cent charged in 90 minutes. It features an inbuilt 'safety charge-discharge over-heat protection system' which steps down automatically if it becomes too hot. Interestingly the AceBeam with its USB port can also double as a power bank to enable recharging of phones, laptops etc.



Wandering in the shallows.



The 65-watt charger supplied was a demonstration model with a flat bi-pin connector which doesn't fit Australian standard power sockets but the version that'll be for sale will have compliant plugs. As with all modern charging systems, care must be taken to prevent overheating by ensuring free air-flow around the charger which in this case reached 50 degrees C after about 40 minutes. Charging involves plugging the USB cable into the base of the lantern and charger.

When switched on a red indicator alongside the input socket lights up until charging is complete, at which point it goes out (the other indicator light is beside the on/off switch). When battery voltage is between 100 and 30 per cent the light is green with the lantern switched on but then changes to steady red as voltage declines to 10 per cent after which it flashes to signal imminent loss of power. When in use, as the voltage drops to pre-set levels the output shifts down in stages so the unit doesn't cease functioning immediately. Similarly, when the temperature reaches 65 degrees C it will downshift successively to avoid overheating.

The AceBeam is supplied in a robust box and comes with a nylon holster, lanyard, charger unit and Type C USB cable along with a spare rubber charge-socket protector and two extra O-rings which help seal the battery pack to the lamp head. The level of waterproofing is IP66 (Ingress Protection Code) from dust and water jets or splashes providing the seals are maintained.



I took it along on a beach holiday and wading after dark in the shallows of South Australia's Spencer Gulf we were able to attract garfish and generally marvel at the huge amount of light emitted. Similarly, on the 100m rimfire range at SSAA Para we couldn't help but be impressed by the width of beam and large output, effectively illuminating tree branches hundreds of metres beyond the shooting zone. The AceBeam was loaned by the X-Hunter web store (www.xhunter.com.au) and recommended retail price is around \$535. ●



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Access all areas

Opening up new hunting land is a matter of tact, says Joseph Nugent

It's an undeniable truth that every hunter needs somewhere to hunt whether you've just started out, moved to a new area or simply want to target a different species. Public land access varies greatly from state to state and guided hunts tend to be a costly endeavour so for the majority of us, private properties are the most practical place to begin. When the property I hunt with my bow recently changed hands, it was made clear I could no longer access the land and it was time for me to seek pastures new.

Where to start

Discounting family or friends owning land, the most effective way to gain admission to a new property is through a personal approach either by 'door-knocking' or 'letter drop', the latter being my personal favourite for initial contact as it's not unduly demanding of a landowner's time nor is it invasive of their privacy. Furthermore, it gives them time to reflect on your request and places the decision to meet and discuss your proposal face-to-face entirely in their hands.

While it sounds simple to write a letter asking permission to hunt on the owner's land, there's more to it than that and when preparing a letter of introduction, both presentation and content are equally important as the missive is essentially your first impression to any landowner and needs to be a good one. You must be careful to consider tone, content and length so keep it to a single page in an easy and quick-to-read format being respectful, non-demanding and making no assumptions about potential entry.

You must be upfront and honest about yourself and the exact nature of the access you're seeking, for example are you making a request for a group of hunters or just yourself? Are you proposing to use a bow, a rifle or both? Are you targeting a particular species? Lack of clarity at this point could see an opportunity subsequently lost so including details such as being appropriately licensed, your experience with firearms and possession of liability insurance should all be considered. It's at this point being able to cite membership of SSAA is an invaluable addition to your approach.

Once completed, circulation is the next step and I started by looking at feral animal dispersal and the distance from home I was

willing to drive. From there I was able to map out an area of interest and plan a mail route so the only thing left was to load up the ute with letters and set out to distribute as many as possible. In the end I delivered 35 and after several days I heard back from a landowner offering access to a 600-acre block outside of Charters Towers and, after meeting him in person at his invitation and convenience and making a positive impression, a further 1300 acres in the same area was also made available to me.

That first face-to-face meeting is crucial to securing access, as a property owner who's 'interested' in granting you approval can quickly change their mind if your presentation is that of a demanding 'redneck' rather than a respectful, appreciative 'outdoors' person - think about your presentation and the impression it will make. The properties I secured offered both feral pigs and chital deer just a two-hour drive from Townsville and was perfect, so my letters had been a success.

Lie of the land

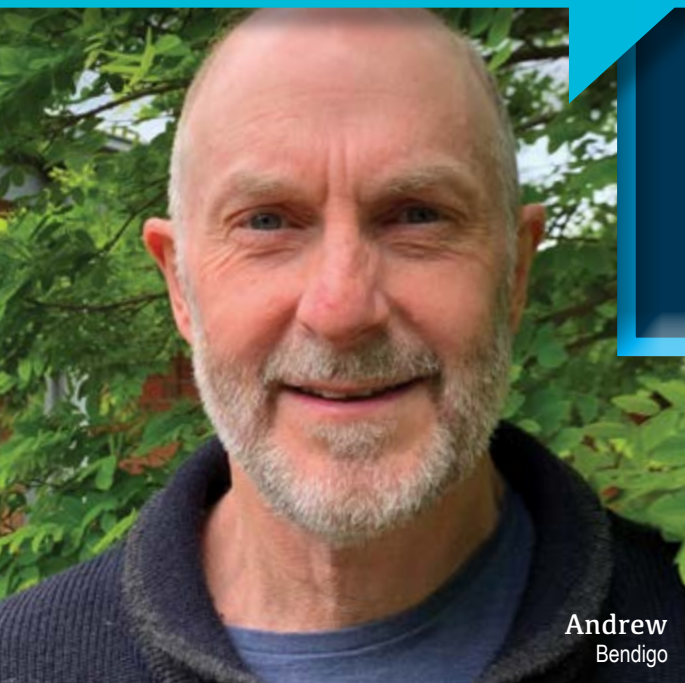
With access secured it was important to do some scouting of the properties. In the months to follow I'd go on two or three



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Access all areas

daytrips looking for sign, setting my trail camera and stalking both chital deer and feral pigs with my bow. There was clearly a substantial number of animals using the property with rub in every tree line, wallows and mud slicks around all the dams. My trail camera had picked up a mixture of deer and pigs but due to north Queensland summer temperatures hitting upwards of 40 degrees most days, much of the activity was occurring late afternoon and into the night, making the window for daytime hunting narrow.

The open and grassy terrain also made it difficult to stalk into an appropriate distance for my bow so after being busted by several stags, I decided to get serious and hunt with a rifle (naturally I'd negotiated both options with the owner). My rifle of choice is a Tikka T3x chambered in .270 topped with a Leupold 4-12 variable scope using 130-grain Nosler BT handloads, a combination which proved devastating on red stags in south-east Queensland.

With everything good to go my first afternoon was spent sitting off one of the large dams in the hope some game would come to the water as the midday heat began to ease. Three hours passed before I noticed movement about 300m away in the tree line adjacent to the dam as something spooked a couple of kangaroos. Seconds later a small herd of chital deer - two young stags and a doe - came into view but hoping for something a bit bigger I held position off the dam until the sun had set though nothing else appeared.

The next day began with a fruitless morning hunt not spotting a single animal as the temperature rose with the sun, soaring to the mid-30s by 8am. It became apparent detecting animals moving during the day would prove difficult and focusing on areas with water and deep shade would be key.

Success

As I spent the next afternoon sitting off the dam in anticipation of an animal coming in for a drink, I noticed a lone boar cross the tree line where the deer had been yesterday. In a bid to intercept him before he could cross the fence into the neighbouring property, I walked along the front of the dam wall and into the tree line but he'd gone.

Considering these animals' apparent habit of moving through the same tree line during an afternoon, I thought it a good idea to backtrack among the trees. The tree line and parallel track allowed me to stalk the fence line between the dams and base of the largest hill on the property so moving cautiously, carefully scanning the



shaded trees and bushes, I soon detected the familiar red and white spotted coat of a chital deer, awake but still bedded in heavy shade under a small stand of bushes.

Moving my head slightly left and right for a better look at him, I noticed he was doing the same and knew something was up. I had to make a quick decision and being larger than the last chital I took with my bow a year ago (and an empty freezer for some time) made it a no-brainer despite his velvet antlers. Taking a knee, I slipped a shot under the bushes in front of his chest as the 130gr Ballistic Tip from the .270 rolled him over where he lay.

As much of the property was accessible by vehicle I was able to return to camp for my ute, making the meat collection process far less strenuous. Thanks to the generosity of the landowners I used their cold room to process and store the meat overnight, saving me a late-night drive back to Townsville. After expressing my thanks and leaving them a haunch of venison, I headed home the following morning and with the freezer filled for at least the next six months I had time to work on my bowhunting skills, chasing a few of the feral pigs causing havoc around the property's dams and creeks.



Reflections

We're ambassadors for our chosen sport and it only takes a single ill-considered or selfish action to tarnish the reputation of us all and harden the hearts of landowners to requests for hunting access. It's therefore essential we take the time to do the right thing in seeking land on which to hunt.

Gaining access is a matter of persistence, honesty and a favourable first impression in equal measure. Be prepared for knockbacks and take them with good grace and, if granted entry, be respectful of it, understand the expectations and limitations (rules) imposed by the landowner and follow them to the letter. Be thankful for

the privilege and show it - my practice in this regard includes:

- Ensuring in advance a proposed hunt is convenient to the property owner.
- Making time to stop and say thanks on entering and exiting the property.
- Offering to help with any small jobs being undertaken on the property.
- Keeping a clean campsite - take home what you came with and don't litter.
- Leaving a portion of the game meat harvested as a tangible expression of thanks.
- Providing a carton of 'Christmas cheer' each year.

Most of all don't take your access for granted. Cultivate it, as proving yourself with one landowner may actually open the door to neighbouring properties or those of family members. If you're persistent and do the right thing, farm gates will inevitably open. Good luck. ●

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Trickle treat

Hornady combo a reloader's dream, says Daniel O'Dea

I recently conducted an audit of my reloading bench and cabinet where it seems Hornady is a pretty predominant brand with me and there's likely a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, I've always been a big fan of Hornady New Dimension Dies as I really like their seating dies with the floating bullet alignment sleeve and ease of adjustment of the seating stem.

Although I have several other reloading presses I was an early convert to the Hornady Lock-N-Load as the bushing system provides the strength and precision of an O-frame press without having to readjust when swapping from one calibre to another or just from sizing to seating die. The Lock-N-Load press is my 'go-to' for reloading and permanently set up on the bench and I also like my Hornady Lock-N-Load powder measure which you can run in a die bushing if required and has quick-change adjustment stems so you can pre-set a few for your more regular loads.

So it's no surprise my interest was sparked when local Hornady importer Outdoor Sporting Agencies sent me a new Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle and G3-1500 Digital Pocket scale for review. They turned out to be a perfect match so let's start with the Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle and so as not to assume every reader will know what a powder trickler is, here's a brief explanation of what and why.

When throwing powder charges from a powder measure there can be a small variance between charges which can depend on numerous factors such as the type of powder. Ball-type powders for instance will meter more consistently than extruded powders and even the action of moving



Hornady Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle and G3-1500 Digital Pocket Scale.

the lever can influence the load thrown if the user isn't consistent (a full measure might meter a slightly higher charge than a near empty one and so forth, though such variances are generally small). In general, with best powder measures the standard deviation may only be around 0.2 of one grain of powder but I've also seen extreme spread of up to one grain which may matter little with hunting loads but for target or long-range competition, negating even the smallest of variances is a must.

So when working up loads for either accuracy and/or a low standard deviation (SD) on velocity, many will weigh each charge individually to ensure absolute consistency in charge weight. Generally the most efficient way to achieve this - and one I've used for years - is to set up your

Measuring loads with the Quick Trickle.



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Trickle treat

powder measure to throw a charge slightly lighter than desired and then moving to the scales, sprinkle or indeed trickle the last few grains of powder in to achieve the desired weight. I've predominantly used a small powder dipper for this but a separate smaller measure designed to mechanically dispense this last little top-up can be useful and is generally referred to a 'powder trickler'.

I own and have used such devices in the past but found them cumbersome and slow, mainly because I was using them with mechanical scales. The common tricklers available offered no set-up adjustment (for height of scale) and you could only dispense at extremely low single rates of flow. The Hornady Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle combined with the G3-1500 Digital Pocket Scale completely overcome these issues. How? Well the Quick Trickle has two adjustment wheels to control dispensed volume with a claimed ratio of 3:1 which literally means the large wheel dispenses powder three times faster than the smaller one and in testing this was exactly the case.

Running up some 6.5 Creedmoor loads with AR2209 I found one complete revolution of the larger wheel dropped 1.2 grains of powder while the same turn of the smaller wheel delivered only 0.4 grains of powder. This proved extremely precise with a quarter turn on the small wheel giving me just 0.1 grain, so in practical terms I could roughly dump a load out of the powder measure, a grain or so light, and quickly spin up the exact volume using the two wheels on the Quick Trickle.

The unit stands 26cm high including a threaded shaft for the Lock-N-Load bush and locking ring. The thread shaft allows

for about 40mm of height adjustment which is important in setting the unit up so the dispensing tube is at the optimum height for the scale you're using. The package comes with a heavy steel base about 10cm in diameter which incorporates the female socket of the Lock-N-Load bushing system and, once locked into the base, you have a stable platform which isn't going to move around in use.

The second element in this powder-dispensing perfect match is the G3-1500 Digital Pocket Scale. To effectively use a powder trickler you ideally need a high precision scale capable of picking up the most minute changes in weight during the act of dispensing and in this department the Hornady G3-1500 is no slouch. Powered by a pair of AAA batteries (not supplied) this has a precision load cell which ensures accuracy to one-tenth of one grain up to 500 grains and has a maximum reference measurement of 1500 grains.

Tapping the on-off button fires up the unit while a three-second hold turns it off. 'Zero' on the display is self-explanatory as tapping it zeros the unit when the dispensing tray, be it the one provided or otherwise, is added to the load plate. Tapping 'Unit/Cal' lets you cycle between the measurement units desired be those grains (gn), grams (g), ounces (oz) or carat (ct). Pressing and holding 'Unit/Cal' will test the unit's calibration against a 10-grain proof weight (also provided) while pressing and holding 'Unit/Cal' along with the on-off button lets you



The Hornady Quick Trickle allows for dispensing powder just a few grains at a time.

toggle between other functions including battery level, backlighting level of the display panel and provision to adjust for how long the backlighting stays on, default being 120 seconds. This really is a feature-packed device.

For testing I pulled out my set of Lyman proof weights with the G3-1500 earning top marks. No matter what combination of proof weights, the unit was spot-on even with the diminutive 0.5-grain proof weight and when used with the Hornady Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle, adjustment readings were instant in processing precise loads to within 0.1 of a grain of powder.

If you're new to reloading and setting up a reloading bench or just looking to update your equipment, the Hornady Lock-N-Load Quick Trickle and G3-1500 Digital Pocket Scale combo could be just what you're after. As a rough guide, at time of writing an online search gives you a little change out of \$250 for the Quick Trickle and \$130 for the G3-1500. ●



The Quick Trickle base plate is integrated for the bushing system.



The Quick Trickle locks into the base plate using the Lock-N-Load bushing system.



All Hornady reloading bench here with the Lock-N-Load O-frame press with new dimension dies fitted, Powder Measure, Quick Trickle, G3-1500 scales and even the case tray.

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Gunpro	Dubbo	NSW
Belmont Guns & Ammo	Belmont	WA
The Sports Hut	Invermay	TAS

A photograph of a hunter in a field, seen from behind. The hunter is wearing a dark cap, a light-colored vest over a dark long-sleeved shirt, and light-colored trousers. They are holding a long-barreled rifle. A black and tan dog is running alongside the hunter. The background is a grassy field with trees in the distance.

The ethical CARNIVORE

Bob Boland

In our DNA: Humans have been hunting for food since time began.

Humans have always been carnivorous, indeed humans sourcing meat from farming rather than hunting is a relatively new phenomenon. Yet today hunting is portrayed by some as being wrong, so is it ethical to hunt for meat? I believe the answer is a resounding 'yes' and what follows are just a few of the reasons why.

1 Nature is not Disney: A bullet to the major organs is a quick and clean death and from a hunting perspective, death is typically achieved before the animal is even aware of the hunter's presence. As such, death via human hunter is among the best an animal can have. Nature is 'red in tooth and claw' and most wild animals die from disease, parasites or non-human predators, most of which eat their prey alive.

2 Global food production: Shooting is critical for global food production as without it, most farms would not be able to produce either crops or livestock.

3 Conservation comes down the barrel of a gun: Of course fencing, trapping, baiting and biocontrol (eg, calicivirus) are useful but all have significant limitations and environmental impacts. Shooting is unique

as it allows clear target selection, not only on a species level but with regard to age, gender and health. Hunting is also the most humane control method - poison and biocontrol are not as quick or painless as an injection of lead.

Trapping puts animals in distress and is time-consuming while fencing has significant impacts on a landscape level for both target and non-target species and is expensive to install and maintain. Additionally, most ecosystems require an apex predator for diversity to occur and hunters are apex predators. Finally, the energy invested in hunting is low as are the 'food miles' while packaging of meat sourced from hunting is minimal.

4 Hunting is health: Hunting requires practitioners to maintain fitness, take to the outdoors and exercise self-control. Additionally, hunting provides high quantity and low ecological impact meat and eating meat is an integral part of a healthy diet.

5 Hunting is human: Humans have an innate desire to hunt which has been honed by people having to hunt to survive. Yet the basis of humans hunting runs even deeper than this and is literally in every cell of the human body - we're designed to

be omnivorous. Consider just these three elements of the human body:

A: humans have eyes close together at the front of the head which gives us binocular vision (the ability to accurately judge distances). This ability is only useful for a predator as herbivores' food does not move away. By contrast, a rabbit has 360 degrees of vision but poor depth perception which enables it to easily spot possible predators but hard to accurately judge their distance.

B: Human teeth are designed to both process meat (front teeth) and plant material (back teeth).

C: The length of the human digestive tract is designed for a mixture of both meat and plant material. Herbivores have a much longer gut, often with high specialisation (eg, ruminants such as cows have multiple stomachs and speciality gut flora to process low energy food). Carnivores have shorter digestive systems as meat is easier to process.

As stated, these are just a few examples of what it takes to be an ethical carnivore so go hunting and put fresh meat on the family table. I'm sure they'll thank you for it. ●

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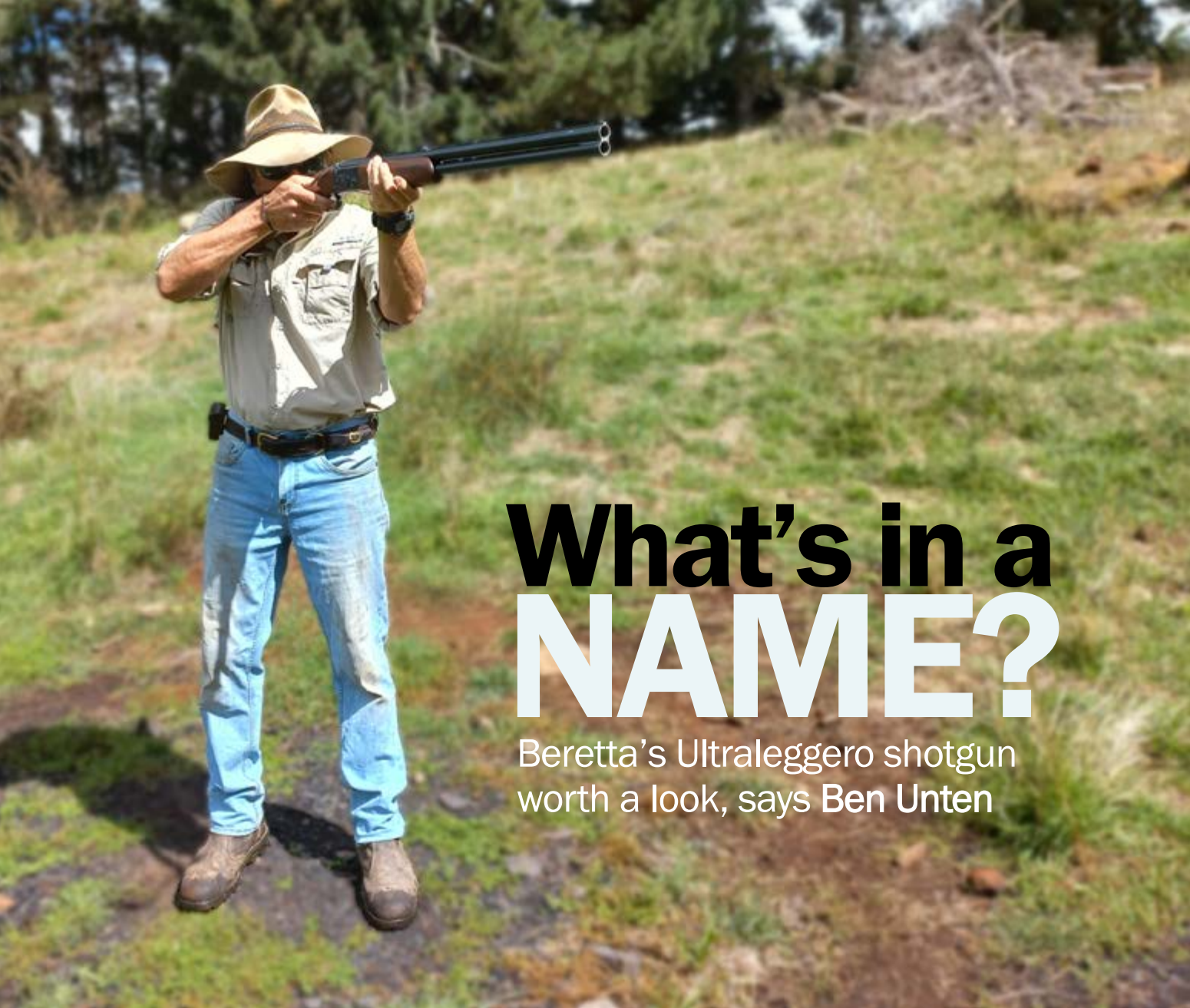
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What's in a NAME?

Beretta's Ultraleggero shotgun worth a look, says Ben Unten

The latest offering from Beretta is the Ultraleggero 12-gauge over-and-under shotgun. Based on the popular 690 platform the Ultraleggero is made in Italy and features an attractive 2.5 grade Turkish walnut stock and fore-end and there have been a number of hi-tech modifications made to this shotgun in order to have it come in at a lightweight 2.87kg on my digital scales. Some of these modifications include reducing the amount of steel in the barrels, an aluminium triggerguard, reducing thickness of the walls of the action and having techno-polymer inserts on both sides and underneath.

The Ultraleggero is 1160mm in overall length, the stock featuring a straight comb with 50mm drop at heel and with a 16mm-thick rubber recoil pad stamped 'Extralight'. Length of pull is 370mm

and the grip is delicately chequered and feels slender but comfortable in the hand. Chambered for 3" shells the action features a standard, thumb-operated lever for break-open and has an intuitive barrel-selection switch underneath. Instead of the usual stamped lettering it has two concave indents - the larger one painted red and the smaller one white.

When the switch is shifted to the right the larger red dot is visible on top, indicating top barrel to fire first and by sliding the switch to the left that dot is underneath indicating lower barrel to fire first. As mentioned the action has techno-polymer inserts on both sides and underneath the action, these engraved with a floral pattern and closer inspection reveals 'Ultraleggero' is inscribed within the engraving.

The cavity within the fore-end has been enlarged to further reduce weight while the exterior features the same chequering as the grip and a take-down lever is located two-thirds up the underside of the fore-end and operates more like a switch than a lever as it travels roughly 5mm before the fore-end is released.

The Ultraleggero is available with 30" or 28" barrels with the latter supplied for testing, the barrels spaced 5mm apart with the upper having a 6mm wide, 5mm high raised and vented rib with a single brass front sight (there's no rear sight). Both barrels appear to have been shipped in a thin blue plastic protective membrane and as this was a test firearm I left it in situ. The Ultraleggero comes broken and the fore-end must be removed to facilitate assembly.



The powerful ejectors.



Techno-polymer inserts reduce weight and are inscribed 'Ultraleggero'.

Chokes

The Ultraleggero is delivered with an Improved Cylinder choke installed in the under barrel and a Modified choke in the upper. The shotgun comes supplied with three additional chokes in Full, Improved Modified and Cylinder along with a plastic choke key, 25ml bottle of Beretta oil, rear screw swivel mount and barrel clamp swivel mount. As this shotgun is going to be carried more than it's shot, mounting the swivels is the first thing I'd do but as a review firearm I left it as-is.

In the field

This is a lightweight shotgun and as we'd chosen No.4 and No.7 shot for the bulk of the testing, recoil was certainly noticeable. A target was set up at 25m and as we began test firing, the lack of a rear sight did take some getting used to until I eventually worked out the correct 'rib-to-sight' ratio (that is, how much of the rib I needed to see beneath the brass front sight) until I felt comfortable and confident enough to take it bunny busting around my place.

Even though the distances were short the lack of heft made carrying the

Ultraleggero a pleasure. This was especially noticeable as I'd just returned from an unsuccessful deer hunt where I had had to lug my Tikka Varmint T3 in .243 uphill and down dale as my other mountain rifles were either having work done at the gunsmith or experiencing ammo supply issues. The ejectors are virtually 'super-charged' and spat out spent shells like insults from a disgruntled footy fan.

I found this shotgun handled and swung pretty well in the field and while the weight and balance do take time to feel comfortable with, I certainly grew in confidence when swinging through fast-moving targets. Unfortunately while there were plenty of rabbits around, recent rain and warm temperatures meant it wasn't possible to move in close enough or track them through the undergrowth.

The Ultraleggero is a well-balanced lightweight shotgun and, bearing the Beretta name, the quality speaks for itself. For those in the market for a shoulder-carried field shotgun you'd be hard pressed to go past the Ultraleggero which retails for \$3499 and is available from Beretta dealers or visit berettaaustralia.com.au for more. ●



The intuitive barrel selection switch and indicator.



Additional chokes and sling mounts are supplied.



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Comfort zone

Douglas Riach's hunting and camping tips for 'old bucks'



A young fallow buck enjoys being in the prime of life.

Unlike the young fallow buck in the photo, some of us hunters are knocking on in years and with increasing age there are some things I know have changed in relation to hunting and camping which other hunters may be interested in. I still have a small dome tent and a lightweight hiking tent for backpack hunts but their use will be restricted to rare occasions with the tips that follow designed to make camping and hunting more enjoyable.

Tent

One of the biggest changes I've made is to buy a tent which allows me to stand up inside as to stand up out of bed and stretch then get dressed is far better than having to lie on my sleeping bag and try to put clothes on. Moving in and out of the tent is also kinder on the back and knees as I can just walk in and out normally rather than crawling on all fours.

Difficult to put up you might think? No, it's a Coleman's 'Instant Up Tent' which opens like an umbrella and while mine is the original Coleman's, nowadays there are copies and other tent brands using the same or similar systems. This competition between tent makers also reduces the price and gives you a variety of makes and models to choose from.

These tents are not particularly bulky and easily fit across the tub in the back of my ute or even on the back seat. And did I



The Instant Up Tent affords room to stand.

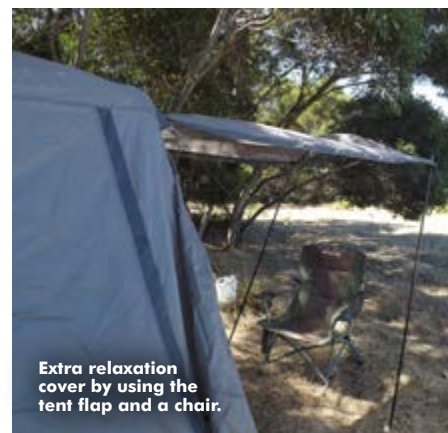
mention I set up the tent easily by myself without any real effort on my part? I make use of the extra space inside by bringing in my pack, rifle and duffle bag out of the dirt and weather.

Tent flap

The front flap of the tent not only drops down and zips up to give extra closure but is also great for shade and somewhere to sit during the day or night with that extra protection of the overhead flap. If you're after an Instant Up Tent, choose one with this type of front flap as the extra comfort and protection are a real bonus.

Car as windbreak

When setting up any tent the wind is often a nuisance so check the breeze and location



Extra relaxation cover by using the tent flap and a chair.



The oversized chair offers real comfort.

then park your vehicle in a position which gives some protection from the gusts. It doesn't matter if the wind changes during the hunt as the vehicle is only parked in

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Comfort zone

that position to make it easier to set up camp when operating solo.

Chair

A good chair is always worth taking - something to sit and relax on and eat meals in comfort. My camp chair is a little oversized but worth it for that extra comfort and I never use stools or cheap chairs which might fall over or break. With a good chair I can lean back and relax while dining or mentally reviewing the day's activities.

Stretcher bed



I no longer like lying on a sleeping mat on the ground mainly because it's hard to rise in the morning and does nothing for my bad knee and there's also the

bonus of having the sleeping bag up off the dirt and dampness if you move off the mat through the night. The extra advantages are something to sit on and put your boots on and the additional space underneath - somewhere to store boots for the morning and a torch within reach if you need to get up during the night.

But the main reason I have one of these stretcher beds is the ease of swinging my legs over the side and standing up in the morning. There are several folding-style stretcher beds on the market, mine is a one-piece folding aluminium frame with fixed canvas and it's an item I always make room for in the ute.

Doormat

I use a rubber floor mat from the back seat of my vehicle in front of the entrance to the tent as it's useful to wipe your boots on and helps keep the inside of the tent clean. It's a rear car floor mat I have in the vehicle anyway so there's no need to pack an extra item, just take it from the car and put it at the tent entrance.



Car tailgate

I have a utility or pickup-style four-wheel drive which allows me to leave food and cooking gear under cover in the back. This saves me lifting the Engel fridge and other gear out of the vehicle and I use the tailgate as a base for cooking so I don't need

to pack a table and therefore avoid a bit of manual handling.

Toilet



Squatting becomes harder with age and in some places it's not possible to dig a hole in the limestone or hard ground so I have a small portable toilet in a black carry bag

which doesn't take up much space in the vehicle. I carry it empty of water with just some chemical concentrate in the tank and if not used I don't add the water. I also like to position the toilet next to a low branch as it's lower than a normal toilet so the branch helps with a grip to rise from the seat.

Headlight

I carry a small reliable headlight and Ledlenser torch in my backpack as more than once I've needed a torch for the walk back to base camp in the dark. I carry both a headlamp and torch as the latter is good to shine around but if my hands are full the headlight's the way to go. I also take a couple of extra rechargeable batteries and use lights I can change batteries in the field if necessary. It's almost no weight and well worth it to avoid stumbling around in the dark.

PLB

Some items I carry are like an insurance policy and while I may never need them, if something happens I have the confidence they're there to help and I place a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) or EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) in this category. I'm now on my third and buy a new one after 10 years which is the stated battery life of the unit, the cost of a PLB when spread over the 10 years of battery life being equal to about 10c a day which is cheap insurance indeed.

Communications

Almost everyone has a mobile phone these days and they're worth carrying when hunting. Mobile phones aren't guaranteed to have coverage though and on my last hunt I had no signal and it wasn't even that remote, being the south-east of South Australia and only 50 minutes from a reasonable sized town. As I grow older I consider communications more important, whether it be for a vehicle breakdown, accident, medical issue or just phoning home to

say I'm having such a good time I'll be away for a couple of extra days. I might be fine but if I stay extra days without telling the family they'll be concerned.

But if mobile phones don't work at a given location I need a Plan B so carry a satellite phone. It's a few years old but still working well and I've used it in remote NT, Victorian high country and northern British Columbia in Canada to communicate home successfully. There are a number of newer technologies that send text messages which could also be worth considering but the important point is you have a way of communicating.

Backpack

Backpacks are like cars - everyone has an opinion as to which is best. A pack has to fit the needs of the hunt (one-day or multi-days) carrying out meat or trophies and should also suit the user's height and size and be adjustable to allow for additional winter clothing. In short, it has to be big enough for what you need to carry out and back. I have more than one pack but if I'm expecting to haul out a large amount of meat I use my 85-litre Kuui Pro - it's not the current model but still has the carbon fibre frame and meat hauler.

I use a large pack as the compression straps can be pulled in when the pack's not full then expanded when needed. Size is important but you still have to look for a backpack which is lightweight when empty and has good padding and airflow. The addition of a rifle carrier is worthwhile on those long walks back to camp after a day's hunt and although it makes the pack heavier, it feels like less total weight than wearing a pack and carrying a rifle in the hand or slung over your shoulder. You don't have to be an old buck to appreciate a comfortable backpack but the older I become the more I find myself enjoying that comfort. ●



Using the parked car as windbreak.

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These boots are made for stalkin'



Ben Unten

I find hunting boots one of the hardest items to buy and because everyone's feet are different, unearthing reliable and relatable online information is difficult and yes, you can read all about the technical qualities of the various footwear on offer, but accurate sizing and fit are still something which needs to be done 'in the flesh'.

That said European footwear company Lowa, established in 1923, has gone a long way towards solving this problem. In addition to a comparison chart listing UK, EU and US sizing, Lowa has a downloadable PDF file which gives you the ability to accurately measure your feet in the privacy of your own home. It even has a credit card outline for you to check the calibration of your printer and, following a few easy steps, I was able to accurately provide my size to the distributor.



The X-stud to reduce tongue slip.

The Lowa Tibet GTX is a good-looking boot right out the box. The Gore-Tex lining is designed to allow moisture and sweat to escape while remaining impervious to water ingress with the nubuck leather upper also claimed to be open-pored to allow breathability while still remaining waterproof.

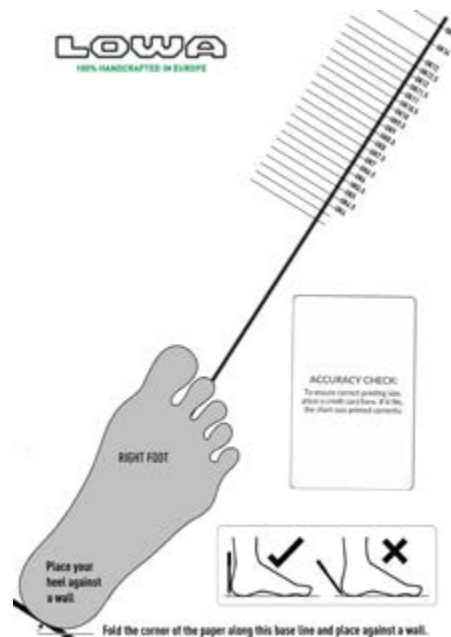
The Vibram out-sole type is listed as Masai, claimed to have 'excellent grip on all surfaces thanks to self-cleaning mountain-eering tread with large lugs for best uphill and downhill traction'. I can't confirm if that's true but can say that in more than 25 years of hunting I'm yet to be disappointed with a Vibram sole. The Tibet GTX stand approximately 230mm tall and the pair weighed 1800 grams on my digital scale.

Lacing them on

One thing which strikes you is the lower eyelets aren't eyelets at all but rollers which allows for easier tightening and loosening towards the toe. The other interesting feature is the X-lacing stud, a patented Lowa technology which lets you wrap the upper laces around a metal stud towards the top of the tongue that's designed to hold the tongue in place both horizontally and vertically which claims to reduce blisters and definitely lowers the 'TFI' (Tongue Frustration Index) caused by tongues constantly trying to slide their way back into the boot!

In the field

The Tibet GTX is listed for wider feet yet despite mine being on the narrower side, I found them comfortable to wear with minimal heel slip. They're stiff through the sole and luckily I prefer a stiffer boot as I find it helps reduce foot fatigue and



The clever sizing chart.

I like the additional support which these provide. I wore them for a full day's activities which included some fairly steep hiking and although not broken in, I experienced no discomfort.

For the more adventurous the Tibet GTX is also listed as being 'crampon compatible' so there's nothing stopping you from putting these boots through their paces in Alpine country. Tibet GTX boots retail for around \$649 and for more information visit lowa-boots.com.au and you'll see their footwear is able to be re-soled by Lowa if required, which adds to the value-for-money aspect of this quality boot. Free shipping is available on orders of \$150 and above. ●

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Happy anniversary

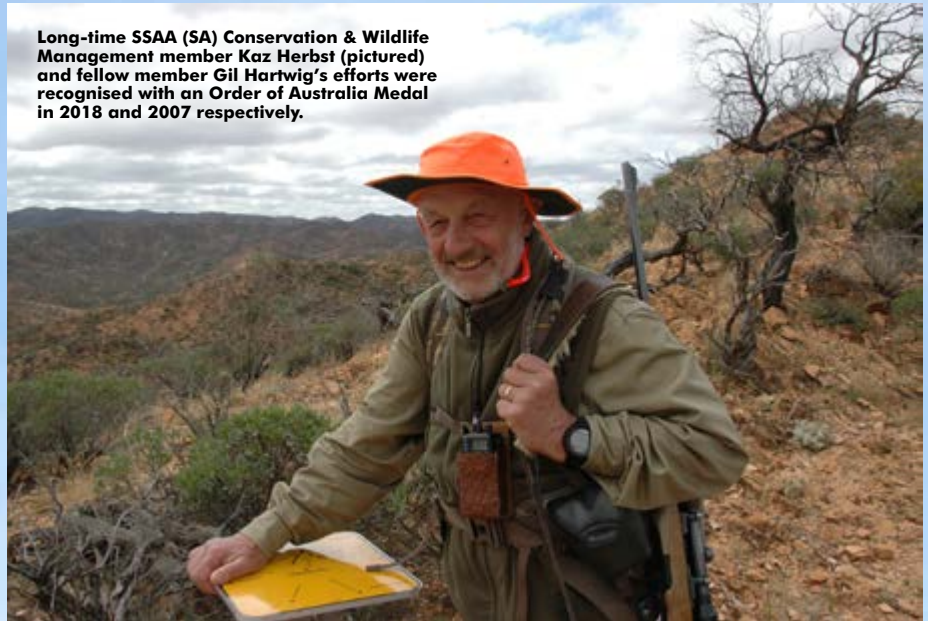
Our CWM program a 30-year success story, writes Rachael Oxborrow

Thirty years ago a small group of South Australian hunters were called upon to help tackle a feral goat population which was decimating native vegetation and threatening wildlife in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges region and the resulting partnership between members of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) SA, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and a number of other stakeholders has grown to become an unheralded success which has since been mirrored across the state and the rest of the country.

Over the course of the past three decades SSAA SA's Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) program, formerly SSAA Hunting & Conservation, has helped return the Ikara-Flinders Ranges to their former glory with tens of thousands of feral goats having been removed from the national park. Vegetation and water sources have regenerated and countless native animals have repopulated the region while the reduced impact of goats and other pest species has allowed the rare and threatened yellow-footed rock wallaby population to increase from around 500 to several thousand.

Further ongoing work to control fox and feral cat numbers complemented by aerial culls of pest animals, 1080 baiting, trapping and monitoring has since allowed the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) to reintroduce western quolls and brush-tailed possums to the park.

SSAA SA CWM president Chris Carroll said that initial group of volunteers had no way of knowing how much of an impact their efforts would make to the South Australian landscape over time. "Our members forged a path that built relationships with government



Long-time SSAA (SA) Conservation & Wildlife Management member Kaz Herbst (pictured) and fellow member Gil Hartwig's efforts were recognised with an Order of Australia Medal in 2018 and 2007 respectively.

departments, wildlife groups and the indigenous community," he said. "This has led to an acceptance and understanding of the role hunting can play in land management to be fast-tracked and allow highly-trained SSAA members to make a difference in landscapes across Australia."

Long-time member Gil Hartwig detailed that first trip to the Ikara-Flinders Ranges in the April 1992 edition of *Australian Shooters' Journal* when he noted it was a real milestone moment for hunters who were entering SA public land for the

first time. Hunting activities were being deployed to reduce the impact of goat populations which were not only a problem inside the national park boundaries but for the owners of neighbouring properties too.

That original group of 78 hunters entered the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges 650km north of Adelaide and were met by a barren wasteland with goats ambling around in search of food and seemingly oblivious to their visitors. The first year of activities culled more than 3500 goats and paved the way for the Operation Bounceback program to form and expand to include the Gawler and Olary Ranges. This program has been run in partnership with landholders, SA

Reduction in pest animal numbers due to the hard work of hunter volunteers over three decades has allowed native wildlife such as the elusive yellow-footed rock wallaby to repopulate the Ikara-Flinders Ranges region.

Arid Lands, Northern and Yorke natural resources management boards, volunteers and several wildlife conservation groups.

“As one of the contributing groups helping protect and restore these landscapes to their natural glory, we feel a great deal of pride to see native animals being reintroduced to their habitat and thriving there,” Mr Carroll said. “Our members have dedicated years of their lives to the cause and continue to go out and volunteer their time to make a difference in their home state. Many of those original members are still making valuable contributions to the program as well as other CWM activities around South Australia.”

Two SSAA SA CWM members have been honoured with Order of Australia Medal recognition for their services and key roles in Operation Bounceback as well as their SSAA efforts in general. Founding member Gil Hartwig was recognised in 2007 when he was keen to acknowledge his fellow members for their support and contribution because “every activity is a team effort”. In 2018 Kaz Herbst was also honoured but claimed his contribution “wasn’t much of a sacrifice as I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it all”.

South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service executive director Mike Williams said the Department for Environment and Water and the National Parks and Wildlife Service acknowledge and thank the Sporting Shooters, Conservation and Wildlife Management branch for their enduring commitment to the Bounceback Program. “Their work to control feral goats and other pest species in a number of our



Efforts by several groups including hunters from the SSAA helped return the Ikara-Flinders Ranges landscape to its former glory.



Happy anniversary

parks has seen a spectacular recovery of the yellow-footed rock wallaby population which was almost wiped out in the early 1990s by foxes and the grazing pressure exerted by goats,” he said.

“A number of those members who started this work in the 1990s are still involved today and it has undoubtedly been one of our great partnerships and success stories of the past three decades. Recovery of the landscape continues and the reduced threat posed by feral pests has recently paved the way for the reintroduction of a number of locally extinct species including the western quoll.”

Today there are more than 1000 CWM members nationally who are dedicated to the preservation of native fauna and flora. They use their shooting skills to assist in conservation activities through feral animal management campaigns, perform advisory roles in conservation projects, assist with surveys, counts and help maintain assets. These members go through a stringent training process to perform these roles and provide vital services to private landholders, commercial entities and government departments.

Organised culls on feral cats, foxes, goats, rabbits and pigs have taken place in the Simpson Desert, the Flinders and Gammon



Hooved animals caused untold damage to the Ikara-Flinders Ranges due to an immense feral goat population. Hunters helped reduce the impact that can be seen in this image from Dutchman Stern National Park just north of Quorn in South Australia.

Ranges in South Australia; Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory; Pilliga, Wagga Wagga, Hillston and Ivanhoe in New South Wales; the Murray Sunset region of Victoria and various locations around Queensland.

• If you're interested in volunteering for the CWM program or would like more information, log on to ssaa.org.au/resources/hunting/conservation ●

Canada facing government 'freeze'

A move by the Canadian Government to push through legislation blocking the importation, buying and selling of handguns is being closely monitored by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National). The Canadian Shooting Sports Association (CSSA) has received countless phone calls and emails from its members amid Government claims a handgun ownership 'freeze' would stop drug dealers and gangs from using smuggled illegal guns.

SSAA National is all too familiar with this approach from authorities who claim legislation will reduce criminal activity but ultimately only serves to adversely affect law-abiding licensed firearm owners who follow the letter of the law. SSAA National is in contact with the CSSA and will provide assistance if required.

Meanwhile in Australia, SSAA National has been contacted by industry regarding new standards affecting 'button' or 'coin' batteries which came into effect recently. The Commonwealth and Consumer Goods Safety Standard 2020 in the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 has snared a lot of firearm accessories which rely on these batteries as a power source.

While notice was given to the public of this change, the extent of the impact this standard would have has only come to light since its inception and SSAA National will continue to liaise with relevant industry stakeholders on the matter.

- Rachael Oxborrow

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The Dreamline Classic.

Living the Dream

Revamped FX air rifle better than ever, says Neil Wheatley

A few years ago in this magazine I reviewed an FX Streamline air rifle which for me ticked all the boxes being lightweight, consistent, accurate, well-priced, efficient and aesthetically pleasing. So it was with some disappointment that shortly after that review, FX announced it would discontinue the Streamline and replace it with the rifle I'm assessing here, the Dreamline.

It took me a while to finally get around to reviewing the new offering, having hoped the basic premise of the old air rifle had been retained and, on looking over the specifications, I could see that indeed it has. I ended up buying a new Dreamline sight unseen on the strength of online reviews and to my great relief it lived up to - and in my opinion - surpassed the Streamline. Evolution is a good thing.

All the attributes of its predecessor are still here along with a few tweaks and improvements which make it a worthwhile successor. Inside that chunky-looking outer tube the Dreamline has a removable barrel liner which can easily be switched to allow changes in twist rates while calibres can also be swapped out by a barrel, magazine and pellet probe change. The

factory supplied liner on my .22 calibre is the newer 'superior' type which proved an excellent match for the 15.9-grain JSB pellets I had for accuracy testing but can also be used with the new hybrid slugs becoming popular with air rifle enthusiasts for long-range shooting (100m-plus). The JSB pellets worked well with five-shot groups often coming in under half an inch when used on a still day at 45m (my preferred zero distance).

So what other changes have been introduced to this new rifle over its much-loved older brother? Aside from the barrel, the regulator is the new AMP (Adjustable Match Precision) which is externally changeable and seems to be consistent, mine being set at 110 bar from the factory as can be seen on the small gauge mounted on the side of the receiver. The 220cc tank is rated to 230 bar or 3380psi which when full and used on factory settings gave me around 50 shots before tank pressure fell below the regulator setting. What this equated to was around three full magazines of 18 shots each per fill of accurate shooting at roughly 900 feet per second.

The magazine is another new feature. Called the side shot, it delivers high

capacity (22 shots in .177 cal, 18 in .22 cal, 16 in .25 cal and 13 in 30 cal) and features simplified loading. The magazine comes apart for refilling but this is simple and loading was an easy task. Next update is a slight paring-down of an already light design. A weight of 2.6kg without scope is certainly light for a PCP air rifle with this one being the synthetic stock variant which would have helped slightly too as timber and laminate versions are tad heavier.

The synthetic stock had none of the cheap feel or flex that some lesser varieties have and aside from the weight, you could easily believe it was actually timber painted black with a 'grippy' feeling paint which I'm sure is hard wearing (the stock is also ambidextrous). Other features include a gauge on the tank at the muzzle end to show remaining stored pressure, extremely light adjustable match-style trigger, three adjustable power levels via a small dial on the receiver and an adjustable-height butt pad.

I bought this rifle primarily for rabbit hunting on some small local properties and it didn't take long for me to reach for the Dreamline for that very purpose. Air rifle hunting requires accurate shooting as you don't have the power of even a .22LR to humanely despatch game, so fortunately accuracy is where FX rifles truly excel. The first trip out on rabbits saw me take quite a few for less than a full magazine of pellets, the hunt especially notable as I really appreciated the light weight of the FX compared to my previous PCP air rifle.

The quiet report of the Dreamline compared to say a .22LR with subsonic ammo allowed for multiple shots at groups of rabbits without scaring them on the first shot. I'd fitted the optional FX muzzle brake as I felt it improved consistency as well as the optional barrel support band,



New format a solid performer.

though neither is necessary to extract excellent performance from the FX but a custom touch to personalise a rifle is always welcome. As with all PCP air rifles you need a way to recharge the air cylinder as it has maximum fill pressure of 230 bar (3400psi) so a scuba tank or specialised hand pump needs to be part of your kit.

Having paid for this Dreamline myself, it impressed a few of my hunting pals with its accuracy and quality which was enough for three mates and my son to buy their own on the strength of my rifle's performance. The Dreamline is available in different configurations with mine and my son's being the Classic variety (mine a synthetic stock, his in walnut) and for those who like a different look there are Tactical, Bullpup and Lite versions available which have even more versatility with a thumb-adjustable hammer spring tension as standard.

These are all the same basic rifle but now everyone's taste can be catered to with some variants even able to use a large bottle-type reservoir and as mentioned earlier, different calibres are also available with 177, 22, 25 and 30 cal offered by FX. Since testing its predecessor the Streamline in 2018, I've wanted one of these rifles and the Dreamline hasn't disappointed as I'm actually in awe of its accuracy, quality and smooth function.

The new-style magazine took a little getting used to but now it's a breeze to load and there are even 'speed loaders' available on eBay for those who want them. FX are an innovative company with advances being made in new models with efficiency, weight and accuracy all being constantly tweaked to give the end user the best they can buy.

At time of writing the Dreamline Classic is priced around \$1729 from dealers around Australia with back-up and support from Hermann's Sporting Guns in Mirboo North, Victoria. I'm looking forward to many years of use with my FX and wholeheartedly recommend one to anyone chasing a high-quality PCP air rifle. ●



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Right-hand side of the action and how it's incorporated into the TSP X chassis.

Stock up

TSP X chassis offers versatility, says Con Kapralos

In the current firearms accessory market shooters and hunters have been spoilt for choice when it comes to improving their longarms as from replacement trigger groups, magazine conversions and the like, some makes and models have lent themselves to a burgeoning industry. One particular accessory enjoying huge success is the replacement rifle stock, especially those aimed at

the tactical and precision shooting applications. The term 'chassis rifle stocks' is one that's certainly popular, predominantly being made of high-strength aluminium.

Australian designer and manufacturer of chassis rifle stocks, Southern Cross Small Arms offers some excellent platforms in conjunction with Outdoor Sporting Agencies (OSA) to suit their rifles in the Lithgow LA101/LA102 and Howa M1500.

More recently OSA released to the Australian market the new Howa M1100 rimfire rifle in .22LR, .22WMR and .17HMR chamberings.

While the M1100 is usually supplied with a factory polymer stock, OSA and Southern Cross Small Arms have designed their hugely popular TSP X chassis stock to suit the M1100. A review of the M1100 rifle appeared in the November 2021 edition of *Australian Shooter* and OSA also supplied a TSP X chassis for assessment.

Up close

The Howa M1100 TSP X chassis is a premium product with a high degree of fit and finish. The raw material comprises of aircraft-grade 6061 T6 aluminium slabs which are subjected to a series of processing steps with ultra-modern computer-aided design and CNC-machining to form the initial pieces of chassis, these three pieces in effect the fore-end, buttstock and chassis inlet. The manufacturer has cleverly designed the initial parts (fore-end and buttstock) so they can be used in making any chassis to suit other firearms, all that's needed being a separate chassis inlet for the barrelled action and which can then be mated to the buttstock and fore-end.



Magazine well and magazine.

Left-hand side of the chassis.



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Original rifle and chassis stock.

Ahead of final assembly the component aluminium parts are highly polished in a tumbler before being black anodised, which complements the overall look of the chassis. Using high-strength hex-head bolts the three parts are then assembled into a final unit with the recessed lugs incorporated ensuring precise alignment of all.

Starting at the buttstock, what's immediately evident is its clean lines without the need to incorporate 'buffer-style' tubes to attach it to the chassis inlet, the two main buttstock features being the adjustable cheek-riser and recoil pad for length-of-pull.

The rubber recoil pad can easily be removed and polymer spacers added or taken out to adjust length-of-pull to suit both application and user (length-of-pull as supplied was 340mm). The adjustable cheek-riser consists of a cheekpiece attached to the frame using two vertical braces housed in separate columns which slide up/down and can be held in any position by adjusting two small locking levers.

The buttstock also has provision for sling swivel cups to attach a sling.

The barrelled action on the TSP X chassis is cradled in the inlet, in this instance made for the Howa M1100 rimfire platform. It's anchored by two supplied guard screws and provides the utmost in rigidity and stability while achieving a fully free-floating barrel guarded by the aluminium fore-end. A pistol-style A2 grip is bolted to the chassis inlet with this same assembly incorporating the triggerguard, the grip both functional and positive so accessing the trigger blade through the guard is never an issue even with gloves.

The magazine system on the TSP X Howa M1100 chassis is a polymer shroud intended to take the original (factory) Howa 10-shot polymer magazines. Installing the magazine into the oversized shroud is uncomplicated and clips into place well. Rounds fed through the magazines without an issue and removal is done by pressing the small retaining lever.

The fore-end hosts a multitude of M-LOK slots both on either side and beneath, these being standard for attachment of accessories to chassis-style stocks and the more slots the better. Gripping the fore-end with the leading hand is positive with two scalloped sections offering a good channel, the fore-end sufficiently wide to give a stable surface be it shooting from a front rest or any impromptu barricade you may encounter in Precision Rifle Shooting disciplines.

The TSP X Howa M1100 chassis is 780mm long and weighs 1.9kg. It transforms the aesthetics of the M1100 rimfire and while the original polymer stock is perfectly suitable for a hunting rifle, changing to a chassis-style stock gives fresh purpose and makes a great training firearm for the popular PRS disciplines. The Southern Cross Small Arms TSP X chassis to suit the Howa M1100 is available from OSA dealers Australia-wide and retails for \$695. More at osaaustralia.com.au ●



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First-time fallow

Joe Norris recalls a landmark weekend

I never had the chance to hunt fallow deer despite spending considerable time researching where they were located and seeking permission from land-owners in these areas, until the family of a bloke who worked for me sold their central Queensland cattle property and bought some land in the Glen Innes district - I finally discovered I knew someone in fallow deer country.

When the topic of deer hunting came up at lunchtime one day, John told me there were deer on his parents' new block and naturally my ears pricked up. After asking him later if he thought they'd let me hunt on their new place he said he'd ask and a couple of months went by when John casually said one day: "Mum and dad said you're welcome any time."

I couldn't break from work until late April so the rut was all but over when I finally reached Glen Innes and on arrival at the farm, John's parents welcomed me into their home and insisted I stay there instead of camping in the shed. Over dinner that night Ron told me he'd spotted deer at the back of the property but hadn't noticed any big bucks lately so next morning I was up before daylight to check out the area. It was bitterly cold and a heavy fog was obscuring

the landscape, the fences white with frost on the wire, something I hadn't seen before.

Walking round the yard and sheds I saw rabbits scampering about and lots of bird-life in the gardens. Ron said he'd take me for a drive round the property to find my bearings so we clambered into his off-road ute and headed off into the fog. He pointed out where deer were entering his property from the neighbour's as well as dams and other feed areas he'd seen them frequent so I spent the rest of the day helping with station work while making plans for a look next morning.

The alarm woke me well before daylight and I made my way outside, the morning a carbon copy of the day before with heavy fog and no wind. When I reached the back paddock where Ron had seen most of the deer in the open I came across some saplings well beaten and shredded by antlers, when suddenly the sound of running hooves broke the silence and several deer took off up the hill and effortlessly cleared the boundary fence into the neighbour's place where I didn't have permission to hunt.

I sat on a log for 20 minutes to let everything settle down again even though I thought I'd blown it and all the deer had

gone. After I got going again the light had strengthened to the point I could see quite well through what was now much less dense fog. Contouring round a hill, about halfway up I came across a bare patch of churned-up ground which I realised was a rutting pad and I was carefully scanning the area for any remaining deer when I spied a young buck watching me from the trees about 80m away.

I tried an old trick that works with cats and, pretending I hadn't seen him, looked the other way and carefully raised my rifle so I could see through the scope then swung slowly back to the deer which wasn't overly concerned as he stood his ground facing me. Through the scope I noticed both his main beams were broken off so I kept my movements slow and fluid as I lowered the rifle and took the camera from my belt pouch. All the while the buck stood frozen and I was able to take a couple of photos.

I shouldered my rifle again, swung back to the buck and in doing so noticed another four or five deer feeding further down in the bottom of the gully. It became clear fallow deer really are scrappers as every single male had broken main beams which made my mind up to take one for meat and that lovely chocolate coloured hide.



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First-time fallow

The one staring me down was closest as I focused on his throat about 8" up from his brisket to allow for the downhill angle then touched the lightened trigger of my Ruger 77 in .243 Win. The buck folded at the shot and didn't move again.

The deer in the gully took off in the opposite direction as I approached my prize and while it may seem strange, I always kneel beside the deer and give thanks to the animal as any creature harvested should be respected. I dragged the buck up to the fighting pad then away again so I wouldn't contaminate the pad when I gutted the animal. I called Ron as arranged to give him the good news and he picked me up for the trip back to the shed so I could hang my deer and allow it to cool before skinning and breaking it down for the freezer.

I thanked him for letting me hunt on his land and he asked: "Are you only taking one? You can take as many as you want." Now my freezer can easily hold two so I told him I'd like to take another if possible, Ron saying he'd ask his neighbours if I could cross their fence if I saw deer on their side which luckily they agreed to. Next morning I found myself back at the fighting pad as the light slowly strengthened so I sat and waited for decent visibility and as the fog cleared I could see a mob of deer down on the flats.

Most were females or bucks with broken main beams so they only had brow tines and a short main beam which made them look like young spikes. I started a stalk but the wind which had been non-existent sprang up out of nowhere and in seconds the deer threw their heads up and raced away. I'd no choice now but to cut back around to make the wind right and was sneaking along

the boundary fence when I spotted deer walking up the gully towards me. Kneeling down I checked the mob through my scope and noticed all the bucks had broken heads - I wondered if they were lacking nutrients in this area as almost every buck sported busted headgear.

Holding on the shoulder of the biggest buck I dropped him as he paused almost directly opposite me on the gully at about 150m. Once again he went down without fuss and as I was preparing to cross the fence I spotted movement further down the gully. A fox was trotting towards me and as Ron had told me to shoot any foxes I could, I wasted little time in lining him up and flattened him with a shoulder shot from the .243. The echo of the shot had barely subsided when another fox came into view so she was put down just as emphatically and on inspection I'd downed a breeding pair with beautiful winter skins, though sadly the .243 isn't the best if you want to harvest fox coats.

I gutted the deer and hung him by the antlers so he'd drain and I wouldn't have a damaged cape then found a couple of sticks and removed the fox tails as the rest of the skins weren't salvageable. I gave the deer about an hour to drain then made it into a Kiwi-style backpack and carried it and the fox tails to a point where Ron could easily pick us up. Back at the shed I processed the deer hanging there from yesterday and hung up the latest one so I could cape it and salt both the hides, cape and fox tails for the trip back to Queensland.

It was so cold that by the time I'd salted the skins the remaining deer was chilled enough to cut up for the freezer. Luckily Ron wanted the bones for his working dogs so I didn't even have to dispose of them, just bust them up with an axe. I couldn't believe how fortunate I'd been to secure access to this land and the help and



The rub tree stands out amid lifting fog.



The deer ready to be transported out.

hospitality shown to me was extraordinary. I thanked them sincerely before heading back to Queensland and while I've hunted fallow in other areas since, you never forget the first time. ●



Venison hung and ready to be worked on.



The fallow rutting pad Joe stumbled upon.



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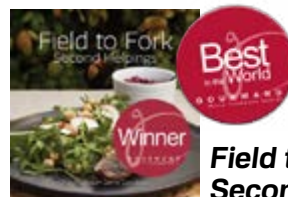


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National

National Junior Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette Postal Championships

March 1-July 31, 2022

All clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match under current SSAA National rule book. No nominations fees apply. See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

National Junior Rimfire Field Rifle Postal Championships

June 1-October 31, 2022

All clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match under current SSAA National rule book. No nominations fees apply. See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SSAA 10m Precision, NRA 3x40 3P, Field Rifle Postal Shoot National Championships

June 1 - August 30, 2022

All locations

Program: Shot in accordance with current SSAA Scoped 3-Positional & Field Rifle rules from June to August 2022. Contact: Jennifer Ingram jennigram1978@gmail.com

SSAA Combined Services National Postal Shoot

June 1 - September 19, 2022

All clubs and branches.

Program: Rifle: Event 1 - 3P core event Match 1 Standard Rifle (graded); Pistol: Event 1 - 3P core event Class 1 Handguns (graded), Class 2 Handguns (graded) Class 3 Handguns (open), three classes may be entered. Contact: Steve Knight 0428 876 991.

SSAA Fly Shoot National Championships

August 19-22, 2022

Big Springs Range, Wagga Wagga, NSW

Program: August 19 set-up and practice; 20 Light Gun 500m Fly; 21 Heavy Gun 500m Fly; 22 200y Rimfire Fly. Facilities: Catering breakfast and lunch all three days, camping with showers, toilets, cooking facilities, \$10 per person for all the event schedule. Contact: Greg Chapman chappo555@bigpond.com

Sporting Clays National Championships

September 17-18, 2022

SSAA Wodonga, Vic

Program: 200 target event with 100 each day, Squad 1 Saturday reverse on Sunday (practice on Sept. 16). Facilities: Limited camping on-site, catering over weekend. Contact: Josh Knight 0488 970 293.

5-Stand National Championships

September 24-25, 2022

SSAA Shepparton, Vic

Program: 200-target event with 100 per day over four grounds, squads run in reverse on second day (there's a midweek competition on Sept. 21). Facilities: Limited camping on-site, catering over the weekend. Contact: Tony Connell 0419 331 374.

Lever Action National Championships

October 1-3, 2022

SSAA Alice Springs, NT

Full details on National website. Contact: Jim Ellis 0418 675 526 or leveraction@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SSAA Long Range Precision National Championships

October 15-16, 2022

SSAA Luna branch, Captains Mountain Range, Qld

Program: October 14: Range open for zero checking. October 15: Match 1 700m; Match 2 800m. October 16: Match 3 900m; Match 4 1000m. Facilities - Cabins and camping: Bunkhouse \$15/night; cabin single occupancy \$40; double occupancy \$30 per person; campsite \$12/night. Contact: Richard White.

SSAA Combined Services National Championships

September 30-October 2, 2022

Central Queensland Shooting Complex, Gladstone, Qld.

Program: Check National website. Paid catering available (pre-order). Free camping at range with toilets and showers (no power). Contact Ken Innes: 0427 668 450.

SSAA IMHSA National Championships

September 30-October 7, 2022

SSAA (ACT) Majura

Program: Sept. 30 Practice; Oct. 1-3 Small Bore and Field Pistol; Oct. 4 Practice; Oct. 5-7 Big Bore. Contact: Russell Mowles handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Cheyne Fischer ihmisa.act@gmail.com

NSW

SSAA (NSW) Combined Services State Championships

September 16-18, 2022

Windamere Regional Shooting Complex, NSW

Program: Full details on National website. Prizes: Medals for all rifle events, Top Gun and Top Gun Junior. Facilities: Barbecue and basic kitchen facilities, camping and caravans permitted at range Friday to Monday, male and female toilets and hot showers. Contact: Anthony Gatti info@nswcsd.com.au

Vic

SSAA (Vic) IHMSA 80-shot Ram Slam State Championships

August 26-28, 2022

Eagle Park Shooting Complex, Little River, Vic

Program: 80-shot Ram Slam, Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited. Contact: metallicsilhouette@iinet.net.au.

SA

SSAA (SA) Lever Action Metallic Silhouette State Championships

August 20-21, 2022

Moonta Shooting Club, SA

Program: Saturday 8am Practice; 9.30am 80-shot Cowboy Rifle Silhouette. Sunday 8am Practice; 9am 40-shot Small Bore CLAS; 1pm 40-shot CLAS Pistol Calibre. Facilities: Camping on range with power, limited facilities (drinks, sundries but no showers). Contact: Shane Peters 0427 242 312.

SSAA (SA) Field Rifle, 3P, Scoped Air Rifle, NRA any sight State Championships

September 3-4, 2022

SSAA Para, Greenwith, SA

Program: September 3 -NRA 3P (60 shots); 10m Precision Air Rifle. September 4 - 3P 10m Air Rifle. Facilities: Canteen at range all day, camping on range with showers, toilets, power. Contact: Paul Rawlings 0403 436 905 or paulee06@bigpond.net.au

SSAA Member Alert

Please be aware that state and territory police firearms registries regularly cross-check firearm licences and your member status. To support your genuine reason and keep your firearms licence and to make sure that SSAA can support you, make sure you renew your SSAA membership.

Qld

Queensland NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoots

All (SSAA) Qld branches with approval to shoot Postal Metallic Silhouette Program: Shoot 1: February 1-May 31; Shoot 2: April 1-July 31; Shoot 3: May 1-August 31; Shoot 4: August 1-November 30. See National website for full event details. Contact: Hazel Bozic (07)4128 0467 or pms@ssaaqld.org.au

SSAA (Qld) Field Rifle and 3 & 4P State Championships

August 19-22, 2022

SSAA Gladstone Branch

Program: August 19 Practice; 20 RF Field Rifle (42 shots), CF Field Rifle (42 shots); 21 RF NRA 3P (60 shots), CF 4P (40 shots). Facilities: Free camping, toilets and hot showers (no power), access from Thursday morning. Food and drinks Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Contact: Jennifer Ingram 0418 259 269 or Leanne 0421 017 404 (after 5.30).

NT

Big Game Rifle National Championships

October 7-9, 2022

Micket Creek Shooting Complex, Darwin

Program: Range open October 7 for practice, 8-9 for competition. Nominations close September 9. Facilities: Toilets on-site with disabled facilities, barbecue lunch provided for all competitors, no camping or caravans. Contact: Joe Libro ntbiggamerifle@gmail.com

Tas

SSAA (Tas) 5-Stand State Championships

November 4-6, 2022

TII Huon Combined Shooting Club, Tas

Program: November 4: Side-by-side 50 targets; Sub-gauge 50 targets. Nov 5-6: State Championships 100 targets each day. Facilities: On-site camping with toilets, full canteen (cash only). Contact: Dale Foggio 0408 361 638 or dalepest@msn.com (email preferred).

SSAA National Event Cancellation/Postponement Policy

SSAA National championship events may be subject to border controls and other COVID-19 impacts. In addition to general border closures, many states and territories may prohibit persons from known COVID hotspots. An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA National, SSAA State Office or club directive.

It is recommended competitors consider any potential COVID-19 impacts on travel, accommodation plans and insurances etc. SSAA National will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA National championship event for any reason, including COVID-19. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

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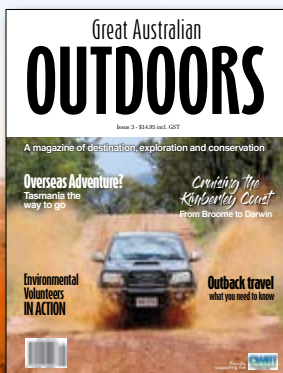


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Refund Policy: Subject to Australian law, membership fees are not refundable, nor can they be transferred.

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Noises in the night

Though it was dark and warm in the hut the quiet of the night wasn't quite, even after I'd turned the generator off. Over in the corner the wood heater crackled and popped as new flames reached up to claim the billet of wood I'd rolled into place before I crawled into bed. Firelight flickered around the walls and on the flat top of the heater a kettle of water hissed and bubbled softly.

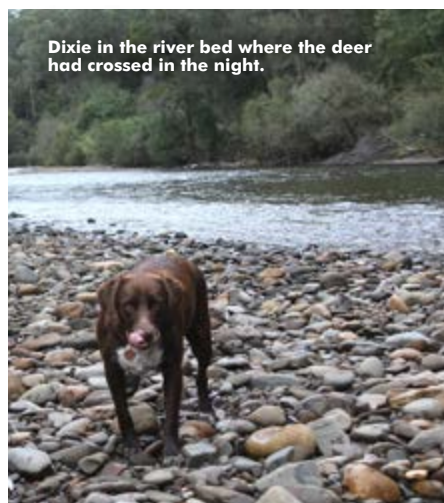
On her bed in front of the fire Dixie lay with her belly to the warmth and snored, worn out after a busy afternoon. She'd twice chased wood ducks on the cultivation paddock, been for a swim in the river then shown me where a sambar deer was bedded in a thicket of dogwood on the edge of the timber. The deer had honked and crashed away as we crept closer and though we didn't see her the marks she left identified her as a big hind.

For the last hour of light we'd waited in the head of a wind-blown tree and watched a strip of edge country where the sign said a mixed mob of deer had been feeding the night before. As so often happens, that's when we should have been there. Nothing came, not even a wallaby though the drone of a tractor tilling in a crop just around the corner of the hill may have had a lot to do with that. By the time darkness settled down the dog was sitting behind me, leaning against my back for warmth and using me as a windbreak.

But now we were both warm as I lay in the dark listening to noises in the night. Down towards the dairy a farm dog was

barking, perhaps at a couple of cats which were sorting out their differences, screeching and screaming at each other. The bulk milk carrier had collected its load and was grumbling off into the night as a mournful bull bawled and was answered by another.

Outside the river gurgled and bubbled along as it always does, a timeless night song as old as the mountains themselves. A



Dixie in the river bed where the deer had crossed in the night.

passing wood duck mewed, across the river a fox barked as a boobook owl called and a possum rasped. Somewhere on the ridge an old tree creaked its last and crashed to the ground with an audible thump, always a scary sound in the dark. That was the last I heard until Dixie nudged me awake a little after two, whimpering in the dark to tell me she needed to go outside. I followed her out with a need of my own. Frost sparkled in the torchlight as high wind-blown clouds

coming in from the south laid wispy streaks across the star-shot void of an early morning sky.

Just up the river a deer honked though not the full-on klaxon alarm call sambar are noted for but a softer, communicative belling such as a hind might make when unsure where her calf is. Three times the deer called, the last one seemingly a little further away though in the dark and cold it really didn't matter. Rain pattered on the roof at daylight, the overnight weather change completed. If I can avoid it I no longer hunt in the wet so I put some more wood on the fire and went back to bed while the dog didn't even stir.

Around mid-morning we went for a walk and along the edge of the cultivation paddock I found two sets of washed but recent marks left by a hind and her yearling. Was she the deer I'd heard in the dark - probably though I couldn't be sure. A third animal with a much bigger foot had joined them and together they'd gone down the bank to the pebbly bed of the river and crossed through a shallow run. Dixie showed me where they'd entered the water, looking back and wanting to know if we were going to follow them up.

Happy with what we'd found we walked back to the hut through a shower of rain, wet and dripping and smugly pleased my early morning thoughts about those deer noises in the night had almost certainly been right.



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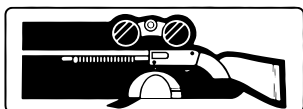
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- Fire & extraneous perils.
- Flood
- Theft.

Not Covered.

Theft where the equipment was not stored in an approved gun safe as required by State or Territory authority, other than when the equipment is in use or away from the Insured's premises. Where the Insured or any person or entity to whom the equipment has been entrusted fails to comply with any law relating to either storage, use or handling of the equipment.

Any commentary provided in the advertisement is general advice which does not take into account your individual situation and you should consider SSAA Mutual's Financial Services Guide and Statement of Protection (www.ssaib.com.au) before deciding to become a member and to purchase and hold discretionary protection issued by SSAA Mutual Limited.