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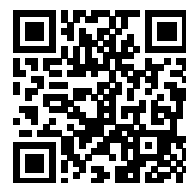
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Our October cover - see page 18

NEXT ISSUE

Next month sees the start of a two-part introduction to shooting with thermal optics and our own Matthew Godson has been out and about to field test their features, the pros and cons and what you need to know to start your thermal adventure with a rough price guide before you make your choice.

And talking of choices, Con Kapralos has been running his keen eye over five contenders in the bolt-action rifle arena, so for the shooter or hunter looking at one of these as either their first rimfire or to add to their collection he has plenty for you to consider.

ATA Arms of Turkey are building a reputation for affordable firearms and Paul Miller has been assessing the ATA Pro 12-gauge shotgun which he says would be ideal as a first or second choice that would last a lot longer than an entry level gun.



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EDITORIAL POLICY

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

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ABN 95 050 209 688

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International shooting takes first steps back

Supporting Shooters' Association of Australia members have returned to international competition for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the world in its tracks. Images of our much-loved logo and a group of smiling participants draped in the Aussie flag have been a welcome sight and the return of this aspect of competitive shooting is sure to be an exciting prospect for our aspiring elite athletes.

Among the SSAA members who dusted off their passports and flew the flag for Australia at the inaugural Precision Rifle World Championships in the picturesque Moselle region of France were Phil Nash, Scott McMillan and Tristan Wright who took part in a week-long event involving 250 hopefuls from 16 countries competing both individually and as teams.

Precision Rifle is becoming one of the fastest-growing SSAA disciplines with both centrefire and rimfire matches being staged by clubs across most states along with a national centrefire series. Visit the disciplines section of our National website to find out more and, as with every SSAA discipline, the extremely inclusive and supportive community is always keen to welcome newcomers.

In domestic competition, turn to Page 72 for a report on the SSAA 2022 Benchrest National Championships during which Les Fraser and John Babic amassed enough points to qualify for entry into the Hall of Fame, an outstanding accolade in what is the pinnacle of Benchrest shooting in this country.

Elsewhere, with spring now well under way most of the country is experiencing a surge in vegetation growth and animal populations. This follows substantial rain across much of Australia this year and places an extra level of importance on effective land management as we head into

summer. Mouse plagues, Japanese encephalitis virus, the threat of foot-and-mouth disease and other challenges will be uppermost in the minds of many people nationwide and hunters have an important role to play in not only pest animal management but in taking care of themselves when in the field along with the biosecurity of where they're hunting.

Now's the time to step up and offer your unique skillset to help landowners with their already full list of responsibilities and it's also time to ensure you protect yourself in environments prone to mosquitoes and use responsible biosecurity measures. The SSAA Farmer Assist program is a more formal way of connecting landowners with hunters who can help with pest animal problems so visit farmerassist.com.au to learn more about how you can lend a hand.

And finally the International Shooting Sports Federation has made a formal submission to the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Games Federation for consideration to include shooting in the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Shooting Australia's endeavours to work closely with the ISSF and other groups to have our sport added to the line-up should be commended and we wait with bated breath for hopefully good news in coming weeks.



Top of their game: Benchrest Hall of Fame inductees John Babic, left, and Les Fraser.

Hail the Parker-Hale

Long-time reader, love the magazine. I reference Paul Heiser's article in the May issue on Parker-Hale replica rifles. In the early 1980s my uncle was working away and I was with him when he decided to drop past an auction in Katoomba, NSW. He'd never visited it before and never did again but on that day he found a Parker-Hale 0.577 carbine as described in the article. It was a '150th anniversary of the founding of South Australia' edition with a small brass plaque on the buttstock.

The rifle was in its case with all reloading equipment and documentation in pristine condition. As my uncle was an avid collector of limited edition Winchesters - he had 12 including a John Wayne Special and Captain Cook Special to name just a couple - he snapped it up for \$800 and it sat proudly in his walk-in safe for decades.

When he passed I was lucky enough to inherit all his rifles including the Parker-Hale. It has never been fired, still has the twine wrapped around the trigger/flintlock etc and now has pride of place in my safe, coming out on special occasions to drool over! As there was no mention of this specific model in the article, I wonder if any readers have more information and a possible value in this condition?

Heath Guest, via email

On the front foot (and mouth)

I believe there may be an opportunity for SSAA members to play an active role in helping control any outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease which may threaten our country. While scientists will play a major role they won't be able to match the number of 'boots on the ground' compared to hunters (I come at this from an ignorant perspective in that I've no idea of the practicality of this).

However, if we step up early in the piece and put forward ideas we may be seen in a positive light by the non-shooting community. If it was possible to train and equip hunters with a simple specimen kit for taking a tissue sample and forwarding that to a relevant authority, we could cover the greater part of the country and identify where an outbreak might be occurring.

This of course is in our own self-interest too as I can only imagine the resources that would be thrown at this problem if it got out of hand. Hunters will be the losers here so let's try to help before that happens.

Lionel Widdowson, via email

- Sound idea Lionel. SSAA National has already been in contact with the National Feral Pig Action Plan coordinator to offer our assistance where needed.

Around the traps

With regard to the letter in your February edition on old rabbit traps repurposed for another day, here are another couple of examples - a clock and a wine bottle stand. I've also seen a rabbit trap front doorbell where the tongue of the trap has a red button protruding through it and the word 'press'.

Terry Ryan, via email



Insurance SSAA GENERAL INSURANCE BROKERS



Don't delay when it comes to membership renewal

Leaving it late to renew your SSAA membership and associated SSAA Firearms Protection service could mean you're uninsured and at risk. SSAA General Insurance Brokers regularly experiences rejected claims for SSAA members who've let their cover lapse previously through the SSAA Firearms Insurance or the new SSAA Firearms Protection by not renewing SSAA membership on time.

The process to receive either type of cover involves members renewing annually with their membership fee. Late renewal results in a period of uninsurance and this will automatically mean any claim during

that period is rejected. For example a member who holds SSAA Firearms Insurance and is due to pay their fees on June 1 but doesn't renew until June 14 would leave themselves uninsured for that two-week period. It's amazing how many accidents and incidents happen during this time of uninsurance and the brokerage has seen instances where an accident happens while hunting or at the range and there have even been burglaries and fires in those periods and the member isn't covered.

Renewing membership and paying the \$35 Insurance/Protection fee after

the due date and lodging a claim shortly thereafter doesn't fix the problem. The date and time of renewal is double-checked with the membership office by the insurer on every claim as a standard part of the claims process and lodging false information on a claim form is a criminal offence. The secret is to always renew your SSAA membership on time. Numerous renewal notices and messages are provided by the SSAA Membership office so there's little excuse for late renewal. If SSAA Firearms Insurance or SSAA Firearms Protection are included with your membership it's imperative to renew on time.

Pushing back against the anti-lead tide

The World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) of which SSAA National is a member, has financed a scientific study looking into lead ingestion in wildlife populations. This study, rather clumsily titled *Method to assess the potential magnitude of terrestrial European avian population reductions from ingestion of lead ammunition, was recently published in the scientific journal PLOS One* (Public Library of Science).

The study scientifically demonstrated how current estimates of terrestrial bird losses across Europe from ingestion of lead ammunition, which have also been used by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in a lead ammunition restriction proposal, were based on uncertain or generic assumptions and shows how the methodology behind most of the current literature relating to lead ammunition ingestion is not efficient and leads to flawed outcomes.

WFSA secretariat Mauro Silvis said the study is peer-reviewed so is very robust in its scientific rigour. By undertaking this work the study found the European Chemicals Agency assumed population sizes were decreased by the additional annual lead-induced mortality, yet did not have a quantitative or qualitative estimate of the percentage of terrestrial carnivorous birds with lead poisoning, in other words they may have 'manufactured' some figures to suit their agenda.

Instead of basing a figure on robust work the ECHA developed a highly uncertain estimate of one per cent decrease in terrestrial game birds from lead shot ingestion, the data underpinning this estimate coming

mostly from the UK and ECHA had mixed different statistics together which were simply not comparable, something which is and should be seen as unsatisfactory.

Instead of ECHA's one-step approach this study has developed a two-step population modelling format, step one being to evaluate the percentage of carcasses which died from lead ammunition ingestion (data from actual necropsy and pathology reports or available field tracking data with transmitters), then convert that percentage into annual mortality rates. Step two then used population modelling which incorporated population dynamics to evaluate changes in both growth rate and size based on carcasses.

The result of adopting this approach is the study was able to estimate final percentages after pooling data across numerous European countries. For gallinaceous birds it found 0.2 per cent for direct (ie, lead as a direct cause of death) and 1.4 per cent for the ultimate estimate of lead shot ingestion-caused deaths (ie lead as an indirect cause of death), with a mid-point estimate of 0.8 per cent. The estimated direct cause of death (0.2 per cent) was in fact five times lower than ECHA's arbitrarily selected 1 per cent they used to estimate primary poisoning without accounting for among-country differences in exposure or population modelling.

Mr Silvis highlighted that the study's proposed methodology is of benefit to hunting and shooting sector interests around the world, particularly so when regulators and certain NGOs tend to push uncertain or arbitrary estimates of risk to birds from

lead in ammunition. Furthermore, the model used can be replicated in all national and regional contexts.

We've already started to see work undertaken in Australia regarding impacts of lead ingestion via spent ammunition and I personally feel the majority of studies I've read lately discussing the ingestion of lead through ammunition in Australia have suggested a move away from lead. I see this as one of those 'picking the lowest fruit' approaches and it's definitely not a widespread issue in Australia with our density of shooting activities over large areas of land.

In the past there have been issues in highly-used public duck swamps but over land it's a different story. There are certain animal welfare considerations to explore regarding projectile performance before contemplating a change to non-lead-based alternatives and this is before we even factor in the excessive cost of those alternatives. To read the study in detail, search its name and you'll find open access on the online journal *PLOS One*.

Send questions to:
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Continuing an enduring legacy

Like many readers I was saddened to learn of Peter Bindon's passing as I've enjoyed reading his column for many years and was humbled when approached by *Australian Shooter* to carry on Peter's legacy in 'Bushcraft & Survival'. But who am I and why should I be that guy?

My earliest memories of hunting, fishing and being a 'camp follower' stretch back four decades to the days when I eagerly soaked-up my father and grandfather's life lessons. I was also a Boy Scout and school-boy Army Cadet. I started bowhunting at age 10, received my minor's firearm permit two years later and for almost 40 years have hunted and now have the pleasure and responsibility of passing it on to my daughter - my own 'Padawan learner'.

My friends call me 'a greenie with a gun' and there's an element of truth in that. As an adult I completed an Environmental Science degree among other useful credentials and with them have helped shape land management practices in some of this country's most vulnerable ecosystems. But there's more to this picture as I've been a firearms instructor in the Australian Federal Police and for almost 30 years served in the Australian Army (RA Inf) as both soldier and officer. Along the way I jumped on opportunities to do survival courses in Townsville, Canungra and Malaysia.

My interests have taken me to every Australian state and territory which leaves me in awe of this 'Great Brown Land' and humble enough to know it doesn't give up its secrets easily. I've also been privileged

for the past decade to explore Papua New Guinea as a senior investigator in search of our World War Two unrecovered war casualties, meeting and living with the indigenous tribes of our nearest neighbour. Beyond this I love a good book on the art of survival and relish conversations around a campfire. After all, we can always learn something from others' experiences and as Albert Einstein reputedly said: "Remember to never stop learning and never stop growing. The day you stop learning is the day you stop living."

Which brings us back to survival craft, fieldcraft and bushcraft that involve more than just grossing-out your partner by eating witchetty grubs or mangrove worms. It's things we do every day, look left and right before crossing the road, check the car mirrors before changing lanes, apply pressure to a bleeding wound and change course to avoid dangerous encounters be they human, animal or ex-partner! Subconsciously we ask ourselves survival questions and act on them out of instinct. This is learned behaviour. With a 'normal' question our brains quickly generate answers from similar experiences like 'what's for lunch?' Our answer draws on factors like what we ate yesterday, what's in the fridge or location of the nearest takeaway.

But the questions we're interested in within these pages are different. They're the 'what if' questions, the answers to which our brains have no habituated response. They're powerful questions that demand we think in the brain's frontal lobe - the decision-making, problem-solving and

Survival craft, fieldcraft and bushcraft involves more than just grossing-out your partner by eating witchetty grubs

planning part - to visualise solutions before we actually need to act. What if we can't get back to camp tonight? What if Smithy just 'disappears'? What if there's a flash flood? What if I'm bitten by a snake? What if Johnno's rifle backfires and injures him? What if this all happens eight kilometres from camp?

By asking these questions and seeking answers you're not being a worry-wart, you're generating options which help you cope when stress triggers your 'reptilian brain', leaving you struggling to process anything more than the urge to fight, flight or freeze. By training your brain ahead of time you unpack ways to anticipate the solution - you've taught yourself to think outside the box so you're no longer just an 'existor'. You're a survivor!





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SIFA



Q I recently bought a 12-gauge Miroku Sporting shotgun for my youngest son who's 14. He'll mainly shoot clays on our farm as we have a clay thrower and I thought this would be a good way to educate him on how to use the firearm correctly. He's only a little guy at the moment, just on 1.5m, and I was advised to cut the shotgun stock to fit him properly. I'm told the 'length of pull' is now 360mm if that makes sense. The problem is I caught the shooting bug too and would also like to use this shotgun but is that possible? It feels okay when I use it. Any advice on ammunition would also be appreciated.

Roy Kane, Qld.

A I guess anything's possible but is it perfect? Probably not. I assume you're a lot taller than your son hence why you ask the question. Whoever advised you to shorten the stock has certainly done you a favour. You probably didn't tell the gunsmith you also planned on using the shotgun judging by the way you formed your question, so here's what I'd do if I was you.

Length of Pull (LOP) is a measurement taken from the middle of the trigger to the heel of the recoil pad (the top) and again to the toe of the pad (bottom) so I'll assume the 360mm you quote is to the centre of the recoil pad. LOP is commonly measured this way but technically that's incorrect for a variety of complex reasons I won't go into here, but it's largely related to the 'pitch' of your stock which dictates the angle the butt sits in your shoulder.

If I make the broad assumption you're 1.8m tall, a common set of LOP dimensions would be as follows: 375mm to the



Recoil pads come in various sizes and can be changed in seconds.

heel, 372mm to the mid and 380mm to the toe (this would be for a standard sporting stock). These numbers are only a guide as body shape, technique, experience and a few other factors will come into play to totally customise your stock's length. The 360mm LOP for your son's shotgun wouldn't be too far out for someone his size and while in theory it may be a little long, I'm sure he's still growing.

I hope the stock maker sliced the smallest amount of wood off the stock that was practical and fitted the thinnest recoil pad possible (the thinnest that would still provide some benefit to help reduce the pain would be no smaller than 13mm). Most decent brands offer pads going up in 5mm increments and that's what I suggest you do if you both want to use the same shotgun. If you had a 23mm pad or even a 28mm and swapped it with your son's 13mm you should be good to go.

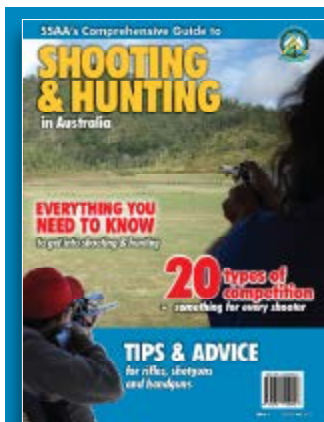
If you have a small battery-powered drill then changing the pads will take about 30 seconds and that'll be time well spent, as one of the worst things you could've done was teach your son using a stock that's too

long as that'll change his perception of recoil as well as introduce him to many other bad habits. I've always maintained it's far better to use a stock with a slightly shorter length of pull than one that's too long.

If you're just busting clays on your property then buy some lower-velocity ammunition, either 1150fps 28-gram loads or, better still, some lighter 24-gram or even 21-gram shotshells. They'll still break clays at reasonable distances and if you're standing beside the clay thrower you won't miss a target due to the reduced velocity and smaller shot loads.

Miroku offer a great variety of well-made shotguns and as your son grows just keep fitting a larger recoil pad and you'll have a gun you should be able to pass on to your grandchildren. I wish you all the best with the many hours of enjoyment you'll have teaching your son to shoot.

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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS?

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Q I was given this old 37mm cartridge case for my collection. It's a bottle neck case measuring 210mm with a 55mm head diameter. Can anyone help identify it please?

Bill M, via email

A According to Chris Chant's *Artillery of World War Two*, the 37mm round was used in the M3 anti-tank gun during that war as well as in several tanks and armoured vehicles. The round fired a projectile weighing just under 2lb at a muzzle velocity of 2900fps and had a range of 1000yds. Your case was made in 1941 and apparently loaded in 1942 according to the dates on the case head and primer. The SMC stamp refers to the 'Symington Machine Corporation' based in Rochester, New York, a company founded by Thomas Harrison Symington (1869-1931).

Geoff Smith



Q I recently bought a Ruger No.1 in .308 and have 1" and 30mm rings. I tried a Nightforce 2.5-10x42 scope and on low magnification the eye relief is almost acceptable while cranking the magnification up only makes it worse of course. I read John Dunn's articles every month and 'am aware of his love of single shot rifles and the Ruger No.1 so my question is: What's the way to go for a scope with correct eye relief?

Pete Morrison, Vic.



A Quite a few people have problems with eye relief on Ruger No.1 rifles and there are a number of ways to resolve them. As you've realised the No.1 requires a scope with the longest eye relief you can find, especially when using a variable scope. With a fixed power scope it's not such a problem and I fitted a straight 6x Leupold on the Anniversary model I had and it worked just fine but that may not be the case with your eyes.

The easiest way to improve the situation is to replace the rear scope ring with an offset or extension ring which attaches directly to the scope ramp and moves the rear ring back towards the receiver to shorten the eye relief. Ruger make them so that would be my first line of enquiry. Another fix I've seen a number of times is to trim 25mm or so off the buttstock. It's a fairly drastic measure which ruins the balance of the rifle and in your case would also destroy its value as a collectable item. Perhaps you could find a replacement butt stock that's expendable?

Another alternative is to have a standard dovetailed quarter-rib made without the Ruger recoil slots to replace the factory rib. That's the way I went with my 7x57 and it works well using Warne rings to hold a Schmidt and Bender 1.5-6x42 Zenith Flash-Dot scope. Once again this set-up impacts the original configuration of the rifle so may not be suitable for your needs. Either way I hope you enjoy your 50th Anniversary Model No.1 as it's a fine rifle.

John Dunn

Q I'm a 15-year-old shooter and in the past year have been discovering reloading with my grandad and my question revolves around barrel bore diameter in relation to diameter of the projectile being shot. Projectile diameter is always slightly larger than that of the bore so the projectile can grip to the rifling in order for the twist to occur. For example a .30-cal (308, 30-06 and 300 Win Mag) bore diameter is .30" and projectile is .308" so the projectile is .008" larger than the bore.

Similarly a 218 Bee has a bore diameter of .218" and projectile of .224" so the projectile is .006" larger than the bore. Then you have the .223 Rem which has a bore diameter of .223" and projectile of .224" which is only .001" larger so I'm wondering what factors determine this measurement and why the projectile grip differs between calibres.

Cooper Teasdale, WA

A There are a couple of aspects to your question which start with the use of non-standard cartridge naming conventions. A cartridge designer may use diameter of the bore of the barrel rather than that of the projectile to give a cartridge its name. This can cause confusion as bullets and barrels can have exactly the same dimensions but have very different names based on their bullet diameter as, in your example, .308 of an inch is the diameter of the bullet and rifling *grooves* and .30 of an inch is the diameter of the bore and rifling *lands*.

Another point of confusion is the cartridge name can sometimes bear no relation to the barrel *or* bullet dimensions. Despite the numbers in their names the .218 Bee,

.219 Zipper, .220 Swift, .221 Remington Fireball, .222 Remington, .223 Remington, .224 Weatherby Magnum and .225 Winchester all have *bore* diameters of around .217 to .219 of an inch but a *groove* or bullet diameter of .224" depending on barrel manufacturer. In the type of sporting rifles and handguns we use, the difference between groove and bore diameter will generally be between .005 and .010 of an inch, again depending on manufacturer.

To answer your question the differences in rifling depth or 'projectile grip' as you put it, doesn't really change much until you start getting into larger, heavier calibres such as military tank, naval and artillery ammunition. Shooters who have their barrels custom-made can request the rifling to be cut to specific bore and groove measurements.

Rod Pascoe

Q I last asked about the 20-gauge vs the 12-gauge for shooting Sporting Clays and hunting here in Queensland and decided on the 12-gauge as the best all-rounder. I was wondering if the 28-gauge which seems to be increasing in popularity would make a good choice to complement

my 12-gauge for light Field and Sporting Clays competition or novelty events?

Mike James, Qld

A Glad we were able to help and you decided on the 12-gauge to suit your shotgunning needs. Your idea of a 28-gauge gun to go with your 12-gauge is a good one and a lot of keen shotgunners try a lighter gauge for fun and to broaden their shooting experience. The 20-gauge as we noted from your last question is an exceptional gauge but not that different from the 12-gauge, at least when comparing similar shot loads.

There certainly seems to be movement here in Australia towards lighter gauges for shooting clay targets like Skeet and Sporting Clays and light closer-range field shooting. The 28-gauge survived in the US for many years due to it being a recognised gauge for competition events in Skeet. The type of close-range bird hunting they love there on a host of different species from quail through to pheasant can be dealt with humanely with quality 28-gauge loads and shot sizes between about No.9 and No.6.

Last year we reviewed a 28-gauge in the Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon 1 with 30" barrels

which impressed me so much I actually bought it and I've been having great fun learning to shoot such a light and lively gun at Sporting Clays. At our club you shoot the same course as the guys using 12-gauges, just in a different class with shooters of the same gauge. You're at a bit of a disadvantage on really long targets but with the use of tighter chokes you can make up ground using 21 or 24-gram loads compared to the standard 28-gram, 12-gauge competition loads.

For Skeet shooting at targets where the maximum distance is about 22m, the 28-gauge is a delight to use and crunches targets with a lot less recoil and drives your mates crazy with their 12s when you clean them up with a 28! And that's the point - lighter gauges are lots of fun. The .410 with its half-ounce of shot (14-grams) is for the masochists among us though there are still those capable of shooting 100 straight at Skeet with the little 'rabbit gun'. I can't recommend the 28-gauge too highly as a fun gun for close-range small game and clays.

Paul Miller



Paul enjoyed reviewing the 28-gauge Beretta Silver Pigeon so much he bought one.

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Precious cargo

Beretta 687 Diamond Pigeon a real gem, writes John McDougall

From the long-established stable of well-made sporting arms and the oldest manufacturing company in the world enters the Beretta 687 EELL Sporting, another fine example of exquisite workmanship. Beretta have for many years produced guns of superb quality with their higher-grade sidelocks just sensational and while the 687 EELL isn't a sidelock sporting arm, it does have wonderful sideplates adorned with magnificent hand-cut engraving.

In comparison to a sidelock costing around \$30,000 the 687 EELL at roughly \$12,000 remains a boxlock sporting arm but with the addition of that beautiful engraving which, coupled with the walnut stock, contributes to the premium price you'd expect to pay for such a gun. So let's have a closer look at this beauty and see what it has to offer.

Barrels

Impeccably soldered and hammer forged to precise specifications the steelium barrels

are assembled and immaculately blued without blemish and at 760mm (30") are fitted with the latest Beretta Optima choke tubes, being fully internal and 70mm in length. All Optima choke tubes are suited to high performance steel shot loads up to Modified (half choke) and Beretta don't recommend using anything tighter than Modified with these loads as they say patterns become distorted and the barrel and chokes wear substantially.

Topped with a parallel 4mm rib this is low for a Sporting model but when mounted, my eye looked straight down the middle albeit a little flat, more like a Field-grade rib than a Sporter. I was disappointed a mid-sight bead wasn't fitted straight out the box though Beretta provide an excellent service where buyers can visit the warehouse and have their gun custom-fitted.

The top rib is nicely ventilated and side ribs solid which I can only think is to give the gun a better feel and balance as the stock wood is quite dense and full of character. In all my years of testing and owning

Beretta firearms I've always appreciated the lengths they go to give their under-and-over shoguns a perfect balance and what I call 'Beretta feel'.

At the chamber end of the barrels the monobloc is well finished, jewel polishing perfectly and abundantly completed to enhance the aesthetics and retain valuable lubricant to augment longevity and service of the shotgun. Chambered for 76mm (3") cartridges the Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Sporting is well suited to waterfowling, including geese, as it's proofed for high performance steel shot loads. The ejectors are strong, solidly built and timed to perfection, removing spent cartridges quickly from the chamber.

Bifurcated jointing of the barrels to the action gives the gun its customary low profile and a feeling of great balance and ability to swing evenly, this system having been used by Beretta for decades and it certainly characterises their shotguns. The trunnions in the receiver wall are also replaceable and located perfectly with the

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View of the action open showing the extent of jewel polishing about the monobloc and engraving about the receiver.



Top tang with its engraved finish, well-tensioned top lever and safety-cum-barrel selector.

semi-circular bites in the monobloc and the fact these trunnions can be replaced ensures a Beretta gun, whether a basic 686 or a 694 top model along with the 687 series will provide generations of reliable service.

Receiver

This is the centre of interest with its hand-cut scroll engraving. Magnificently done and stunning to look at, for many this'll be the pride of ownership. It's akin to a work of art and that's exactly what you have in your hands, a crafted gun with impeccable and faultless engraving which almost covers the whole receiver, sideplate and triggerguard and is a tribute to the master craftsmen contracted to Beretta.

Design of the top lever is superb and tensioned so as to require even pressure by the handler to operate. Its shape is ergonomically devised to work comfortably, being well in reach for quick opening of the barrels from the receiver for fast reloading, another benefit of the bifurcated jointing of Beretta shotguns whereby their lower

receiver profile presents a shorter gape (less of an angle for the barrels to drop) for reloading.

The triggerguard is well shaped and complements the overall lines of this gun, adorned with fine scroll engraving which completes the presentation. Design of the triggerfoot was perfect for my grip although I'd have preferred an adjustable one, maybe gold-plated for a model such as the Diamond grade as this would really set off the engraving about receiver and side-plates and add a further air of grace. Might be something for Beretta to consider in future models. Trigger pulls are well adjusted at just on 2kg for each barrel.

Stock and fore-end

Although told by my Beretta contact the stock and fore-end were of Grade 3 walnut, I could imagine them being another step up as the character and grain direction is superb with a lot of the appearance often seen in walnut closer to the roots of the tree. Magnificent woodwork with stunning hand-cut chequering faultlessly executed at

around 20 lines/inch provided excellent grip for good gun control. I found the standard factory stock dimensions suited my style of shooting and build as the gun mounted comfortably, bringing my preferred right eye to look straight down the barrels.

Being a standard-shaped stock and not a Monte Carlo design the gun fired beautifully on clays, right on point of aim (neither higher nor lower) for the height of the barrel rib. I was looking forward to shooting this beauty more either at clays or in the field and thankfully, to top off the stock a good recoil pad is fitted should you decide to shoot some hyper-velocity steel shot HP loads on waterfowl.

In the field

I had a great time reviewing this gun and many others who took the chance to mount and shoot it were also suitably impressed. It was like taking a work of art for a walk around the simulated field ground, trying to bag as many clay targets as possible and was a delight to shoot with RC2 loads supplied by Beretta. Being low recoil they



The elegant Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Pigeon is sure to turn heads.



Underside of the Beretta Diamond Sporting featured beautiful scroll engraving, including the triggerguard.

The gun in lockable hard plastic carry case with accessory chokes, spanner, gun oil and instruction booklet.



Five choke tubes are supplied along with gun oil and propeller-style choke tube spanner.

weren't what I'd normally be using but claimed their fair share of targets at the Frankston ground and at the Steve Bettoni shoot on Phillip Island. I was rapt with second barrel shots with RC2 loads through the Improved Modified choke as targets beyond 50m succumbed with regularity.

Overall the Beretta 687 EELL Diamond Pigeon is a well-designed, well-tuned and spectacular gun to look at, the woodwork and sideplate engravings exceptional to make any shooter proud to own one. Anyone in the market for a versatile shotgun which smashes clays with its

steelium barrels and Optima choke tube combination will find it hard to beat and, coupled with Beretta's 'Forever' service arrangement and personal fitting, it offers excellent value for discerning shooters. ●



Design and inletting of the fore-end catch is perfect.

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Beretta, Brescia, Italy

Distributor: Beretta Australia

Overall weight: 3.5kg/7lb 11oz

Barrel weight: 1.40kg/3lb 2oz

Overall length: 1205mm/47½"

Barrel length: 760mm/30"

Bore diameter and chamber: 0.732" bore, 76mm/3" chamber

Proof: HP steel shot (stamped with the CIP Fleur de Lys)

Chokes: Cylinder 0.730", Improved Cylinder 0.720", Modified 0.710", Improved Modified 0.705" and Full 0.695"

Trigger pulls: Under and over both 2kg/68oz

Length of pull: 375mm/14¾"

Drop at comb: 37mm/1 3/8"

Drop at heel: 60mm/2 3/8"

Warranty: 12 months plus a further two years if registered with Beretta

Price: About \$12,000 with moulded and lined lockable case, instruction booklet and accessories



The heat is on

Zeiss thermal monocular a hunter's buddy, says Con Kapralos

The outdoor sports optics market is awash with thermal gadgetry - some brilliant and some merely passengers in a rapidly transitioning sector. Whether it be thermal imaging rifle-scopes, spotting scopes or dual-purpose units many almost need a university degree to operate. This is exacerbated by poor technical manuals and instructions not to mention being designed with the user as an after-thought. Some thermal optics remind me of those old hand-held camcorders of yesteryear - bulky and unwieldy.

Thankfully the folks at Zeiss Sport Optics know what outdoor sportsmen and women expect and duly deliver in their superb products be they riflescopes, binoculars or night vision instrumentation. Their newly-released DTI 3/35 (and DTI 3/25) digital thermal imaging devices have been created by design engineers to meet the demands of hunters who want a compact thermal spotting monocular that's easy to use with minimal fuss and smooth operation.

Zeiss don't hide the fact their DTI thermal monoculars are made in China but to stringent specifications as the fit, form and function live up to the brand name and heritage.

First impressions

The Zeiss DTI 3/35 is a compact thermal monocular measuring 193x60x65mm, the main tube slightly tapered in contour with a hard-wearing rubber coating around the inner metal frame. This tapered design takes into account the differences in hand shape and size which should suit most users and, being truly ambidextrous in design and layout, means southpaws are not disadvantaged by inconveniently located buttons.

Viewing the DTI 3/35 from the front, a 35mm objective lens is set within a recessed rubber collar which also serves to focus the image by simply rotating the collar as required. Focus adjustment is easily tweaked for a sharp image and also benefits from the fact that when set it stays sharp thanks to its frictionless positioning

design. A rubber lens cap is supplied but this one's captive to the body so can't be misplaced or lost - it simply hangs clear of the objective ocular housing.

The operational buttons sit atop the body and are laid out in a way which benefits the unit's ambidextrous design. From the front the on/off power switch is first while a quick press of the same button turns off the internal LCD screen to prolong battery life. Next button is the camera function which has a raised central dot for enhanced detection, a short press engaging the video function and a longer press switching between camera and video modes and it's easy to move between these two for users who wish to record their observations day or night.

Magnification controls sit immediately behind the camera control button and are designed for ease of operation. The DTI 3/35 gives a standard view of 2.5x optical magnification but using either of the side buttons, digital zoom can be incrementally

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The eyepiece is well designed for ease of use and avoids unwanted light.

Layout of the operational buttons makes use easy and uncomplicated.



increased in four steps up to four times which is ultimately a 10x overall magnification (being digital in nature rather than optical) resulting in increased pixelation. At every stage you know the magnification setting which is displayed upper right on the internal LCD screen.

The rearmost button is 'mode' which serves two functions, a short press giving the choice of changing colour palettes between white, black, red-hot and rainbow and a longer press opening the main menu

where you can tailor a myriad of settings such as LCD display (brightness, contrast, 'Picture-on-Picture') and other important functions such as auto-calibration. Crucially, first-time users must familiarise themselves with the layout of the operational buttons and what functions they perform by either reading the manual or viewing online instruction videos.

The rear of the unit has a soft rubber eyecup adjustable for both left and right-hand users which when held to the eye

blocks unwanted light and makes viewing the internal LCD screen much easier. To the left of the main body near the eyepiece is a diopter focus dial, used to bring together the internal LCD screen, easy to adjust for differing eyesight and once set up to suit it gives excellent viewing with minimal eye strain and fuss-free observation. The DTI 35/50 comes with a neck strap which attaches to the body and allows the unit to sit centrally on the chest for ease of access.



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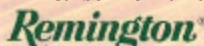
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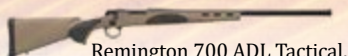
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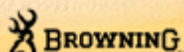
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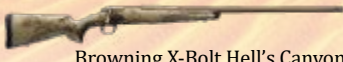
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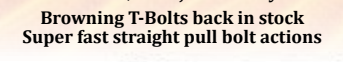
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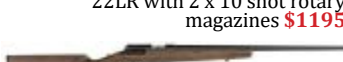
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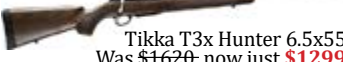
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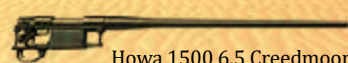
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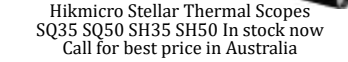
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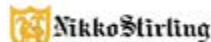
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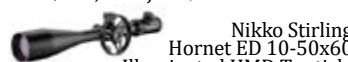
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Zeiss thermal monocular

In the field

Setting up the DTI 3/35 before heading out is vital for successful thermal imaging, as messing about trying to change settings is counter-productive. Zeiss claim a detection range of just over 1200m from their $\leq 50\text{mk}$ sensor and field of view of 19m at 100m gives excellent performance with great thermal scanning and imaging. In the field I found it superb for both day and night-time use, especially daylight stalking through scrub and timber thickets where deer seem to bed-up during the day. The DTI 3/35 easily detected thermal footprints of deer standing motionless in the scrub which the naked eye would miss.

Additionally the unit came into its own when looking for downed deer in the scrub as the animal emits a thermal heat source even when shot and many deer managers in the UK use thermal devices exclusively during daylight for that very reason. For night-time hunting the DTI 3/35 is an excellent way of uncovering game and pest species without having to resort to a traditional spotlight until needed and while I only use thermal monoculars such as this for quarry detection and retrieval, I don't tend to bother with the video or picture features as such, but that's personal preference.

Many will find these two features to their liking with the ability to download images and videos to a PC through an integrated USB port which also charges the on-board lithium-ion battery (it gives a touted seven hours' run time which I can vouch for). Internal memory storage in 15Gb will give several hours of video storage and quite a few pictures to boot. The DTI 3/35 can also be mounted on a tripod if needed but for general stalking use this wouldn't be used.

In summary

The Zeiss DTI 3/35 thermal monocular (along with its sibling DTI 3/25) offer hunters and outdoors enthusiasts a compact and easy-to-use thermal imaging device. Weighing 450g it's comfortably carried in a pocket or backpack and is a bonus for modern stalking hunters seeking an 'edge' when it comes to locating huntable species, even in daylight.

Game such as deer are becoming smarter with increased hunting pressure but using thermal imaging technology offers an additional advantage as, for the night-time hunter, using a thermal monocular such as the DTI 3/35 facilitates scanning areas for intended quarry without the need of powerful spotlights until taking a shot. Thermal imaging optics have changed the game when it comes to hunting and when

The objective lens of the DTI 3/35 in its focus-adjustable housing.



The DTI 3/35 is made in China but designed by Zeiss engineers to meet stringent quality requirements.

used responsibly make for a great tool in the hunter's kitbag. The Zeiss DTI 3/35 retails for \$4499 and is available through all Outdoor Sporting Agencies dealers Australia-wide.

More at osaaustralia.com.au •



Zeiss DTI 3/35 as supplied with instruction manual and accessories.

Specifications:

Focal length: 35mm
Sensor resolution: 84x288
Thermal sensitivity (NETD): $\leq 50\text{mk}$
Display resolution: 1280x960
Display frame rate: 50Hz
Range: 1235m
Field of view (at 100m): 19m
Optical magnification: 2.5
Maximum digital zoom: 4x
Zoom steps (in 0.5x): 1x-4x
Battery: lithium-ion - internal
Run time: Seven hours
Internal storage: 15Gb
Dimensions: 193x60x65mm
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Rifle shooting is something Scottie has been involved in since a young age and when his preferred shotgun disciplines were dropped from the Paris 2024 schedule he knew it was time to fine-tune his skills.

Scottie turns to rifle for Paralympic push

Rachael Oxborrow

On his third anniversary of joining forces with the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) to promote target shooting as an all-abilities sport, Scottie Brydon is showing the nation and the world just how accessible the sport really is. "I'm in a wheelchair, achieving at a top level and having the best time of my life," he said. "It doesn't matter who you are there are no labels, it's an even playing field and one of the best ways to be social and enjoy being active."

The Trap shooter's campaign to compete in the 2024 Paris Paralympics has taken a new direction recently, following the exclusion of his preferred shotgun events from the Paris line-up. He began to forge a new path into elite rifle shooting in early 2020 but his initial efforts were hampered by the global pandemic effectively shutting down all sport for an extended period. But Scottie has been able to regain his focus quite quickly.

"Once everything opened up again in late 2021, I made sure I was involved in domestic competition and performing at my best in front of the people who pick the squads," he said. "I was lucky enough to be selected by Shooting Australia and included in the Pathways Squad for rifle which put me on my way to making the national team."

Scottie said while rifle wasn't his first choice, it's not a new venture for him. "I've shot rifles all my life, particularly as a youngster," he said. "But the reality is it's a different style of shooting to shotgun, very physical and more about practising firing. It's all about muscle memory, shooting in jackets, off benches and triggering. If you do something wrong in rifle competitions it can really affect all aspects of what you do."

As a Trap shooter Scottie has competed in Paraplegic Olympic Trap events and set a new world record in qualifying for the WSPS Championships at the Sydney International Shooting Centre in 2019. His shooting career began in his hometown of Cobar, NSW before he relocated to Canberra to be closer to competition and training facilities. SSAA partnered with Scottie in 2019 to support his sporting endeavours and promote the shooting sports.

Earlier this year he competed in the first international competition on his road to Paris at the Chateauroux 2022 World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS) World Cup in France. "To do as well as I did on my first international trip was great but also an eye-opener to gauge where you're at with international competitors," he said. "I hadn't been shooting against internationalists for quite a

few years so it's pleasing to know I'm in the mix with my scores."

His performance in France impressed selectors who have chosen him for the 2022 WSPS World Cup in Changwon, Korea later this month. As Scottie pursues his dream he's taking every opportunity to promote the sport and prove target shooting is for everyone. "Disability won't hold you back when it comes to shooting," he said. "The sport is out there for all and there's no limit to what you can do. Shooting is a fun sport and I'm just trying to get that message out there and hopefully inspire others to join in." ●



SSAA ambassador Scottie Brydon has turned his attention to rifle shooting in the lead-up to the 2024 Paris Paralympics.



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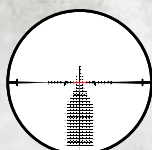
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Safety first

Geoff Smith walks us through
SA's firearms training history

Each Australian state has its own firearms legislation and in South Australia an improved system for managing firearms was introduced 30 years ago this month, as prior to this over many years numerous incidents had prompted calls for tighter controls. In the 1970s the astonishing prices being paid for fox skins meant winter nights, even near built-up areas, were illegally punctuated by gunfire and spotlight beams. Farmers were angry, shooting mishaps abounded, police resources were stretched yet guns were widely available to anyone over 15 with little restriction beyond a 'tick and flick' questionnaire at the local police station.

With a lifelong passion for guns and shooting the nightmares that followed a near-miss incident prompted me to focus on safety. I was employed teaching and writing safety-related training material for the electrical trade school and by 1973 as a hobby I started submitting articles to this magazine and, with the creation in 1976 of what is now TAFE, staff were invited to consider subjects we could offer.

I suggested gun safety and to my surprise before long I was teaching it. Having been a SSAA member for some years I had access to the Para Range in the then semi-rural Adelaide area of Golden Grove, though it soon became clear those who needed training most were also least likely to seek it out as voluntary gun safety only interested those who were inherently safe, although I did run courses for young TAFE agriculture students.

I periodically ran courses for new SSAA members at Para which continue to this day and concurrently with my teaching work I was studying education at university. Although my supervisors were initially lukewarm I received approval to investigate the academic side of firearm education and subsequently wrote a dissertation on the subject. I wanted to know what caused shooting accidents, what were the consequences and, most importantly, what could've been done to prevent them.

It seemed from initial enquiries that many shooting deaths recorded as 'accidents' were clearly either deliberately self-inflicted or occasionally homicides and my friends at SSAA were able to track down some overseas publications through which I made the acquaintance of several experts from New Zealand who were thinking along the same lines. Locally we surveyed the public to establish popular beliefs about the subject while the SA Police and coroner also provided data and moral support.

In 1988 radical changes to the 1977 Firearms Act were proposed which most of



Instructor Phil Worden with instructor applicants at Dean Range in 1993 using the-then widely-available Chinese SKS rifles.



Students undertake safety training at Para Range in 1978.



Lecturer Des Staite assists one of their students during a 1978 training session at Para Range.

these pages for years: Australian shooters should be regarded as a skilled resource and shooters, clubs and government could work cooperatively and professionally to address the problem. Some clubs around the state were willing to participate and TAFE could provide coordination through its then-state-wide network of 'community colleges'. It could offer professional selection, engagement, training and employment of staff, provide government indemnity, manage finances and safety and offer systems for enrolment and record-keeping of applicants while quality assurance and tight control over standards would also apply.

The committee recognised that safe firearms handling requirements were different for the various uses and advised that shooting associations should be SAPOL-accredited to provide relevant training for new entrants to their shooting disciplines. SSAA (SA) were there from the start. Professor Tom Frame described this mindset as "tribalism" in his 2019 book *Gun Control: What Australia got right (and wrong)* and it remains a significant problem dividing the recreational shooting community even now.

At this stage, remember, using TAFE as the delivery agency was merely my suggestion though unfortunately the committee chairman went back to the Police Commissioner who announced TAFE would do the training (the TAFE Minister knew nothing about it since it was only the suggestion of a lowly teacher). So after extricating myself from a certain amount of hot water the dust and tears subsided and the program began.

In June of 1992 I found myself seconded to the newly-formed Recreation and Sport School and immediately began working on the logistics and content for both training instructors and the basic licencing program. I'd already written the *Guide to Hunting and Shooting in Australia* which had been published as monthly lift-outs in *Australian Shooters' Journal* in 1989 and which the committee approved as a useful starting point.

My new supervisor Peter Vandepeer OAM had been an army instructor as well as being heavily involved in Australia's outdoor recreation industry and with his help we soon had advertisements placed to engage potential instructors and seek expressions of interest from clubs. A steering committee was formed involving National Parks, Police and experts in firearm injury and ballistics and as work proceeded, regular meetings vetted the content. The first instructor training program launched in October 1992 amid very positive media coverage and while it took many months for the legislation to pass, the first course for licence applicants was held in November 1993 and these have continued ever since.

Page 8 —The Advertiser, Saturday, May 28, 1977.

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The ad for Firearms Appreciation and Safety.

us felt were unnecessarily draconian and protest rallies provoked a Parliamentary Inquiry. Many stakeholders testified and offered expert advice which led to the formation of several small committees including one dealing with training for recreational shooters on which I was SSAA's representative. SA ultimately decided to mandate secure storage, initial training, permits to acquire, stricter classification of self-loading firearms, tightening of dealerships, computerised registration and a photo ID licence, all of which came into effect in 1993, fully three years before the Port Arthur tragedy that led to similar conditions nationally.

Although firearms safety is largely common-sense I believe I was the only committee member who'd specifically undertaken tertiary study into the subject. We'd been reviewing available resources when the chairman announced negotiations with interstate training providers appeared cost prohibitive so my background led me to repeat what I'd been suggesting in

Safety first

The program is offered statewide although remote areas have been challenging. Applicants pay a fee which covers operating costs so the program remains cost-neutral to the taxpayer and research undertaken some years ago has shown training, in conjunction with the other measures, led to a significant reduction in accidental shooting deaths and injuries. A paper I presented at the 2006 'In the Right Hands' international firearms safety conference in Christchurch described the progress made at that time and in the years since continual steady advances have been made to improve the quality of presentation.

From starting with a staple-bound roneo duplicated set of notes the text book, some overhead transparencies, a single video tape and couple of assessment tests, applicants were taken through the basics of firearm operation, legal obligations of firearms owners and hunters and how to safely handle, transport and store guns with theory tests and a practical assessment then following.

We now use PowerPoint, improved videos and professionally printed manuals while the current Category AB practical session uses a bolt-action .22 rifle and break-action over-and-under shotgun with coaching techniques applied, although the program really seeks to ensure safe handling rather than proficiency. Separate courses exist for people approved for Category C, D and H firearms - such as primary producers, firearm dealers and others with special purposes - while park rangers, stock inspectors and various others (occasionally including SAPOL Firearms Branch staff) are also trained. The program is continually under review seeking to improve methodology and embrace new ideas and technology and work is in progress to implement CGI technology to create improved training video material.

Thirty years on about 43,000 people have undertaken the training as we've progressed from blackboards and roneo-printed notes to a highly polished and professional means of introducing new

shooters to the basics of safety, their legal and ethical responsibilities and how to advance in their pursuit of recreational shooting and hunting. While statistics are scant, accidental shooting deaths and injuries have declined dramatically as when the program began there'd been a 15-year average of 2.2 fatal shooting accidents in SA each year as well as 20-30 serious injuries. Club memberships have increased, vandalism with guns has all but disappeared and relations with the rural community have vastly improved so all up it has been a gratifying success story.

It's impossible to acknowledge the input from the huge number of people who've been involved down the years and for this I apologise (many are no longer with us). Notwithstanding, I remain indebted to the late Senior Sergeant Ted Warren and late Senior Constable Ray Nicholls without whose enthusiastic support the program would never have begun. ●



Instructor Phil Worden coaching pastoralist Sharon Oldfield at the Dean Range in 1993.



Port Augusta TAFE instructor Ron Laurence coaching a farm practice student as part of the pilot course in November 1993.



Actor the late Paul Cronin, originally a farm boy from SA, hosted the film Keep Safety in Your Sights introducing changes after the Port Arthur tragedy. TAFE was heavily involved in production of the film.

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Buckle up!

Ridgeline's handy harness a bino benefit, writes Chris Redlich



Low profile pouch lid with magnetic closure allows for easy one-hand grasp. Note side pockets and molle for pouch attachment.

Binoculars are an essential and valuable item for hunters and protecting them from the elements during a tough stalk will help preserve them for when performance is paramount. Ridgeline are a respected apparel and accessories brand used by hunters throughout Australia for decades and known for producing reliable and affordable kit, in fact most of my hunting shirts and micro fleece tops are made by Ridgeline and have provided years of continuous wear.

New to their merchandise range is the Kahu binocular harness. I'd been scrolling through numerous designs on the internet until a retail ad for the Kahu bino harness in *Australian Shooter* grabbed my attention. At first glance it was exactly what I was after and I ordered one straight away and while I don't particularly like buying things without seeing them first, I had full confidence in Ridgeline's format and on their arrival I wasn't disappointed.

By all appearances construction of the Kahu harness is heavy-duty yet lightweight in the hand and has been made to accommodate most sizes of binoculars and from my own experience fits a pair of standard 10x42 roof prisms perfectly. For larger binoculars the Kahu has three removable foam shims to customise the fit for varying sizes.

The shims are accessed inside the base of the harness and were removed to fit a new review pair of Steiner LRF binoculars. Access to the main pouch is by a low-profile angled lid, grasped easily via a loop-style handle and the lid firmly shuts out the elements with a stitched-in magnetic strip while all internal surfaces are padded and a solid foam base provides impact protection for the binocular objectives.



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Outer construction is of ripstop polyester to withstand abrasion or tearing and this is additionally protected by a water-resistant coating. Dual side pockets and molle webbing enhance utility of the harness but don't add any noticeable bulk overall. I don't like extra pouches or bulk to my binocular harness but this is a handy addition if ever the need arose to stow a rangefinder or extra ammo. A sizeable padded pouch to the rear of the harness is available for secure phone storage, accessed by a large zipper with a well thought-out yet simple cord-style loop.

The Kahu 'H' harness has a breathable airmesh system which provides shoulder support to all the main pouch tethers, these tethers or straps made from tough Cordura-style nylon that's double stitched at all critical connection points. The entire harness is completely adjustable with plenty of length to suit any wearer's height and girth.

Differing somewhat to my older harness are the metallic hooks of the girth straps which provide quick attachment or release to the webbing loops of the pouch, this

system really effective in providing a strong connection point. The only downside I found with the alloy hooks was they make a slight 'tink' sound when brushing against my riflescope or steel watch band and while a minor risk, this could have the potential to disrupt a silent stalk but all things considered I can't see the harness being this strong using anything but alloy. Remaining adjustment buckles and connection clips are nylon, the fastex connection clips including tiny but strong braided nylon loops for attaching securely to the binoculars.

Kahu is available in two colours - beech and escape camo - and I opted for the latter. Rounding out the last of the harness inclusions is an elastic-sided plastic rain protector which resembles a shower cap though I honestly feel the pouch material is good enough to repel water without the need for an additional rain protector.

Not long after receiving the harness I was hunting the hills for deer and putting it to the test. Many days and many kilometres over the following months leading

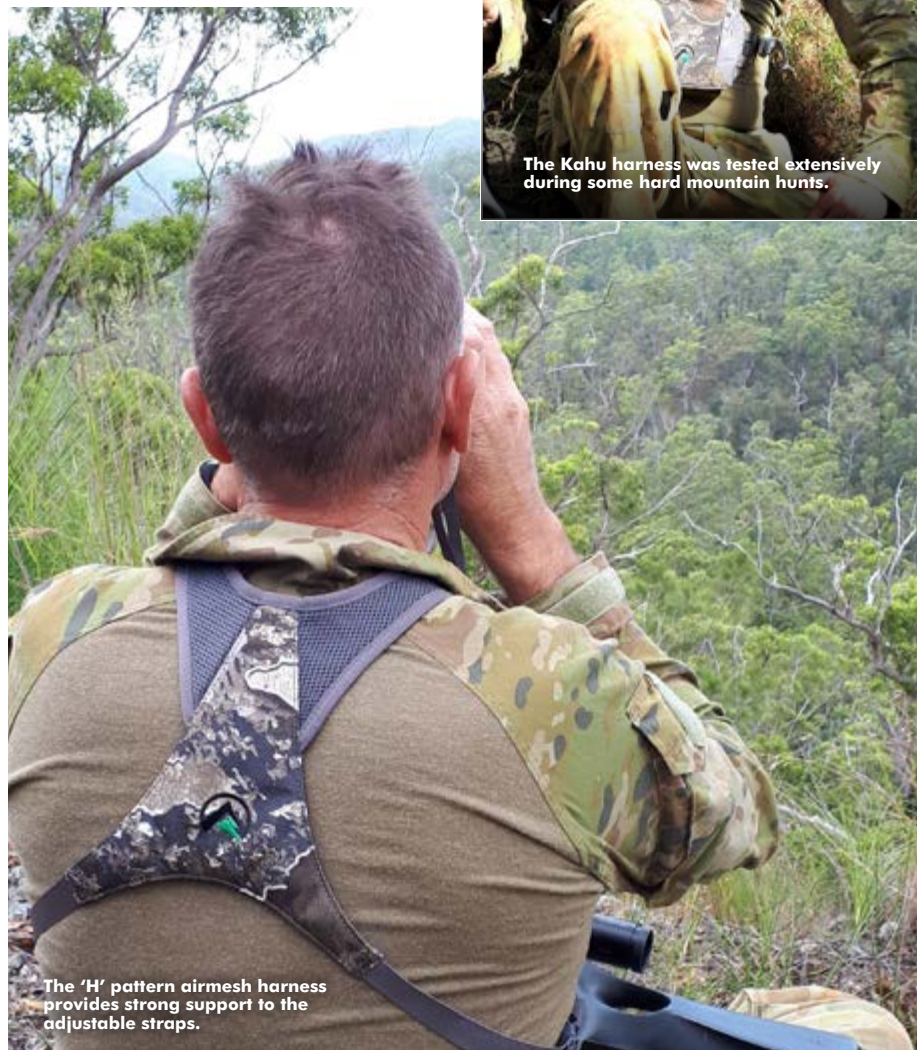
up to and during a successful roar, was ample time to draw a conclusion and, as expected, the Kahu binocular harness lived up to expectations and I'm happy I made the purchase. Backed by a lifetime warranty and retailing for \$179.50 at time of writing, I believe the Kahu is priced well for a quality product that's been devised and tested by Ridgeline in the wilds of New Zealand. For more information and to find stockists of the Ridgeline Kahu binocular harness, visit the Australian distributors website at osaaustralia.com.au. ●



Note the ripstop outer in escape camo and double stitching at critical points.



Alloy quick-release hook and loop on both girth straps.



The Kahu harness was tested extensively during some hard mountain hunts.

The 'H' pattern airmesh harness provides strong support to the adjustable straps.

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Anti-gun lobby flogging same tired old rhetoric

John Maxwell

One of the near certainties in the aftermath of the latest US gun massacre is Australian anti-gun groups and their supporting media will seek to exploit the tragedy to advance their local agenda, for example: 'Australia's gun lobby glosses over Texas school massacre, presses ahead with arms agenda'. Absolutely nothing in the ensuing lengthy report substantiates the deeply offensive assertion the gun lobby 'glossed over' the appalling tragedy at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on May 24.

To back allegations the gun lobby is pressing ahead with its "arms agenda" it repeated various Gun Control Australia claims about gun lobbying and political donations. That particular headline topped a report published by Michael West Media (MWM), a niche news website describing itself as a non-partisan independent media publisher "covering the rising power of corporations over democracy".

"Our investigations focus on big business, particularly multinational tax-avoiders, financial markets and the banking and energy sectors," it says. That would appear to place MWM on the anti-business left and certainly no friend of companies such as Nioa which it accuses of being the beneficiary of "windfall contracts" worth \$883 million to produce artillery ammunition, the term "windfall" suggesting the deal was unexpected or unearned.

The Australian Defence Organisation tends not to hand out multimillion-dollar contracts to companies without some certainty they'll deliver what's required at reasonable value to the taxpayer. In this case the factory for production of 155mm artillery shells, jointly developed by Nioa and defence company Rheinmetall at Maryborough, Queensland creates a sovereign capability to produce munitions which previously had to be imported.

The MWM article refers to the peak gun lobby body as the Shooting Industry



Foundation of Australia (SIFA) and the Sports Shooters Association of Australia and throughout the article SSAA is also variously referred to as the Sporting Shooters Association and by its correct name (three variants). Memo to MWM: It helps your credibility to nail the basics (anti-gun academic Professor Philip Alpers, quoted in the article, is at one point referred to as Ayer).

SIFA, it said, had recently opposed WA legislation "which sought to keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals . . ." It's an enduring theme of anti-gun groups that organisations such as SSAA and SIFA should have no right to lobby on behalf of their members. In the case of the proposed WA firearms legislation there's cause for concern as while purported to be directed at keeping guns away from bikies, there

appear to be provisions which would affect licensed shooters - and not for the better. For example one measure would appear to outlaw manufacture of ammunition, ie, handloading. The law there is already viewed as draconian by shooters with a WA Firearm Licence Application - Permit to Acquire - costing \$331 and \$221 for each subsequent gun (in NSW a PTA costs \$30).

Queensland MP Bob Katter and his party are also singled out as recipients of significant funding from the gun lobby (\$100,000 each from SSAA Queensland, Firearm Dealers' Association Qld Inc and others according to the ABC) as well as \$160,000 from Nioa, none of which is too surprising as Katter is unabashedly pro-gun, his electorate is rural north Queensland and Nioa proprietor Robert Nioa is his son-in-law.

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Anti-gun lobby flogging same tired old rhetoric

Katter also expresses some colourful (for 2022) ideas such as training high school students to shoot. That pre-dated the US school massacre and was actually a reference to the war in Ukraine and how Australia could be better prepared for conflict. That was near universally derided though there was a time not too long ago when plenty of Australian schools had their own armouries full of military firearms, with students trained in their use through school cadet units.

Yet no matter how much Bob Katter receives from the firearms industry or gun lobby groups, no matter what he says or does, anyone who thinks he's about to undermine the National Firearms Agreement is deluded. In the wake of the Uvalde school tragedy and US debate about its gun laws, Australia and its experience post-Port Arthur was cited repeatedly in articles in the US and elsewhere, mostly along the lines of 'Australia tightened up its gun laws in the aftermath of an appalling tragedy so why can't the US'.

And references to Australia's experience continue to feature errors, even by people who should do better. Here's the UK Channel 4's FactCheck in a detailed assessment entitled 'Does gun control work?' "In 1996 the Australian government banned handguns and bought back over 600,000 weapons from the public after a massacre left 35 people dead in Port Arthur, Tasmania." *Not handguns* - as a five-second Google search would have confirmed.

Closer to home there's movement in one nation to follow Australia's example in legislating to deal with a surge in gun violence - New Zealand. Like Australia, New Zealand has been cited in the US gun debate as a nation which responded effectively to a tragedy, namely the 2019 murder of 51 worshippers in a Christchurch mosque by an Australian-born terrorist.

As in Australia, New Zealand banned semi-automatic rifles and conducted a buyback yet gun crime has soared though by global standards its murder rate remains low. Nevertheless, 92 Kiwis died by gunshot between January 2018 and May this year - including the 51 who perished in the Christchurch massacre - but even accounting for that spike the longer-term rate doesn't appear to be falling.

Furthermore, NZ Police data reveals a growing number of firearms offences at 1308 in 2021, substantially more than the 1142 in 2019 which includes the mosque attack. Big increases were in instances where guns were used to inflict injury and intimidate or threaten, something attributed to the soaring gang-related



violence widely blamed on New Zealanders deported from Australia under the former Coalition government's uncompromising policy of ridding the country of foreign-born criminals.

These are referred to as '501 deportees' after the section of Australian Migration legislation which deals with good character (or lack of), something which is now a red-hot issue in Australia-NZ relations and one raised by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern when she met our new leader Anthony Albanese during her visit in early June.

Since 2015 around 2000 Kiwis have been sent back to NZ for failing the Section 501 character test with various reasons for deportation, the most common having been sentenced to a year or more in jail. The Immigration Minister has the final say - some 501 deportees may have been born in NZ but lived most of their lives in Australia, working and raising families with their offences having been committed years earlier.

But others have serious criminal records for dishonesty, drugs, rape and violence including murder. Some were members of outlaw motorcycle gangs and, with limited prospects, many gravitated to NZ's gangs of which there are many, variously based on ethnicity, motorcycles and locality. UK author and TV journalist Ross Kemp suggested NZ had more gangs per capita than any other country on earth and there are thought to be more than 8000 gang members in a population of fewer than five

million, the surge in violence having been attributed to turf and drug wars.

So what's to be done? New Zealand police are certainly seizing record numbers of guns and in May of last year the government took another leaf from the Australian playbook by proposing the introduction of firearm prohibition orders (FPOs) with legislation now being examined by a parliamentary committee. FPOs are in use across Australia, often to target members of outlaw motorcycle gangs as generally these aren't the sort of people who could access guns through a regular firearms licence. FPOs go further by banning recipients from even associating with someone with firearms and giving police extraordinary enforcement powers to search cars and homes without a warrant.

To say this is unpopular with impacted parties would be an understatement. One senior bikie challenged his FPO in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and won, imperilling police plans to roll out FPOs to another 2500 crime figures across the state. But not for long. The Victorian Court of Appeal reinstated the order, declaring it was plainly in the public interest that he not be allowed to possess, carry or use a firearm. Furthermore, personal restrictions were no greater than reasonably necessary to advance the legislative objective of protecting the public against the risk of firearm-related crime, the judges said. ●

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A buck to remember

Brad Allen

The fallow rut was in full swing as my son Morgan and I checked out numerous bucks grunting on our hunting property and while there were quite a few showing real promise, we hadn't seen anything better than those we'd taken in previous years. The penultimate day of the hunt saw us drive to the northern extremity of the property to check out a likely spot where we'd seen many deer on previous trips and parking well short of the rutting area we were all smiles as we immediately heard the grunting of a mature buck.

With the wind just right we slowly edged through the scrub until we could identify a number of does feeding in the middle of an open paddock. As we scanned with the binos a reasonable set of antlers were seen moving above a depression as the buck went from doe to doe, checking to see if any were ready to mate. We guessed he was probably about 3½ years old, a handsome red colour-phase example with quite a good head for our area but as we'd already taken similar quality bucks in previous years with the rifle, Morgan decided he'd attempt this one with his compound bow if a close enough shot presented.

The buck never came closer than 70 yards all afternoon and eventually bedded down in the middle of the open paddock with his girls and couldn't be persuaded to come any closer despite my obviously inferior imitation of a competitor. As the light ran out we let them be, vowing to return in the morning for another crack which saw us back at the same spot though there was no grunting to be heard and not a deer to be seen. No amount of imitation grunting or antler-rattling could bring them in and that hunt ended as a high proportion do, heading home empty-handed but wiser and richer for the experience.

Brad with 30kg of fresh venison in the pack. Only an hour until the hunters reached their vehicle.



For the next two ruts, through drought and COVID we scoured the area for that buck to no avail, as we were both of the opinion he had enormous potential and if he could elude hunters he'd only grow bigger and better. As the 2022 rut approached, an old mate who also hunts for meat in the area reported he'd seen a promising red fallow buck feeding on the same paddock. He was with a big mob of does feeding at night then moving off the open paddock just before first light and my initial thought was to wonder if this was the same buck three years on.

Anything worth having is worth as much effort as it takes but the track to the area

was waterlogged and resembled a swamp after the La Nina summer rain events. Having been bogged on that track on a couple of previous occasions when it was nowhere near as wet, there was only one thing for it - we'd have to tackle it on foot and knowing it would take at least an hour to reach there from where we could park the vehicle, we had to leave camp by 4am.

We stood in the gloom of an early April morning on the edge of the open paddock glassing every likely spot, studying every fold in the ground that might hide deer. As the light improved and with nothing seen we slowly and quietly kept to the bush edge, the breeze in our face as we moved

south in search of a different and hopefully better perspective.

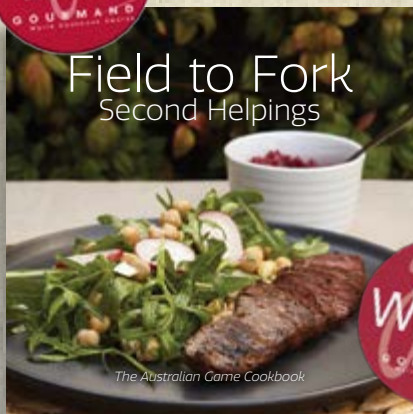
Being slightly more elevated than the first glassing spot I could see well out into the paddock and the next tree line about 400 yards away. Immediately I spotted something with the naked eye that looked for all the world like a buck's head with antlers, staring in my direction and as I raised the 10x42 Leica Geovids I still wasn't sure until he turned to his right revealing two magnificent palms. This had to be the buck I was told about and we also identified several groups of does feeding with him. The trick now was to cover the 400 yards of open paddock between us and hopefully end up in a position for a shot, with bow or rifle, depending on our luck.

About 300 yards from our position on the tree line stood a large dead tree in the middle of the open paddock and our plan basically consisted of keeping that tree between the buck's position and ours as we carefully made our way forward through the long grass towards him. With our concentration focused on the big boy, all was going well as we neared the dead tree when we noticed a smaller black buck with a doe in tow just 60 yards off to our left under some trees. Morgan looked at me and indicated he wanted to try a stalk on the buck with his bow and I agreed, so with the only cover between them and us being tall grass, it wasn't long before Morgan was pinged at 40 yards by both of them though luckily they moved off to our left and away from the main event.

Sneaking around the side of the big tree we were unable to spot the buck who'd moved position and several minutes of glassing passed before we again located



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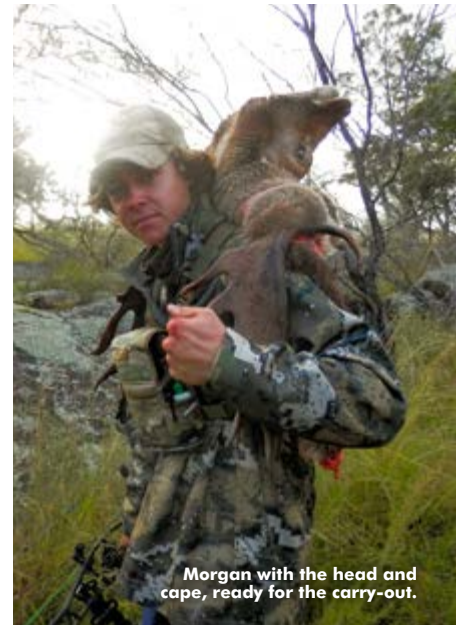


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A buck to remember



On that day he was king of the paddock.



Morgan with the head and cape, ready for the carry-out.

two groups of does feeding several hundred yards further on among some open trees. We could only surmise he was close to their location so, using the long grass and a depression in front of us, we again edged carefully towards the does. We finally closed to 120 yards from the nearest group, staying quite still in the long grass and morning shadows as we continued to glass for the buck and it was only minutes but felt much longer before we finally saw two large palms cruising through the long grass as he moved between several groups of does.

At this point it was obvious there was no way we were going to make it any closer which meant Morgan would have to use the rifle instead of his preferred bow. I told him: "He's a cracker and I can't see us getting any closer, you should take him with my .270 if we get a chance. Bucks like this don't come along very often!" Morgan agreed and readily swapped his bow for my old Ruger.

The does kept feeding and as Morgan set up the shooting sticks the buck began strutting towards the closest group. I whispered: "Get ready, this might be your best chance." The buck moved between the does, checking each in turn as it became obvious the rut hadn't yet started but was about to kick-off at any time. Morgan tracked him through the Trijicon Huron 3-9x40 set on 6x as I ranged him at 109 yards. He was sniffing after a doe and as he stopped perfectly side on, Morgan gave him the message with a Winchester 130gr Power-Point behind the shoulder. The big fellow buckled and was clearly hit hard, managing only 20 slow and wobbly yards before ultimately succumbing to the shot.



That smile lasted quite a few days after the hunt.

High fives, back slaps and handshakes were the order of the day as one happy young hunter made his way forward to claim his prize. There was no 'ground shrinkage' of his antlers as we approached him and he was possibly the buck of a lifetime, bigger than any I'd ever taken in the area. "I want to have him mounted and next time I can concentrate on bow-hunting now I've taken one this good," was Morgan's appraisal of the situation. I had to agree as he truly was a magnificent animal, well worthy of joining the others in our trophy room.


It had been a good season with all the deer as fat as mud and, as they weren't yet rutting, it was obvious we'd also be taking as much meat as possible. After caping the buck we took the legs, backstraps and tenderloins which were packed into my Moroka 30 meat pack for the carry-out. Thankfully the majority of the one-hour trek was downhill but due to the euphoria of the occasion, the associated pain was soon forgotten while the success of this hunt will live long in the memory. ●



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Stock modification *made easy*

Rifle complete with action fitted to refurbished stock ready for sighting-in.

Chris Redlich

It took one last grasp before I realised the fore-end of the stock on my custom Zastava in .22 PPC was more suited to benchrest shooting than offhand field use and while ideal for vehicle and target purposes, I couldn't bear another walkaround hunt with the stock in its current form. Some serious modification was needed.

Rifle stocks are very much a personal fit and if you have one that's not suitable for purpose you can expect a deficiency in field accuracy. There are multiple aftermarket stocks available (you only have to flick through the ads in this magazine) but a simple modification to your original stock might be all you need.

I must disclose the stock on my rifle is actually an aftermarket Boyds laminated and while it was far superior to the original synthetic model, the wide fore-end was awful to grasp offhand. So here I'll endeavour to outline a few basic steps on the much-needed alteration I completed which improved the field performance of my beloved .22 PPC and its laminated stock.

Step 1

Identify the area of the fore-end you'd like trimmed and record the measurement.

Step 2

Position stock on a flat, clean workbench clamp if possible. Using an electric planer, carefully dress the stock edge down at a minimum depth setting. Repeat the process on the opposite side but do NOT shave too much with the planer.

Step 3

Clamp the stock again and using an electric belt sander with 120 grit paper, gently further reduce both edges to the desired new dimensions and profile (shape).

Step 4

Finish off the new belt-sanded edges by using an orbital sander (see photo A), followed by hand-rubbing with 120 grit sandpaper and reducing to 240 grit, applying strokes along the length of the stock for a neat look (remember it's easier to sand off more later than trying to add if you take off too much). If the profile is slightly uneven, hand-sand until satisfied (photo B) and finally blow all dust from the stock in preparation for an oil finish.

Step 1: Identify and measure the area to be culled.



Step 2: Use an electric planer to reduce bulk area.



Step 3: Reduce to your desired shape using a belt sander.



PHOTO A. Step 4: Using an orbital sander.



PHOTO B. Step 4: Hand rubbing with sandpaper.



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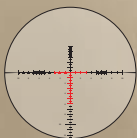
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Stock modification made easy



Step 5: Applying Tru-Oil finish.



Step 6: Hand-rubbed finish with steel wool.

First night shooting ferals after the alteration - head-shots on hares were comfortably achieved.

Step 5

For a nice finish I use Birchwood Casey Tru-Oil but past experience led me to modify the oil by thinning with turps which enabled a longer work time and easier application of the sticky oil. Soak a clean cloth in the oil and rub the bare timber area back and forth in long, even strokes. Allow to dry and repeat the process until desired oil penetration is achieved.

Step 6

Tru-Oil generally dries to a satin and almost gloss finish so for a matte finish I rubbed the oiled area back with triple zero-grade steel wool until it blended with the original texture. Once satisfied I blew down and wiped the stock and refitted my barrelled action. Being absolutely rapt with the new feel and look of my dressed stock I couldn't wait to go shooting with it.

The test

At the range I was pleased to discover the Zastava shot just as good as it had before and losing the extra weight off the fore-end hadn't affected accuracy. Using my pet load of 50-grain Nosler Ballistic Tips the PPC is usually capable of grouping sub- $\frac{1}{2}$ MOA at 100m but my first outing after stock modification proved successful, with an 'out of the safe' three-shot group measuring just over $\frac{1}{2}$ MOA which included two shots touching.

The confidence driven by my results on paper was all I needed to start shooting thin-skinned ferals and the opportunity arose to field-test the rifle from varying positions as I cleanly head-shot some hares while spotlighting at both short and long range.

And finally

For those who consider themselves handy with manual and power tools, this is an easy task that's worth having a crack at. If you're trying to save some money then a simple modification such as the one outlined here will cost no more than \$50 in consumables and could be just the answer to resurrecting that old suspect stock. So I hope I've been able to impart enough information to shooters thinking about undertaking a similar stock modification. ●



COMING SOON



AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND

HANDGUN

ISSUE

21

Available from late November 2022



All hunters yearn for a good knife as does Leon Wright . . . but his is different

The old Green River knife
before being sent to Knifeworks
Australia for refurbishing.

While most of us have an auntie or two in the family I consider myself luckier than most as I've had the love of 18. On my mother's side (the Kirwins) were 12 girls and three boys, all raised in the 'Kelly' country around Carboor in Victoria and they attended bush schools such as Oxley and Bobinawarra. The family farmed in the Carboor district and being such a large group, regular rabbit hunting outings were the go to help feed the hungry horde and everyone took part. The love of the bush never left my aunts and later in life they could often be found camped on some peaceful river or further north in Queensland or in the gem fields of Rubyvale and Anakie.

Just as a quick aside and a snippet of Australian history, my great-grandfather Lawrence Kirwin who farmed at Carboor, was also employed by the Victorian Police as a secret agent in pursuit of the Kelly Gang. Going by the alias 'Renwick' he soon came to the attention of the Kellys to the point the family had to hide him in a hollow log at the back of their property and feed him after dark. Apparently the mosquitoes were bad but far less a threat to his life had the Kellys caught up with him! JJ Kenneally's *The Inner History of the Kelly Gang* contains an account of his involvement.

The aunts on my father's side were all born in the bush too and one who was very dear to me was Aunt Loma who led a dream life though full of hardship. Born in Cann River, Victoria she was on the road droving with her father at the age of 15. There were very few vehicles at this time, no refrigeration or air-conditioning so everything was done on horseback until automation and electricity caught up. The only mobility my aunt had for many years was an old wagon pulled by a couple of horses and



The old wagon drawn by two horses covered many miles from Victoria to Queensland.

as kids we loved travelling country roads in that wagon. There was nothing easy about droving in those early days but Loma loved it and wouldn't have swapped it for anything. She competed in many buck-jumping events and told me she rode in the first Moomba Festival.

When she eventually married my uncle they continued droving stock from Victoria to Queensland and everywhere in between and often Loma drove a mob of sheep or cattle while raising two children as my uncle did other droving work in the Northern Territory. She was considered one of the few women drovers in New South Wales and, after outliving two husbands,

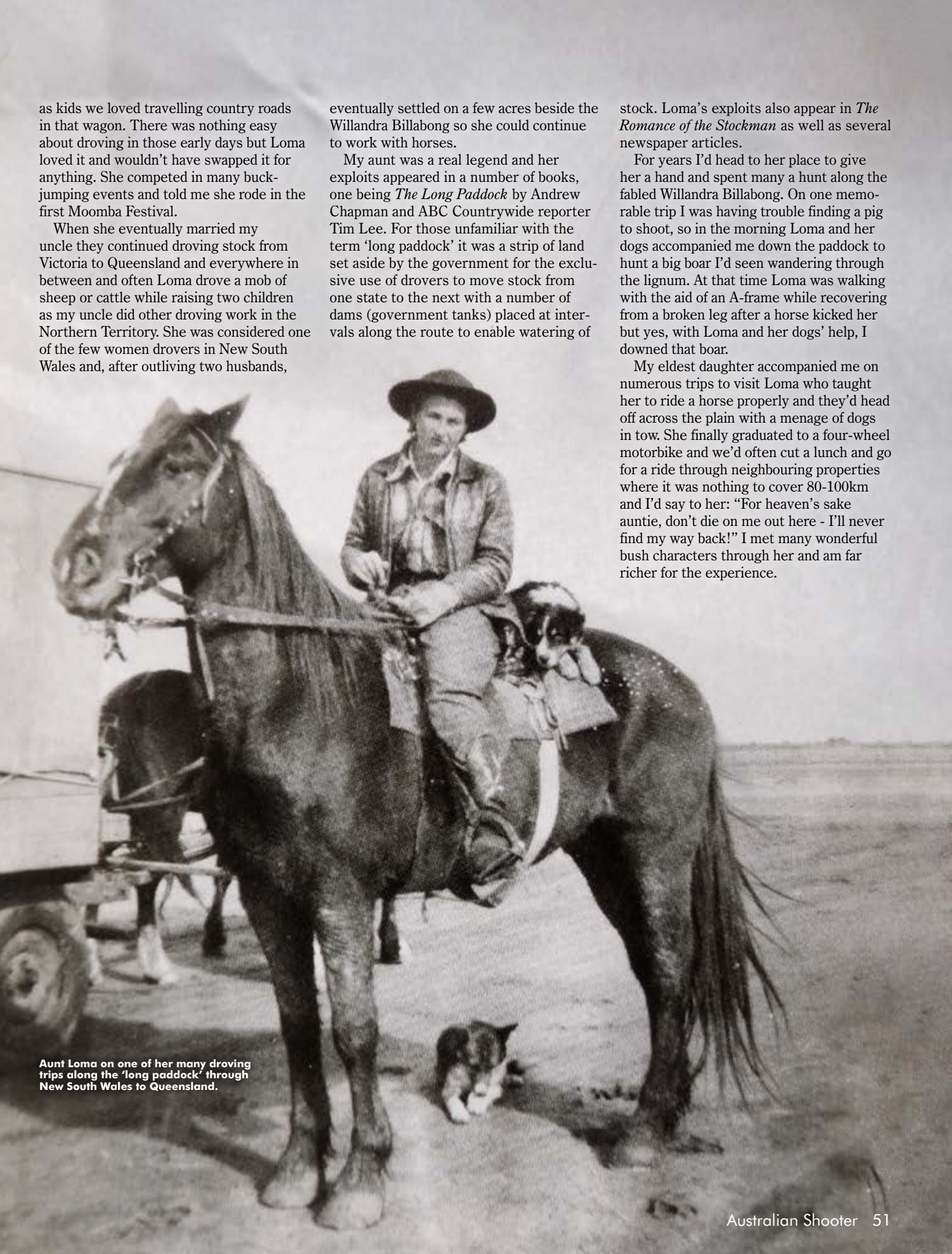
eventually settled on a few acres beside the Willandra Billabong so she could continue to work with horses.

My aunt was a real legend and her exploits appeared in a number of books, one being *The Long Paddock* by Andrew Chapman and ABC Countrywide reporter Tim Lee. For those unfamiliar with the term 'long paddock' it was a strip of land set aside by the government for the exclusive use of drovers to move stock from one state to the next with a number of dams (government tanks) placed at intervals along the route to enable watering of

stock. Loma's exploits also appear in *The Romance of the Stockman* as well as several newspaper articles.

For years I'd head to her place to give her a hand and spent many a hunt along the fabled Willandra Billabong. On one memorable trip I was having trouble finding a pig to shoot, so in the morning Loma and her dogs accompanied me down the paddock to hunt a big boar I'd seen wandering through the lignum. At that time Loma was walking with the aid of an A-frame while recovering from a broken leg after a horse kicked her but yes, with Loma and her dogs' help, I downed that boar.

My eldest daughter accompanied me on numerous trips to visit Loma who taught her to ride a horse properly and they'd head off across the plain with a menage of dogs in tow. She finally graduated to a four-wheel motorbike and we'd often cut a lunch and go for a ride through neighbouring properties where it was nothing to cover 80-100km and I'd say to her: "For heaven's sake auntie, don't die on me out here - I'll never find my way back!" I met many wonderful bush characters through her and am far richer for the experience.



Aunt Loma on one of her many droving trips along the 'long paddock' through New South Wales to Queensland.

The Loma

One of those was old Billy Baird who ran the courier service from Hay to Ivanhoe in NSW and twice weekly he'd drop in on Loma for lunch. As a prisoner of war during World War Two, Billy was in the mines when the atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Saved from certain death due to the fact they were underground, he and his fellow prisoners didn't see the sun for days afterwards, only fallout. Then there's Maggie Moore the shearers' cook who gave a classic interview to the Shearers' Hall of Fame on how she handled drunken shearers. They're long gone now but as I said, I'm richer for knowing them all.

Before she passed away Loma gave me an old knife she'd had for who knows how many years. It was a Green River knife and was a bit worse for wear after decades of use though its sentimental value is priceless. It held its edge through some hard work and was one of the few knives I had that could field-dress a sambar stag with few touch-ups to the blade.

A knife that can hold a good edge is integral to any hunter's kit for everyday use, whether around camp or for field-dressing various game. Like most hunters I craved that and if the knife was a bit fancy, all the better. With some loose cash I thought I'd splash out and buy such a knife but then opted to have the old Green River done up instead, preferably with a deer antler handle. I sent a photo of it to Ron Ross of Knifeworks Australia and asked if he could do the work I needed and a swift reply had me sending it in his direction. For once cost didn't enter into things as he was given free rein to see what he could come up with. All went well and after Ron finished the refurbishment the knife was on its way back.

Six weeks later the knife still hadn't turned up and believe me I was starting to panic but after a flurry of emails back and forth to Australia Post it was eventually found and delivered. Ron had done a magnificent job and it was, to my mind, a work of art. He'd replaced the old wooden handle with one made from deer antler, slightly curved to fit snugly in your palm for a good grip, the blade had been cleaned up and a mirror finish applied so it was definitely one of a kind.

Ron asked about its origins as he hadn't seen one of that design for many years though his grandfather had used similar knives which were now in his possession. I told him of my aunt and her life and he was so taken with her story he asked my permission to copy the knife with a couple of minor changes. The finished product would be called 'The Loma' which would be embossed on the blade and hoping he

intended putting the knife on the market I said I'd like another five for family members. Ron had kept the original wooden handle and asked if I'd like it to feature one of the knives. I told him I would and we sorted out the others too.

The last time I saw Auntie Loma she was bed-ridden and I could tell she was dying – she'd fitted an awful lot into her 92 years

but sadly her time was up. I put my hand on her shoulder, bent over and kissed her head then whispered in her ear: "Thank you for being a great aunt," at which she squeezed my hand. Even though Loma has gone I'll never forget her and each time I draw that knife I'm reminded of all the wonderful times we shared. ●

The finished product is a true work of art.



The other orders cut from 1025 grade steel and ready for the next stage.



Shown here are the blades, cleaned up and embellished with 'The Loma' engraving.



Finished knives ready to be shipped to their new owners.



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Criminals find it “easy” to buy black market firearms

Rachael Oxborrow

Criminals are accessing illegal guns in Australia despite the existence of stringent firearm laws and continuing to tighten these laws in the hope of reducing criminal activity has potentially more impact on people who follow the rules and meet licensing and storage requirements than those who choose not to. These are declarations the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) has been making for years with the backing of objective evidence-based research from authoritative sources including the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Now a new Deakin University study published in the *Deviant Behaviour* journal entitled 'I know a guy and he's got guns galore: Accessing crime guns in the Australian illicit firearms market' has once again backed our assertions. The study found a cohesive network of career criminals are running a thriving illicit gun trade in this country. Researchers interviewed criminal gang associates, former outlaw motorcycle gang members, drug traffickers and armed robbers in New South Wales and South Australian prisons and revealed criminals find it “surprisingly easy” to buy firearms through Australia's black market despite strict gun laws. Keep an eye out for an in-depth analysis of this study from the SSAA Legislative Action (SSAA-LA) team in the near future.



Meanwhile, SSAA National's response to a global push to introduce marking standards for individual ammunition cases has been forwarded to our World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) associates. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) released a discussion paper to investigate the feasibility of marking small calibre ammunition earlier this year. The WFSA represents its hunting, shooting and industry member organisations from around the world on the international stage, with SSAA National being one of its founding members.

The UNIDIR paper was discussed as part of the second substantive session

of the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition held in August. The OEWG has now met twice as it seeks to elaborate on a set of political commitments as a new global framework which will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management. The third session for this group is set for February of next year.

The SSAA official response to the UNIDIR paper and its concept of ammunition marking has been provided to the Australian Department of Home Affairs. If you'd like to learn more about the Association's official response, visit the SSAA National website. ●

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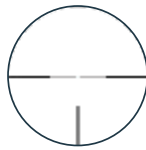


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Life's a Beech



CZ 457 ramps it up a notch, writes Con Kapralos

The current incarnation of the Ceska Zbrojovka (CZ) rimfire rifle line, the CZ 457, continues the tradition of this famous European marque with its roots steeped in the legendary Brno rimfires and more recently the CZ-UB (Uhersky Brod) 452 and 455 models. One way to gauge how respected these previous editions are is by the prices well cared-for rifles still command while targeted by collectors, astute shooters and hunters after a classical rimfire option.

The CZ 457 is distributed by Winchester Australia whose website list 15 different models. Entry-level options retailing just above the \$1000 mark consist of the Synthetic (\$1045) and Beech Wood (\$1060) and when approached to run the rule over the latter in .22LR we were happy to oblige. The rifle was supplied with an excellent scope in the Meopta Optika 5 in 2-10x42 in CZ rings along with Winchester rimfire hunting ammunition for testing.

At a glance

The gun arrived in the customary CZ carton and the beechwood stock really surprised with some pleasant figures in the grain and impressive fleur-de-lys chequering pattern. The rifle's a bolt-action repeater with the barrelled action a deep satin black, the barrel of a sporter profile measuring 525mm and devoid of iron sights. The rifle is supplied with a five-shot clip magazine and comes with a comprehensive instruction manual, warranty certificate and CZ test-target shot with RWS 40-grain ammunition. It has overall length of 975mm and weighs 2.6kg.

Barrelled action

The receiver is shared across all models in the 457 bracket, a one-piece steel unit of circular bar-stock with attractive flats milled on the right and left-hand facets, the receiver top having an 11mm dovetail milled into it which provides the only means for scope-ring attachment. Left of the receiver carries the CZ logo and 'CZ 457' lightly engraved into the flat and behind this is the bolt release button which permits bolt removal for security/safety and cleaning with reinstalling the bolt as easy as removing it.

The layout of action has been updated from the CZ 455 to the CZ 457.



The barrel set on the CZ 457 carries over from the 455 and is interchangeable on both.



The right side of the receiver has an identical flat as the left, the front receiver ring having a small gas port just forward of the ejection port together with proof markings and serial number. The front receiver ring has no threads for the barrel shank as the barrel is a slip-fit with two set screws to hold it in place once installed, the screws being M6x1 thread pitch. The rifle accepts any compatible CZ 455/CZ 457 rimfire barrel and is straightforward to install.

The barrel is of a light sporter-weight profile, 525mm long and chambered for the .22LR cartridge with matching one-in-16 twist rate and made of chrome molybdenum steel using a cold-hammer forging process. There are no iron sights but a threaded muzzle for use with compatible accessories, the only drawback being the protective knurled cap sitting proud of the barrel surface which would've been better flush. The barrelled action has a satin black finish which, according to CZ, has much improved

anti-corrosion and anti-abrasion properties over traditional finishes.

Bolt

This is a cock-on open, control feed design with the major improvement over the CZ 455 being a 60-degree bolt throw which allows riflescopes to be mounted as low as possible. It's of multi-piece construction and consists of the polished steel body, blued bolt handle collar and knob with the cocking cam and firing pin springs housed inside a polymer shroud at the terminal end.

Rounds fed from the magazine are controlled by dual opposing non-rotating extractors, ensuring the rimfire case is held tightly against the bolt face during loading to keep it from being deformed until it enters the chamber. On firing, the extractors come into play again and effectively eject the case clear of the action through the port.

Many owners choose to retrofit larger-diameter bolt knobs for a 'tactical look' but for a hunting rifle the small-rounded knob is spot-on and easily comes to hand when chambering a round and ejecting a fired case. Bolt travel is smooth as a rimfire bolt should be with no hint of binding and will become slicker with continual use.

Safety, trigger and magazine

The safety is a two-position linear unit behind the bolt notch and part of the trigger group itself, the new 'push forward to fire' design a complete change from that on the CZ 455. Pushing the lever forward unblocks the trigger sear to expose a red dot on the receiver flat, indicating the rifle is ready to fire. Pushing the lever to the back reveals a white dot indicating 'safe-mode' where the trigger sear is directly blocked but the bolt can be cycled to clear the action. The trigger's the standard one on the CZ 457 series and is single-stage



The bolt on the CZ 457 is a multi-piece affair with non-rotating dual extractors and 60-degree throw.

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design - fully adjustable using an Allen key through a grub screw on the base of the triggerfoot - and was perfect as set from the factory at around 1kg.

The magazine is polymer as on the CZ 455, holds five rounds with a 10-shot unit available and clips into the belly of the stock and is easily removed by pressing a small lever in front of the magazine well, integral to the magazine box (pressed steel magazines are readily available). The triggerguard and magazine port are two-piece interlocking with the polymer triggerguard attached to the steel magazine port shank. Internally the magazine box is polymer and takes both .22LR and .17HMR/.22WMR clip magazines. It's attached to the underside of the receiver body with two screws and in the case of the .22LR a polymer block is located in the rear of the box to take the shorter .22LR magazine. If changing to a .17HMR or .22WMR barrel, simply remove the steel pin which retains the polymer block in the well and the larger magazine can be used.

Stock

Rifle stocks made from timber rather than walnut aren't new with any stable timber being suitable and the beech unit on the CZ 457 looks the part, designed to the American sporter profile. With modern technology, elaborate patterns can be applied to any nondescript wood to make them look fancy and while I don't know what path CZ have taken with this stock, the ornate fleur-de-lys machine-cut chequering pattern on the fore-end and pistol grip look very appealing.

The stock also sports QD-sling swivel studs and a decent 20mm sorbothane pad, a big plus in my book. Rubber or polymer recoil pads do nothing for a rifle and even though the .22LR has no recoil, having a pad which sits firmly in the shoulder without slipping is a prerequisite. Internally the stock inletting is neatly finished, CZ claiming the rifle uses a 'new type of bedding' arrangement which consists of

a free-floating steel lug in a recess in the head of the stock which mates with a slot machined in the underside of the receiver at the rear tang just behind the trigger group. Why CZ chose this arrangement is clear as the interchangeable barrel screws and front action screw provisions don't leave any space on the underside of the front receiver ring.

Additional to the recoil lug are two composite synthetic pillars inletted into the stock to which the front and rear action screws pass through and the receiver rests on in conjunction with the lug. These pillars ensure the action screws can be tightened without crushing the stock mortise though I'm puzzled as to why CZ would choose polymer pillars when for a few dollars more, alloy would be far better and make the rifle more appealing.

At the range

Shooting this rifle with the excellent Meopta Optika coupled with its fine trigger produced some respectable five-shot groups which would easily equate to 'Minute of Rabbit' or any other varmint at sensible rimfire ranges. It would've been nice to shoot some match-grade ammunition but the scope of the review was as a hunting and plinking outfit. The rifle functioned flawlessly, chambering and ejecting spent rounds without issue and while some like to stretch the legs on a .22LR to 100m and beyond, I feel going past 75m for hunting applications isn't ethical but shoot inanimate targets as far as you like.

Summary

While the last of the fixed-barrel rimfires in the CZ 452 are a thing of the past, the CZ 457 with its interchangeable barrel capability makes it possible to extract the best from your rimfire rifle. With barrels available in .22LR, .17HMR and .22WMR it's just a matter of loosening a couple of retaining screws and sliding in a new barrel to match it with the correct magazine. The review rifle is one any small-game hunter or shooter would be proud to own. The CZ 457 Beech Wood retails for \$1060 and is available from all Winchester Australia registered dealers. ●

Specifications:

Manufacturer: CZ, Czech Republic

Model: CZ 457 Beech Wood

Action: Push-feed bolt-action repeater, 60-degree bolt throw, 11mm dovetail for scope mounting

Calibres: .22LR (tested), .22WMR, .17HMR

Barrel: 525mm light sporter profile, no iron sights, threaded muzzle for accessories (½ x 20)

Trigger: Single-stage adjustable

Safety: Two-position linear

Magazine: Polymer five-round (10-round available), compatible pressed-steel magazines available

Stock: Beechwood, oil finished, impressed fleur-de-lys chequering pattern, sorbothane recoil pad

Overall length: 975mm

Overall weight: 2.6kg

RRP: About \$1060

Distributor: Winchester Australia

The buttstock is well profiled with a nice open pistol grip.



The triggerguard is a polymer unit which interlocks with a steel shank that makes up the magazine port.

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Hide and seek

For Derek Nugent, targeting game animals is a matter of tactics

Hunting is a very personal pursuit. Everyone has their own particular motivation or purpose, their preference in respect to equipment, their own approach or favoured tactics with those employed on a particular hunt being influenced by a myriad of factors, many of which work in unison to dictate how efficiently a hunt will end. These include consideration being given to the target species, its habit and population density, property access and terrain, prior experiences and indeed personal fitness, while another decision to be made is whether to stalk or ambush your quarry as either can be just as effective and most hunters would've used both over the years.

Hide or seek

Stalking for many hours allows you to not only cover a large area but also investigate the various locations favoured by game at different times of the day. From experience I know that once the early morning window to locate feeding deer has passed, it's productive to sweep through likely bedding areas, wallows and water sources. This was once my immediate 'go-to' option but with the passage of time the attraction

of slogging many kilometres over rugged terrain with a load of venison on my back has lost some (but not all) of its appeal. Consequently I now find myself being drawn more and more to the use of a hide.

The notion of targeting prey from ambush is not a recent one nor is it restricted exclusively to humankind as two of our best-known native species - barramundi and saltwater crocodiles - are opportunistic, ambush predators. The tactic works well and has its merits as using a hide allows

you to target a particular area identified as a 'hot-spot' at different times on a seasonal or daily basis. It may be a wallow heavily frequented during the roar, a break in a tree line through which game regularly emerges to feed at dawn or dusk or a convergence point of several well-used game trails.

Providing you're prepared to invest the time a sited hide has the advantage of allowing you to observe without being observed, meaning you can be selective about which, if any, animal to harvest and



Likely spot for a hide with uninterrupted views of dam approaches.

have the luxury of the best possible positioning of that animal for a humane single-shot kill and it's in these respects location of the hide is crucial.

Location

Naturally some sites simply stand out as likely positions for a hide whether permanent or temporary and besides those mentioned above, positions overlooking dams or the margins of cultivated land are prime. An item of kit which can be helpful in determining suitability of a potential hide site is the trail camera which I use extensively to assess likely hide sites, because sometimes the most innocuous locations can be the best.

A trail cam gives a unique and unobtrusive insight into what animals are about - their numbers, trophy potential, patterns of behaviour and this information will dictate not only if erecting a hide at a particular site is likely to be a profitable enterprise but also suggest what times, on both a daily or seasonal basis, animals are likely to be observed.

Thanks to information gathered by my trail cameras I have numerous hides set up on my property, primarily placed in response to the species being targeted, knowledge of their habits and acknowledgement of the need to factor in the wind. So if a particular hide is out of action due to fickleness of the prevailing wind I simply select another regardless, as all have the common characteristic of being able to be approached and occupied in a relatively quiet and unobtrusive manner.



Stag captured on trail cam adjacent to a hide in the background.



A deer filmed from a trail cam above the hide.

Design

When it comes to design of a hide there are no hard and fast rules as once a location has been selected, the decisions simply revolve around how much time, energy and money you wish to invest. For instance if setting up on a real 'hot-spot' for many species (like a dam) you might build a substantial permanent hide for repeated year-round use while if targeting a wallow during the roar, a simpler temporary structure would be appropriate. It really comes down to what works for you.



'Pop-up' tent or chair-style hide.

An online search will throw up a host of options from quite sophisticated semi-permanent US-style 'stands' through portable 'pop-up' chair/tent-like structures to simple camo netting fitted with elasticised ties for ease of rigging to tree trunks. The choice is extensive and really comes down to making a decision as to what's the best fit for your purpose. I use temporary hides to target the more remote sites I've chosen to monitor and with these I go 'au naturel'. Yes, I've actually found a productive use for lantana as by hollowing out the rear of a stand of lantana, a suitable screen can be left facing your kill zone. It's cost effective and works well.

My permanent hides are located on dams and are, for the sake of longevity, made from assorted scavenged metal cast-offs such as star pickets, poles and fencing panels covered with camo netting and nestled in the shade of conveniently placed trees. Each contains a comfortable beach chair to ease the possible hours of waiting and a timber rest from which to take a steady shot. I'm not naive enough to think these structures are invisible to the deer I primarily target, but a set of protocols associated with their use means the animals have accepted their presence and don't perceive them as hosting a threat.

Hide and seek

Usage

My dam-based hides are substantial structures which have been in place for many years and during that time there's been no reduction in either the variety or numbers of animals (native or introduced) that visit the dam. No doubt some are aware of the structures, some probably not, but all have come to accept them as part of the landscape. Each hide has a trail cam either directly above or adjacent to it and the images they capture are both informative and entertaining. Once a decision is taken to 'man' a hide in response to images gathered the rules are simple: A shot can only be taken on a lone animal which satisfies the agreed purpose of the hunt - meat or trophy.

If a group of deer comes through it's an eyes-only experience and if an animal is harvested the entire beast is removed by vehicle prior to any butchering. The overall result, at least in my mind, is the illusion of the hide harbouring no threat is maintained, a protocol which may seem counter-productive and even quite frustrating to some but it appears to maintain viability of the hide. Of course all bets are off should a pack of wild dogs show up as they're shot on sight in whatever numbers possible.

A question of tactics

At this stage of my hunting career I'm still happy to use both hide and seek tactics as the mood takes me, although some of my

companions are perhaps approaching an age to now routinely favour the hide option. Typically our adventures will see us all monitor a different location from a hide on Saturday afternoon then stalk on Sunday morning, with the process repeated over several days or until an animal is grassed.

I fully appreciate some may frown on the concept of using a hide as opposed to putting in the hard yards and stalking the ridge tops, hence my original assertion that hunting's a personal pursuit dictated

by your situation. I'm a meat hunter not a trophy hunter so venison is my goal and any attractive heads which come along are a bonus. Having said that I've no hesitation in harvesting meat animals from a hide or targeting introduced ferals like cats, dogs, foxes or pigs in the same manner. So while my health and fitness allow I'll continue to stalk a true trophy whenever the mood should strike as that just seems the right way to honour a 'Monarch of the Glen'. ●



Despatched days later, a wild dog as viewed from a hide camera.



Inside the hide.



Neat and simple pre-rigged camo netting hide.



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Expert debunks myths of hunting on gamebird populations

The battle of science and ideologies is being examined in an independent review of duck and quail hunting in Australia to ensure the country's oldest land use was not causing a decline in the populations of these two important wild harvest species. Exploring the current and future sustainability of duck and quail hunting answers the question of whether proof exists to back the anti-hunting group catch-cry that current hunting seasons could spell danger for gamebird populations.

Wildlife biologist Dr Graham Hall has more than 35 years' experience in conservation and wildlife research and attests there's no scientific evidence to indicate game bird hunting has a negative impact on the sustainability of native ducks and quail in Australia. His study was commissioned by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) to involve an independent and qualified researcher to examine the issue from a 'big picture' perspective.

He first gives global context to the natural world and the fundamental role humans have in modifying that world for all humanity and the other creatures which share this planet. He then introduces hunting and attempts to place it in the

global context drawn. This section also provides answers to questions posed by SSAA National in an Australian context while acknowledging the limitations of this approach given the lack of local data. The study concludes by recommending a way forward for the sustainable management of ducks and quail in Australia.

This publication is being used by SSAA state and territory branches to assist in their dialogue with governments and their departments, conservation groups and wildlife managers and was also introduced to the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) by SSAA National Wildlife Programs Leader Matthew Godson, who presented the body of work to the annual WFSA conference of more than 44 hunting, shooting and industry associations. Attendance at the WFSA conference is just one of the many ways SSAA National advocates for the shooting sports and recreational hunting with a focus on relationship building and lobbying.

Exploring the current and future sustainability of duck and quail hunting in Australia by Graham P. Hall is available now for \$39.95 (free postage for members) from the SSAA Online Shop at www.onlineshop.ssaa.org.au ●





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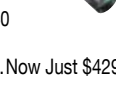
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Throw a party

Do-All Clay Cannon fun for everyone, finds Daniel O'Dea

I was never blessed with a good arm for throwing. As a boy I always seemed to come off second best in a backyard game of branding which I guess is like playing dodgeball but with a tennis ball - no court and more pain. I never had the distance or power of my brother or cousin and ended up the one with most welts and bruises at the end of the day. Later, as an adult, for years I shot competition clay target and even achieved a AA Trap grade but was never tempted by the idea of being a hand-thrower for clay targets on the farm or for practice while on a hunt.

Sure I understood hand-throwers provided a mechanical advantage but it's still a manual system and seemed like a fair bit of effort to me. You always needed a mate with a good arm and where's the fun for them if after your turn on the gun you can't reciprocate on the thrower? The idea of buying an actual clay target trap did

cross my mind a few times, especially as cheaper and more portable options became available, but still represented a reasonable outlay in funds. More recently my interest was spiked when I received a Facebook post from a mate showing a new product from Do-All Outdoors called the Clay Cannon, a handheld clay launcher. The accompanying short video was enough for me and I immediately flicked an email to Outdoor Sporting Agencies, the Do-All Australian agent, requesting one for review.

A few weeks later I had my hands on a Do-All Outdoors Clay Cannon and was in slight bewilderment as to why I hadn't seen anything quite like this on the market before. It's almost a work of genius in its simplicity and in my mind is to clay target throwing what a slingshot is to hurling marbles. To break it down you have two halves of a hard plastic shell shaped like a quarter piece of pie with a spring-loaded

arm in the centre and a pistol grip handle with trigger release at one corner. Three short rail sections allow for fitment of a vertical grip on either flat side of the device or along the horizontal base. Just behind the pistol grip is a large orange knob for tensioning the spring while forward an orange-buttoned cross-bolt safety provides prevention of accidental discharge.

The whole deal arrived flat-packed in a cardboard box and required the minimum of assembly. Basically all there is to be done is attach the supplied vertical grip to one of the three available rail sections then screw on the orange spring tensioner knob. You could say you have to do little to put the Do-All into action.

To operate you must first set the tension by rotating the orange knob to increase or decrease the spring tension - clockwise increases and anti-clockwise decreases - which in turn controls the speed and



Up, up and away goes another target.



Daniel with the Do-All Clay Cannon.



Place two fingertips on the cocking arm.



Draw back to cocked position.

distance of clays thrown. A small window cut forward of the tension knob on both sides (marked Min and Max) lets you see the end of the spring which transverses along as it loads up under tension, giving a visual reference as to how much tension you've set on the throwing arm.

To cock the Clay Cannon you must ensure the safety's in the 'off' position then place two fingers on the tip of the throwing arm and pull it back through its ark until it locks into position on the trigger sear with an audible click. You then put the safety back on before loading your clay or clays on to the throwing arm. As the trigger and sear are a simple one-piece unit and the cross-bolt safety locks it in position it needs to be off to actually cock and lock the Clay Cannon.

Clays can be loaded as singles, stacked or nesting pairs and the Clay Cannon will accept Mini, Midi, Standard and International clay targets - all you do is place the clay or clays upright on the throwing arm. There's a bump towards the bottom of the throwing arm and it's recommended clays be positioned closest to this (nearer the centre of the unit). The position is also marked with two arrowed stickers, one each side (inside) between the shell halves marked 'Load Here' and while these are a little hard to see, they do offer clear direction as to where you need to place the clay. It's noted in the instructions that where you place the clays will affect the speed and direction of when they leave the throwing arm which appears to be covered

with a black strip of heavy grit tape for gripping and launching.

The mechanism and operation is simplicity itself. When you cock and lock the arm it loads up the spring tension and stores its energy. Place clays on the throwing arm and when the trigger's pulled the energy is released and the throwing



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Throw a party

arm catapults them off into the wild blue yonder. The unit is ambidextrous and can be fired with either flat side down but clays must be loaded upright to suit, in other words the clay itself must be upright in the Clay Cannon when launched. A caution sticker either side indicates the 'Launch Zone' with arrows so you've a clear idea of which way to point it on firing.

Eager to give it a workout I dropped into Horsley Park Gun Shop and picked up a box of clay targets (they're about \$40 for a box of 150). With clays in hand all you need is a mate to run the Do-All Clay Cannon, your favourite shotgun and a couple of boxes of shells with shot size of around 7 to 7.5 being ideal. But it's all about having fun so whatever shotgun and shells you have on hand can work within reason, meaning you wouldn't be using buckshot or solid slugs.

There are no real tricks to using the Do-All Clay Cannon as it's pretty easy to cock and load while the arrows clearly display the launch direction, making it simple to point the right way. As with any firearms activity safety is paramount, so naturally the operator of the thrower should always be standing to the side and rearward of the shooter and muzzle, likewise the backdrop must be adequate and safe for

both fall of shot and broken targets.

Once you've mastered the knack of throwing targets with the Clay Cannon, achieving both distance and height won't be a problem and producing great shooting targets will come easily. It's also quite a lot of fun for the operator, certainly better than a hand-thrower which can be a chore and if I had to fault anything at all perhaps it would be the heavy trigger release. Let's just say you're not going to launch a target by accident based on the sample

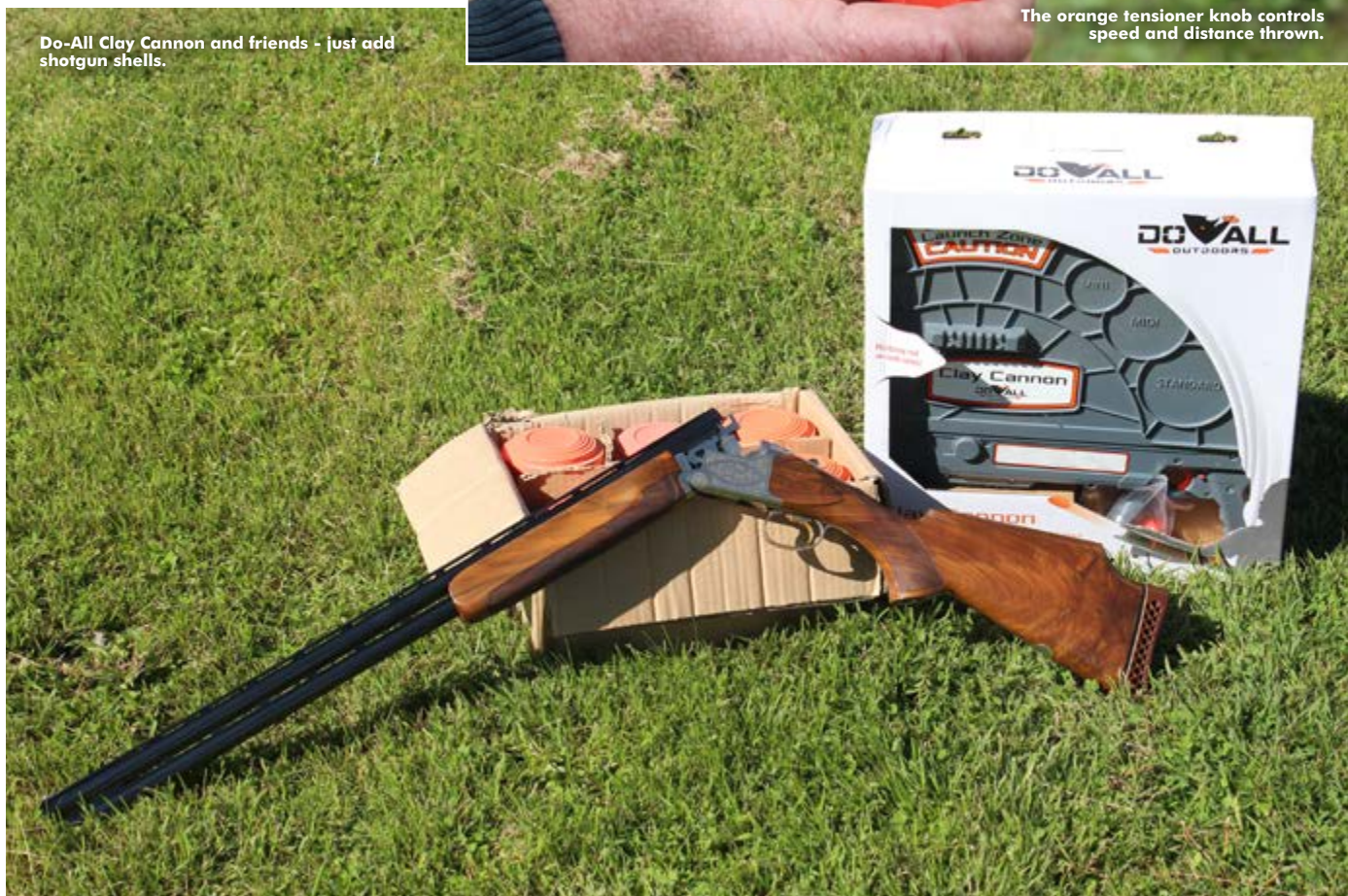
unit provided. Perhaps it might get better with use but in the scheme of things this is a minor criticism.

Totally portable and requiring no batteries the Do-All Outdoors Clay Cannon can be a great addition to your shooting kit for practice or just to have fun around the hunting camp. As mentioned, Do-All Outdoors clay throwers and products are distributed by Outdoor Sporting Agencies. Visit www.osaaustralia.com.au Pricing in stores varies so consult your local dealer. ●



The orange tensioner knob controls speed and distance thrown.

Do-All Clay Cannon and friends - just add shotgun shells.



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Des's double

The visit of an old pal gave Joe Norris the chance for some hunting interludes

Des has been a mate of mine for more than 40 years and when I needed electrical work done at my remote north Queensland cattle property he volunteered for the job and as a licensed electrical contractor who'd recently retired he was able come when it suited everyone. Years ago we were contracted to muster cattle together and would occasionally be able to go hunting for pigs although at that time we were too busy raising families to be away all that often.

I asked him to pack his rifle when we were preparing the gear together for the trip up north as I fully intended to fit in a few hunts while he was helping me. Although deer are not common the occasional one turns up on my place as well as the usual ferals like wild dogs and pigs and as Des never had the chance to hunt deer, I was hoping I could put him on to his first one while he was there.

The Queensland National Parks bought the neighbouring property to us a few years ago and in their wisdom destroyed each of the dams on the estate despite the fact all the native animals had been used to the water being there for generations, so I hate to think how many perished. The other thing that happens now is feral animals migrate on to my place for water when the seasons turn dry. We developed and planted some paddocks we use for hay which means we have the usual complement of pigs and, as stated, the odd deer.

After a few days of running wires and replacing switches and power points we had a free afternoon so I took Des for a hunt. Before we left I told him I wasn't taking a rifle so it was all up to him but no pressure. I promised I wouldn't tease him if he missed - well not

much! We drove to one of the swamps that still had some water at that time of year and after parking the vehicle about a kilometre from the swamp we stalked in, being careful with the wind direction so any pigs or deer wouldn't smell us. I walked behind Des with my mobile phone at the ready in case we found something and was looking at the ground for sign when I walked into him as he'd suddenly stopped and stood frozen in front of me.

Luckily I didn't say anything when I bumped into him as about 150m away was a young chital stag in the early stage of growing his antlers, picking at short green grass in the swamp. The stag had no idea



we were there so Des had plenty of time to slowly creep to a handy tree for a solid rest. We'd talked about recovering all usable meat if we did take a deer and as he was using a .223, Des took his time to place a shot where it wasn't going to wreck too much meat. Sadly I couldn't grab a photo without risk of spooking the deer so I stood behind a tree and waited for the report of the rifle.

Des is a handy rifleman so it was no surprise when the deer collapsed at the shot and when I asked where he'd hit it, he told me he aimed for the atlas joint at the junction of the neck and head. When we walked up to the deer it was apparent Des hadn't lost any of his shooting skills in the years since we last hunted together as the animal was hit exactly where he'd aimed. We loaded the stag after taking photos and took it back to the shed to process it for the excellent venison they provide and with the meat packed into the freezer we salted the hide as Des wanted to keep it and I agreed to tan it for him.

The next few days were taken up with electrical work and it was three days later before we headed back out. Again Des brought his rifle as I did a lick run which entailed carting a couple of tons of urea-based food supplement to various feeding stations around my paddocks to help cattle digest the dry grass and maximise what protein there is in it at that time of year. We checked all the dams as we went and although spotting plenty of tracks, we didn't find any pigs so I decided to head back to the water nearest the national park boundary where we again parked quite a distance away and walked to the waterhole.

We treaded quietly around the large dam, keeping to the scrub surrounding it so we wouldn't alert any pigs although the black cockatoos did their best to announce our presence to the world. In the end there were no pigs so next day we went back to the swamp where Des had taken his first deer in the hope of finding some. I usually

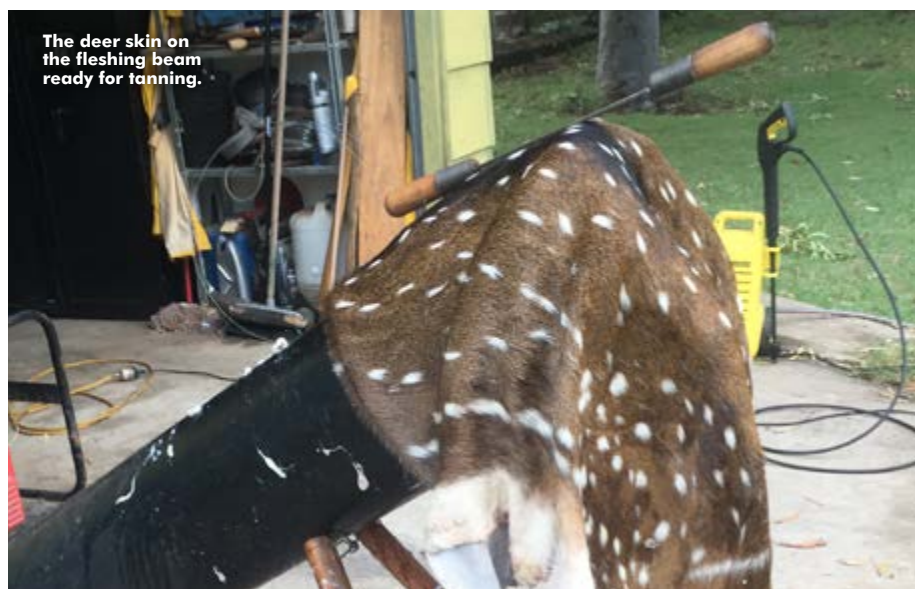
don't shoot pigs on my place as I believe that while there are pigs the wild dogs leave the calves alone because it's easier to catch a pig than a calf, so unless there's an outbreak of some 'exotic' disease I leave them alone. I think they clean up more than they wreck so it's only when a friend comes along I'll occasionally let them shoot some.

As usual we stopped well short of the swamp and made sure the wind was in our favour then slowly stalked in over the acres of dried pig digging surrounding the area. It didn't take long until we spotted pigs but as always seems to happen they were on the far side of the swamp. After carefully looking them over I could see there wasn't one tusky boar in the mob of 20 sows and suckers that made up the crowd but as Des isn't able to go pig shooting too often, we decided to stalk across the swamp to edge a bit closer than the 400m that separated us.

As there was still a fair bit of water around it meant we'd to pick our way through some deep pig diggings as well as open water while keeping the few trees between us

and the animals and try not to make any splashes. Luckily the pigs were more interested in rooting up the swamp grass than maintaining a lookout for danger so eventually we made it to a point where we couldn't go any farther without being seen as we'd run out of cover and there was only open water separating us now.

Once we determined which pig was the biggest Des took careful aim and from about 150m put a bullet behind its shoulder, causing the swamp to explode with the panicked splashing of scattering survivors as they headed out in all directions. We had to backtrack around the swamp to take photos because of the water between us and Des was pleased to have nabbed a pig as well as his first deer. After more photos we walked back to the vehicle as I told Des he'd done the double and all he needed now was a wild dog to complete the hat-trick. Unfortunately we didn't manage a wild dog this time round but as we still have some electrical work to do in the future there's still a chance. ●



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SCAN AND ORDER

Two more sharp-shooters earn Benchrest Hall of Fame accolade

The Springsure range in central Queensland was the venue for the 2022 Centrefire Benchrest National Championships and while rising travel costs meant numbers were down on previous years, those who did make the trip were rewarded with pleasant weather, good company and fierce competition.

The four-day event kicked off with the Experimental/Unlimited class which allows for the very heavy rail-type guns to be used with 10-shot groups required at both distances. The 100-yard section brought a deserved win for newly-appointed SSAA Benchrest chairman John Babic with a score of .3310 to resist the challenge from second and third-placed Paul Sullivan and Chris Parry.

The longer yardage proved a bit tougher as the wind and heavy mirage played their part and again it was Babic who took the honours with an aggregate score of .2998 ahead of Dave McKillop and Parry. No surprise then that Babic took the grand aggregate comfortably and collected four valuable Hall of Fame points along the way with McKillop and Parry filling the podium places.

Sporter class for rifles not exceeding 9lb was next up and shot in conditions which were deceptive at best and downright tricky at worst. Steve Sori took the victory at 100 yards with a tidy .2586 ahead of Keith Sewell and Thomas Thompson while the experience of Sullivan shone through at the longer yardage when he triumphed with a score of .3183 to beat Ray Beavis and Richard Powell. In the overall standings though it was Sewell who came out on top with a score of .3273 ahead of Powell and Sullivan.

In the Light Benchrest category (rifles up to 10.5lb) tiny groups were the order of the day and while putting five of them together proved difficult for many, it was Les Fraser who led the pack with a .2164 aggregate followed by Milan Morrell and Andrew Proll. The longer yardage brought a few shooters undone but Sullivan held his nerve to post a .2742 aggregate and hold off the challenge from Ean Parsons and Fraser, the latter landing the overall title on .2697 ahead of Morrell and Proll.

SSAA Benchrest chairman John Babic (left) presents the trophy to 2022 National Champion Les Fraser.



Up next were Heavy Benchrest rifles (up to 13.5lb) and after the previous events shooters were eventually getting to grips with the vagaries of the Springsure range with many recording tiny groups including an excellent .094 by Rob Hamilton from Coffs Harbour. The aggregate contest proved a close affair but in the end it was Fraser who came out tops on .2308 from Proll and Parsons.

The final yardage for the 2022 championship proved a tough one as the Springsure mirage made life difficult. Making use of a some local knowledge no doubt helped Gavin Marshall win comfortably with an aggregate of .2704 ahead of Parsons and Brendan Atkinson and after his excellent performance at 200 yards it was Marshall who clinched overall victory on .2658 from Parsons and Michael Thompson.

The multi-gun results proved interesting with Morrell winning the 2-Gun aggregate from Parsons and Fraser with the latter taking out the 3-Gun title from Marshall and Beavis. The all-important 4-Gun honours and overall title for 2022 went to Fraser in what was a well-deserved victory with Marshall and Sullivan filling the minor placings. Both Fraser and Babic had amassed enough points to qualify for the Hall of Fame and their patches were duly presented for what is the highest award in Australian Benchrest shooting.

A big thanks goes to the crew at Springsure for putting on a first-class event and while they may be few in number, they certainly get the job done. The 2023 championships will be held at Coffs Harbour next Easter. ●

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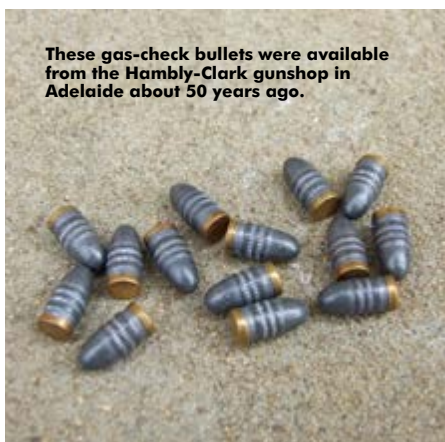
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Bore check *made easy*

The brass fitting on the end of the cleaning rod prevents gouging of the rifling.

Don't be slugged in the pocket, says John Hill

These gas-check bullets were available from the Hambly-Clark gunshop in Adelaide about 50 years ago.



I've mentioned in previous articles where I've slugged a rifle barrel, a process I've done many times which involves nothing more than pushing a lead slug through a clean rifle barrel with a cleaning rod. The lead slug can be a cast bullet or any other bullet composed of soft lead - I use .22 calibre lead bullets bought at the Hambly-Clark gunshop in Adelaide about 50 years ago for \$1 per 100. Those which weren't used in various experiments were saved for slugging barrels and most of those barrels were .22 calibre. These bullets were sold as 'gas-checks' complete to go to their bases and were good for reduced loads in .222s and .22 Hornets.

A hollow in the base of these bullets is a convenient location for a cleaning rod if the brass fitting isn't used.



It's important the slug be at least groove diameter or a whisker larger so it receives a full impression of the rifling and if it's not groove diameter give it a tap with a hammer to increase diameter. It takes a lot of pressure to force the slug into the rifling but from then on it can indicate the bore's condition if it's parallel, tapered towards the muzzle or whether the bore is larger at the muzzle, the latter often considered unfavourable from an accuracy point of view.

You have to exert a fair amount of effort for the slug to get going and doing this by yourself can be a bit awkward. The bullets I use to slug .22 calibre barrels have a hollow in the base to accommodate the end of the cleaning rod, though other bullets or slugs may not have such a convenient feature. When this is the case a small brass fitting made to screw on to the end of the cleaning rod will stop the rod from gouging into the rifling and ruining the bore. It may never happen - but it could - so prevention is better than a cure for damaged rifling (I always slug my barrels with a brass fitting screwed to my cleaning rod).

Slugging a barrel not only tells whether or not the bore is parallel but also gives the groove diameter of the rifling which can be measured from the slug with a micrometer or digital calliper but remember they're measuring soft lead so don't squeeze too hard. Knowing the groove diameter can sometimes be an advantage as to whether the groove is oversize or undersize in regard to bullet diameter and that's why I slug my barrels - it tells me what I need to know regarding the inside dimensions of a rifle barrel. Most barrels today are well made but some from yesteryear were woeful to say the least.

There's another device designed to monitor rifle barrels and that's a borescope - an instrument which gives an indication on the condition of a barrel - but they're expensive to buy. Borescopes can be had with or without a video screen, the former having a screen for all to observe while with the other the bore is examined with the naked eye. I had the latter demonstrated to me by a member of our local rifle club and the scope showed my Tikka .223 had traces of copper in the bore but otherwise was fairly clean.

A borescope may provide a good visual perspective but it can't tell if the bore is parallel or tapered or whether it's larger at the muzzle and neither can it give you the groove diameter. So I'm inclined to think you need both a borescope and slugging to inspect a bore properly but considering the price of a borescope I'll stick with slugging my barrels which costs next to nothing, yet tells me everything I want to know about the condition of the bore. While a borescope will show the rifling has worn

immediately in front of the chamber, so will a look down the bore.

I discovered the usefulness of slugging barrels after buying a new ZKW 465 Brno .22 Hornet in the 1970s. The rifle wouldn't shoot accurately and had group sizes running out to 3 MOA at 100m no matter what was tried by way of reloading components. I'd read about slugging barrels in a shooting magazine and tried my hand using a .22 calibre lead bullet as a slug. This revealed the Brno barrel was far from perfect with the first few centimetres being quite firm, then the slug free-wheeled until it fell out of the muzzle. Returning the slug to the muzzle it was found to be a rattly fit and pushing another one in revealed the muzzle was 0.04mm (0.0015") larger than the breech end of the bore - no wonder the rifle wouldn't shoot.

The answer to this problem was to lap out the breech end of the barrel with lead laps and a fine grade of abrasive paste. It was hard work but I took 0.03mm (0.001") out of the breech end which made the

rifling look quite shallow as though it had been partly shot out. But it did the trick with accuracy improving to just a shade over 1 MOA and by that stage the groove diameter was 5.71mm (0.225"). A borescope would've given an entirely different result and declared the barrel perfect - unblemished from chamber to muzzle - so slugging has definite advantages. I eventually sent that rifle away and had it converted to .17 Ackley Hornet.

Anschutz barrels have always slugged well as have all the CZ barrels I've examined. Others which slugged well are my old Lithgow Model 12 (now almost 70 years old) and a Winchester Model 70 chambered for .222 Remington, a heavy-barrelled rifle whose bore was perfect (according to the slug) but the rifle wouldn't shoot any better than 1 MOA at 100m and I never find out why. Those old Brnos have some of the worst barrels ever made as many of them were larger at the muzzle and that includes rimfires and .22 Hornets. Though I have a Brno .22 Hornet and its barrel doesn't slug all that well, it still shoots sub-minute groups but only with handloads (it's a 1949 ZKW 465 model).

So there are my thoughts on barrel slugging. A borescope will only find obvious things wrong with a bore such as copper fouling, barrel pitting and other visual blemishes whereas slugging tells whether a bore is parallel or not and the groove diameter is a bonus. One's expensive and the other's almost free so you decide which is best. ●



Doug Ratcliff demonstrates a borescope - it's one of the cheaper varieties using the naked eye to inspect the bore.

Divine intervention?

Peter Lytwynenko

This is a short tale about coincidence . . . and a friendship forged more than half a century ago. In April 1971 a young Ian Smith met Trevor Turnbull, a fresh-faced 19-year-old just off the plane from Calcutta in India. The pair were working together and while chatting during their break one day, Ian asked Trevor if he was interested in hunting which brought a resounding “yes” - and a lifelong friendship was born.

Ian was an avid hunter, target shooter, prolific reader of all things hunting, reloading and firearm maintenance and was essentially our ‘go-to’ man for anything shooting-related. If you wanted cases reloaded, rifle information, projectile advice etc, Ian was more than willing to help out and we used to call him our ‘group gunsmith’.

He met and married Linda and introduced her to the joys of shooting and hunting and, as it turned out, she was an even better shot than Ian and became a talented skinner of animals and fantastic cook of wild harvested meat.

Fast-forward a few years and Trevor moved to a new job which is when I met him. We often spoke about hunting and eventually went out bunny-busting where I was introduced to Ian and Linda and as our group grew in numbers, including my brother-in-law, we regularly hunted deer, rabbits, ducks, feral goats and pigs.

When the time was right I introduced my two children to shooting and hunting, they joined the SSAA, secured their firearms licences and it was they who encouraged me to enter the Association’s monthly online competitions. I made it my business to ensure that every month my family and friends entered and to date both my son and brother-in-law have won the desktop pen set and Linda and I each have a ‘Best Shots’ coffee mug.

In July 2020 Ian was diagnosed with terminal cancer and from then on we all hoped he’d win a prize before he passed away and by May of this year, four of our seven-strong group had been a winner in the SSAA’s monthly competition. Then on June 1 this year, Ian died with his family and Trevor, his best mate of 51 years, by his side.

A couple of days after Ian’s memorial service I received a phone call from Trevor to tell me he’d won the Epic Shot Allweather Quick Access Shooting Gun Cover worth \$29.95 and the following day Linda rang to tell me Ian had also won a prize, the GlowShot Long Range Pack valued at almost \$100, a very useful prize she intends to share with her family in Ian’s memory. The details of our good fortune are printed on P89 of July’s *Australian Shooter*.

Now all of this started me thinking: When were these prizes drawn? I rang the SSAA office in Adelaide and outlined the above events to a very helpful lady called Trudy. As I waited I could hear her tapping away on her computer and moments later she confirmed the prizes had indeed been drawn on June 1, the day of Ian’s passing. Call it coincidence or maybe a bit more but either way after years of trying, Ian finally claimed his prize.

In ending I’d like to thank the SSAA, *Australian Shooter* and *Australian Hunter* for two excellent publications and their sponsors for providing prizes which are both functional and sturdy. ●



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Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

August 1-December 17, 2022

All locations

Program: Categories and details on National website. Contact: Kim Atkinson at muzzleloading@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

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 ihmssa.act@gmail.com

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.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

April 7-11, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA

Program - April 7: Practice and scrutineering; April 8: 80-shot Air Rifle Silhouette; April 9: 80-shot Rimfire Silhouette Rifle; April 10: 80-shot Centrefire Silhouette Rifle; April 11: 40-shot Rimfire Hunting Rifle Silhouette, 40-shot Centrefire Hunting Rifle Silhouette. Facilities: Camping, cooking and toilets on-site. Contact: Paul Dunn Paul@compac.com.au or 0407 428 175.

Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

April 13-16, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA

Program - April 13: Practice; April 14: Rifle Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots); April 15: Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots); April 16: Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots). Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, barbecue lunch supplied daily. Contact: Warren Goodfield 0407 440 431 laswa@iinet.net.au or David Brougham 0432 748 703 clas@iinet.net.au.

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@ssaqlld.org.au

NSW

SSAA (NSW) 2022 Muzzleloading State Championships

October 14-16, 2022

SSAA Bathurst, NSW

Program: Cannon events on Friday afternoon, shotgun on Saturday morning, all rifle and pistol events to run concurrently Friday-Sunday. Nominations must be received by October 10. Facilities: Camping on-site from Thursday afternoon to Sunday, toilets and water, limited power, communal firepits, barbecue lunch and cold drinks available to buy. Contact: Shayne Barnsley 0418 302 062 or email darrh_royce@hotmail.com

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

SA

SSAA (SA) BPCR Silhouette State Championships

November 26-27, 2022

Monarto Silhouette Range, SA

Program: Saturday 9am-noon practice; 12.30 40-shot BPCR iron sight match; evening barbecue. Sunday 8.30-9am practice; 9.30am 40-shot scoped match. Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

Tas

SSAA (Tas) 5-Stand State Championships

November 4-6, 2022

T11 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 Foggo 0408 361 638 or dalepest@msn.com (email preferred).

SSAA (Tas) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

March 11-13, 2023

Westbury Shooting Club, Tas

Program: Saturday, March 11: Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette; March 12: Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette; March 13: Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette (all 80 shots). Facilities: Basic camping with toilets, tank water, no power. Entrance fee includes daily breakfast and lunch. Contact: Steve Collins 0459 834 885 or email admin@westburys shooting.club

SSAA (Tas) Gallery Rifle State Championships

January 27-29, 2023

SSAA Blue Hills, Tas

Program: See National website. Contact: David.M@ssaabluehills.org.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.

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.

Sign up a JUNIOR

SSAA National's 'Sign up a Junior' campaign was launched to help introduce youngsters to recreational shooting. Juniors are essential to the ongoing strength and vitality of the SSAA and we are seeking your support to protect and ensure the future of the shooting sports in Australia.

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NEW ☐ RENEWAL ☐ Have you been a member before? Yes/No

Membership No.

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

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AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER is published monthly and is printed by IVE, 83 Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

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Winter hunt at the hut

For the last hour of the first evening Dixie and I sat among some dead blackberries below a bank that looked out on the river flat.

On our last trip a group of sambar had been travelling the river's edge - they may have gone elsewhere since then but given the lateness of the hour that was a chance we'd have to take. You never know with sambar, sometimes you pick it right and are duly rewarded, other times all the vigil produces is a damp butt and a cold walk back to the hut in darkness. Sambar hour isn't always magic but no matter what happens it's usually more interesting than watching the evening news on the idiot box at home.

Sometime after midnight Dixie barged out into the dark, slamming open the partially closed door, racing to chase a prowling possum that long ago learned a truck at the hut may well mean food to be stolen or left-over scraps to be scrounged. If not, dry dog food is an acceptable alternative and I guess that's what Dixie objected to as she's never been big on sharing her tucker. She ran her patrol around the flat and before heading back in I heard her stop to eat the last of the kibble then lick the bowl clean. Back on her bed she turned in search of that just-right spot before she lay down, snorted softly and sighed. In minutes she was snoring.

Though I stilled the alarm at the designated hour, it was daylight when I opened my eyes again and according to the clock we were at least an hour late. As soon as I moved the dog was beside the bunk, smiling good morning and waving her rudder to let me know we ought to be elsewhere.

A deer had crossed the track just upriver, the marks on the cattle-packed clay faint and I would've missed them completely if Dixie hadn't stopped to peer down over the bank. A rock lobbed in the direction her nose was pointing produced a surprised gruff followed by the rushing, brushing sounds of an unseen animal moving away. Just how a sambar deer can push through a thicket of tea tree without so much as snapping a stick will forever be a source of wonder to the likes of me.

The wallow hadn't been used but a hind and yearling had recently passed along the game trail. Dixie took up the marks and disappeared into the bowels of the gully while I stood and listened to hear what might happen. A whip bird cracked and across the valley a cloud of corellas squalled and circled. Like resurrected pterodactyls a pair of white-faced herons slowly cranked and croaked their way down the river as Dixie came back, panting hard but with nothing of importance to report.

The hind edged up out of the gully a little bit at a time - first her ears, then her head, that long grey neck and finally her body. Planted downwind in the head of a fallen tree I watched her feeding as she approached. At about 80m just when she was beginning to look like venison for the freezer she suddenly stopped, raised her head, cocked her ears and stared down the barrels of my binoculars. Leaning hard against me Dixie watched the deer, shivering with excitement and whining softly. The hind erected her mane, lifted her tail in warning and stamped a forefoot before she turned and bolted. How did she know we were there?

It rained last night and hasn't stopped this morning, the clouds dragging their wispy underbellies through trees halfway down the mountain. Ravels of mist are drifting up the valley and the river is a torrent of racing brown water. The dog has been for her morning rounds, licked herself dry and is now supine on the floor in front of the fire, warming her muddy belly. She knows when a day isn't fit for hunting and exactly how to deal with it. She's been to the hut often enough to understand our time there doesn't always go as planned. ●



The hut: Not much to look at but a comfortable camp and long-time hub of our winter sambar hunting efforts.



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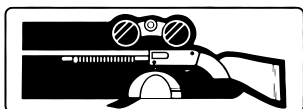
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