

The Australian Junior SHOOTER

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 26

*Schoolies
with a twist!*

End-of-year bash
with a difference

**Calling all
juniors**

Introduce
a friend to
shooting

Win!

GlowShot Long
Range Pack



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Contribute to Australian Junior Shooter

If you or someone you know has a junior-related story to tell or would like us to tell it for them, email us at edit@ssaa.org.au and let's put the wheels in motion.

Editorial

We're back! Now I won't bang on about the uncertain and unprecedented times we've all had to endure these past two years but, in truth, shooters young and old have been doing it tough through no fault of their own. We took the difficult decision to suspend publication of *Australian Junior Shooter* after a series of lockdowns and restrictions meant young shooters like everyone else had, for the most part, to put their sport on hold.

But now as we look forward to the 'new normal', some of our regular contributors have managed to enjoy the great outdoors with sons and daughters in tow and this edition is a nod to their efforts.

Kicking things off is an entertaining tale from Chris Redlich about how he and his daughter, Rachel, enjoyed a 'schoolies' week with a difference. The pair travelled to Inglewood in

Queensland in search of wild pigs and had their work cut out for them in testing terrain where they had to winch their ute out of the mud on more than a few occasions.

Another seasoned hunter, Mark van den Boogaart, has been out and about with one of his sons in a bid to educate the youngster on the finer points of stalking and hunting, something which will stand him in good stead for his own shooting future.

And Bob Boland has outlined what it takes for you to introduce juniors to the shooting sports, discussing safety, cost, mentoring and what firearms are best suited to the novice.

So it's good to be back and we hope you enjoy Edition 26 of *Australian Junior Shooter* - Allan

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Well done Arwen

Reading the article 'Class Act' in Issue 25 of *Australian Junior Shooter* brought back memories of when I was a student more than 50 years ago at Brisbane's Church of England Grammar School (Churchie). There we had a smallbore rifle club where, one afternoon a week, we'd compete at the school's 25-yard range situated between the main oval and mangrove-clad banks of Norman Creek.

We'd bring our own .22s to school, hand them into the marshall's office for safe keeping and head down to the range after school to fire our own or the school's Morris Tubed .303s. After competition it would be off home on public transport with your .22 in a case - how times have changed.

Our club comprised a mix of 'day boys' and 'boarders' who also brought rifles to school from their family's country properties. There was always healthy competition between the city and country boys which culminated in the annual inter-house shoot which one of the two boarding houses usually won, but not so in my senior year when my day boy house triumphed!

The shooting club was overseen by school marshall the late Len Elwell BEM (ex-Army) who instilled in all boys firearm safety and the finer

points of target shooting. Back then the Military Cadets were an active part of many schools' activities and at Churchie we had (and still have) the three Services represented. Army Cadets in the Brisbane area had the Earl Roberts Shoot, an annual competition between schools using .303s at the Army's Greenbank Range and in my senior year I was the only day boy in the school team.

Sadly the shooting sports have been withdrawn from most schools and young Arwen Casley-Porter, the subject of the article I refer to, is to be commended for her efforts in reintroducing this to her school. I sincerely hope other schools come on board and introduce an inter-school shooting competition as young shooters are the future of our sport.

Graeme Smith, via email



Sinking feeling can't dampen schoolies adventure

Chris Redlich



Rachel shares a cheeky moment during a glassing exercise.

Parents show concern when their child nears the end of grade 12 and starts talking of plans to celebrate the milestone away with friends. So my wife and I were pleased when our daughter Rachel approached us months before and revealed her desire to go hunting with dad for 'schoolies week'. Although I'd numerous properties at my convenience to hunt, I thought a change of scenery might add to the anticipation for Rachel and her end-of-year celebrations and, after checking out available areas, the decision was made to hunt a new block south of home near Inglewood in Queensland.

Inglewood boasts diverse agriculture consisting of widespread broad acre cropping along with numerous cattle and sheep properties interspersed by pockets of cypress forestry. From its flatter country to the west, the Inglewood district rises to the hills in the east where it borders Stanthorpe's wine growing region, the locality a fallow deer mecca where chital numbers have increased in the past few years. I was confident Rachel's experience would be a father/daughter deer hunt to remember.

With the date locked in for November anticipation grew and after several phone calls to the owner about conditions, we were on our way. The property largely consists of native grass on rolling hills with numerous gullies feeding creeks and scrub patches dotting the landscape, ideal for sheep grazing and perfect deer habitat. Recent heavy rainfall on the previously parched earth transformed it to a sea of green and once-dry creek beds were flowing. Unlike our home on black soil, granite country can handle a fair amount of moisture and driving around to access the property's backblocks would be a breeze - or so I thought.

Arriving at midday we greeted the owner who showed us a map, including shooting boundaries and what game species were available for hunting and before too long we were following her for an orientation of the hunting grounds. It immediately became apparent the ground had absorbed its fair share of recent rainfall as we slipped and slid our way into the depths of back country.

With a wink of an eye to Rachel, I expressed full confidence in the ute's capability but my bravado would be

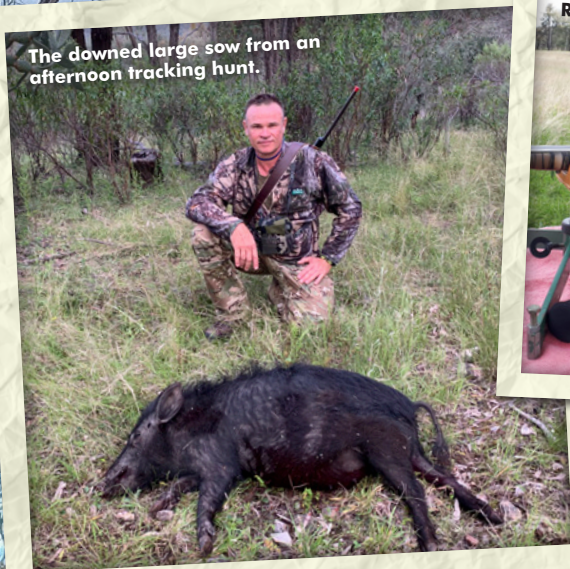
tested just moments after parting ways with our guide. No more than 50m from saying our goodbyes the hunting adventure had begun and what initially appeared a flat gravel track became anything but as the vehicle started sinking in a quagmire of mud. Accelerating hard proved useless as the spinning wheels made more mess than finding traction until a tree within cable length allowed the winch to retrieve the vehicle.

That would be the first of many mud-bath encounters before week's end as I gingerly parked the ute near a tree and set up to test-fire our rifles, Rachel using my wife's custom 7mm-08 and I had my trusty old .303 factory sporter (for varminting I also sighted-in my .22 PPC). All rifles proved spot on as we both confidently shot sub-MOA groups and with check sighting completed we geared up for an afternoon hunt.

I was careful not to backtrack the trail where we bogged though needn't have bothered as the land we were navigating had other plans. My patience was wearing thin as the ute sank to its chassis for the second time in an hour, another tree and my winch to the rescue again as we

The downed large sow from an afternoon tracking hunt.

Rachel sights in her rifle.



Recent rain had flooded the creeks.

Sinking feeling can't dampen schoolies adventure

headed for higher ground. Although a slippery climb in low gear almost forced us to turn around, we made it to a vantage point for glassing.

As the shadows began to appear so did the wildlife and we spied numerous wallaroos emerging from the woods to feed in grass paddocks. I told Rachel now's the time to spot deer as we waited in anticipation but, as none presented, the decision was made to enter the bush and stalk along an overgrown track. The track, dampened by recent rainfall, made for quiet stalking as we headed deeper into the timber.

We approached a creek line and followed the high banks using height to our advantage. A flash of movement in the black shape of a wild pig grabbed my attention - it was

unaware of our presence and continued feeding away from us further up the creek. I alerted Rachel to my sighting and we hatched a plan to track the pig. Stepping off we tried to relocate it quickly but it gave us the slip so we entered the creek bed and crossed to the other side, confident of closing in thanks to fresh tracks. Edging further up the creek we hit a junction and it came down to guesswork as to which path the mountain pig had taken.

Our hunch proved right as the pig reappeared momentarily and I set Rachel up for an ambush shoot. She adopted a kneeling position with rifle shouldered and as the pig emerged from the scrub, she fired. One shot from the 7mm-08 had Rachel's first mountain pig secured and I was delighted to have guided her in deer hunting-like conditions. We celebrated with hugs and high fives, arranged the pig for photos and with the last of the day's light fast disappearing it was vital not to loiter in unfamiliar territory, so we left the thick scrub for the safety of the ute.

Our drive back to base proved fruitful as a large boar crossed our path just on dark. Both of us lined up for the shot and fired in quick succession, Rachel's 7mm-08 and my .303 finding their mark as the boar dropped, both of us happy to have removed another feral pig from the property. The next few days were dictated by weather as we planned our hunts around intermittent showers, constant squalls in the second day meaning a late departure as, once again, the sodden terrain proved challenging in the back blocks. In fact on parking the ute Rachel roared: "Dad, the car's sinking!"

The sensation of your car sliding without wheel spin is unsettling and I immediately used the gravity of the incline and a heavy pedal to propel us out the slop and on to firmer ground. We made for a safe spot further up the hill, waited until another storm passed and, peering through the foggy passenger window, Rachel spotted a single black boar walk past us no more than 10m away.

Totally unprepared she fumbled for her rifle as I wound down the window but the pig had clearly heard

Father and daughter share a break while hunting.



The final afternoon glassing in beautiful surrounds.

us and decided to flee. By the time Rachel was in firing position the boar had made at least another 80m and was out of contention, a missed opportunity but a valuable lesson learned as it pays to remain alert whatever the situation.

We hunted the surrounding hills and flooded gullies to no avail but enjoyed the outing despite being bogged yet again on our return trip. Though we spotted two departing feral goats (unavailable for hunting), Wednesday morning's trip while weathering showers was uneventful but yielded plenty of pig sign and leaving base mid-afternoon we concentrated our efforts on another timbered area which oozed potential.

Fresh pig prints in the moist ground were identified as I taught Rachel the basic skills of tracking. The prints led us to a fork and used wallow so a pig

couldn't be too far away we thought, as muddy prints on the rocks suggested the animal had recently jumped from its bath. A careful stalk through thick tea tree bushes led us to the pig, totally unaware of our presence. Rachel spotted it first but it was my turn for a shot and as it moved closer into view a 150-grain Hornady from my .303 grounded the sow instantly, our success the result of classic 'track and stalk' tactics. A careful exit from the bush ended with Rachel shooting another pig on the run and off the shoulder.

A break in the weather next morning opened the door for a hunt to an area of the property I'd checked previously through binoculars and was keen to explore. As we climbed a steep track, our burning calf muscles and quickening heart rates reminded us of every metre above

sea level but on reaching the top the panoramic view was spectacular. Fresh pig sign alerted us and before too long Rachel shot an unsuspecting mountain sow, another memorable moment shared by father and daughter in stunning surroundings.


Taking a gamble on track conditions we spent the last afternoon in another area which offered stunning views and a perfect place for glassing, my spotting scope picking up a mountain boar more than 1500m away on a neighbouring hill but well out of reach. As we headed back two small pigs crossed our path and met their demise, bringing the tally to seven. Alas, we spent the next three hours recovering our vehicle from the track we'd driven earlier, the ground literally swallowing the ute and if it wasn't for our winch and numerous anchor points, we were facing a long walk back in darkness.

During the ordeal I managed to puncture a tyre while submerged and roll it off the rim before snapping one of my recovery straps. While giving the property owners plenty of amusement on report, our sticky situation capped an adventurous end to Rachel's non-typical schoolies week, the experience shared strengthening our bond and, despite the absence of deer, our hunting time together was a complete success. ●

The smiles say it all after removing the largest wild boar for the trip.



Last of our vehicle bog escapades.




James puts in some practice with an air rifle.

Introducing juniors to shooting

Bob Boland



A .22 has manageable recoil for girls and boys alike.



As shooters young and old, it's our privilege and responsibility to introduce new people to the joys of this great sport and one obvious group we can help are juniors. This article explores the basics of how to encourage young people to become involved in shooting by outlining the three barriers and, more importantly, solutions for this age bracket: safety, cost and mentoring.

Safety

As shooters we know our sport is a safe one as we're all aware of and actively promote firearms safety, yet we need to take this a step further and educate the general community on the safety aspects of shooting. We have a great story to tell as, unlike most other sports and particularly contact codes, accidents while shooting are incredibly rare.

But one important risk we can easily overlook is child protection as legislation varies across jurisdictions. Any organisation aiming to engage with youngsters must ensure anyone interacting with them holds a Working with Children Check

(WWCC) and is trained with regard to both interactions with children and reporting responsibilities. Additionally, the organisation must have a reporting structure in place.

Cost

A major barrier for young people becoming involved is cost in terms of time regarding licensing (like me they're not known for their patience) and economics but we can help them overcome these barriers and an obvious starting point is to give them a taste for shooting. I suspect most of us have already done this for friends by inviting them to the range and I reckon we can become even more proactive and look at running open days where, for a nominal fee, people can try shooting.

Open days don't need to be complicated. A few months ago a mate and I organised an afternoon shoot with eight juniors at our local SSAA 50m range and as we had only two licensed shooters we operated just a couple of benches, one with an open sight and the other with a scoped .22. We provided hearing protection, used subsonic ammunition to minimise

Introducing juniors to shooting

Good beginner calibres.



any potential 'fear factor' and it was encouraging to see the participants improve over the afternoon and, more importantly, just enjoy themselves. Obviously with more licensed shooters and a volunteer at the barbecue, a bigger open day offering more disciplines would be possible.

While open days mitigate the time challenge, on their own they're not enough to grow the next generation of shooters. A further barrier is the financial one and the solution here is sharing. While we can't loan firearms to unlicensed guests, we can supervise unlicensed shooters which carries the added advantage of being able to build relationships and mentor them.

Introducing and training new shooters doesn't have to be complex but it does require some thought and perhaps financial outlay. A novice won't need a several thousand-dollar shooting rig to learn with and some set-ups are obviously not suited to beginners, a rifle with heavy kick for example. Additionally, certain firearms at a glance are clearly better for starters and the good news is that even if your safe doesn't contain such firearms, they're cheap to acquire. Specifically I recommend:

1: A single-shot iron sight .22 such as a Lithgow - they're lightweight, the sights don't require adjustment for



A Lithgow single-shot .22.

different shooters and they're safe. Additionally, they won't break the bank.

2: An old hammer shotgun, notably a .410. Yes I'm aware the difference in price between .410 and 12-gauge is minimal but the recoil factor is not. If you only have a 12-gauge it's worth considering investing in a .410 conversion sleeve to minimise cost and space in your safe. If you don't have an appropriate .410 or 12-gauge, consider a hammer black powder shotgun and .410 conversion sleeve, these old beauties are cheap and it saves them from being deactivated to become wall art.

3: There are a few good options regarding a centrefire for training, with the .22 Hornet, .222, .223 and .243 all candidates worth considering.

At this point some will be questioning why I haven't mentioned the traditional first gun to own - an air rifle - as it was the firearm most of us started out with and back in the day they were almost considered a toy. Nowadays with new technology there are air rifles capable of being used to hunt pigs and ammunition is cheap but the reason I don't recommend buying an air rifle for a trainee is a combination of high purchase price and low flexibility. All three of these suggestions offer leeway in hunting

applications (which to my mind is the next step in mentoring new shooters) and are great guns to have in the safe.

Mentoring

Having examined safety and cost we can now look at perhaps the most important aspect of both introducing people to shooting and helping them mature as shooters - mentoring. Almost anything which is new can be scary and becoming proficient, let alone confident, takes time. I only got my firearms licence as an adult and admit feeling anxious despite being a big bloke, so I'm thankful for the welcome, friendship and mentoring I've had and continue to receive.

Perhaps the most important points on effective mentoring are it's relational and ongoing. Indeed, I still value that experienced input such as wisdom on the pros and cons of various calibres/brands and assistance with fitting a scope or bore-sighting, though have valued the welcome and simple friendship much more. As such, encourage all shooters actively and deliberately to share our great sport with younger (and other) people. They are, after all, the future of shooting in Australia. ●

Elijah, Josie and James at the range.



Educating the next generation

Mark van den Boogaart

After planning a hunt, a big part of it all would be to take along my youngest son. It would be his first trip with dad and even though he was keen he was still unsure about being away from mum. Not wanting to push things I took it easy as his eagerness ebbed and flowed from yes I want to go, to no and back to yes again. About a week before heading away I asked if he'd made up his mind. His answer was no but he wanted to go next year and before I could say "are you sure?" his eldest brother jumped in with: "I'll go."



A pig out in the open providing a perch for a cheeky wagtail.



One of the small Sunday boars.



Mark's eldest in his hunting gear.

Knowing my highly competitive boys I waited for the youngest to make a counter offer which didn't come so it looked like we'd reached a workable solution - next year. My eldest has been hunting with me for three years and is completely comfortable with it and is also showing some interest in firearms and with his new bow is building a good foundation of skills. I was keen to find myself a good boar and we discussed it on the days before our departure, though the idea of looking for a particular animal and maybe not shooting at all was something he grappled with.

The thing is, I want my sons to learn from my experience and ultimately be better hunters than their old man, so while I can steer them away from bad habits I'm going to have to let them figure out plenty for themselves, like when and when not to shoot. To work our way through it we came up with a plan for the weekend hunt - we'd dedicate Saturday to finding a good boar and if that didn't work out we'd use Sunday morning to seek out a good eater. We hit the road on Friday afternoon and once over the range we stopped for dinner in Toowoomba, arriving at the property around 8pm.

Catching up with owners Jim and Debbie we discussed the weekend ahead and agreed on an early start after which I got my already tired son ready for bed. With that done it was time to share a beer with our hosts before heading off myself for a few hours' sleep. As planned we were up early on Saturday morning and, being west of the Great Dividing Range, it was cooler than home.



There was plenty of good sign about.



Goats unaware of the hunters' presence as they search for that good boar.

Educating the next generation

Having visited the property during the past few years we'd become accustomed to the effects of drought and were taken aback by the change. Good rain had gone some way to rejuvenating the area with once bare ground now covered in grass and dams filled to overflowing. Our hunt for a good boar would involve a fair bit of walking so I took plenty of water and snacks as my sons are almost constant eaters.

Starting at a natural access point to a creek we contoured the water course for more than an hour. Along the way we saw plenty of sign and even bumped a red hind who must've been preoccupied with watering and not paying attention to the approaching hunters. We let her go, after which I explained to my son we were after pigs so the deer were in no danger this time around. Eventually we dropped down to the waterline, crossed over and continued on our way.

As we approached a good body of water Jim, who'd been leading us

along the creek line, stopped in his tracks. Attracting my son's attention we both waited then heard something akin to a cross between a grunt and a boof. After a few minutes we closed the gap on Jim who said he was pretty sure we'd inadvertently pushed a good boar out of the area and further up we found a series of tree rubs and a lot of good sign in the creek bed which confirmed this.

It was time for a break as the little bloke was becoming distracted and in need of a muesli bar. Our day continued along a similar pattern of walks and breaks looking for that elusive good boar and we even caught sight of a large, fast-moving black shape before it disappeared among a tangle of cover.

Nearing day's end it was clear from my son's mood he was disappointed things hadn't gone according to plan, a situation compounded by the fact we'd spotted plenty of game, just not the right game, so on the way back we spoke about how sometimes things don't always work out as you hoped.

We also talked about the idea of sticking to our plan and while we hadn't managed to find that good boar, all the scouting would really help us out come Sunday, an idea he quickly latched on to.

As expected the breeze was picking up, causing the temperature to drop and it was soon a lot cooler so we had our dinner by the fire. No doubt about it, Sunday morning was cold and I was thankful we'd packed some warm clothes. We'd a good idea of where to go and eventually my son and I found ourselves held up under cover above a creek line, as we assumed if there were pigs around they'd move in from the east along the water.

Wrong! They surprised us by coming from the north and I was worried we'd be rumbled by the three small boars so we sat as still and quiet as possible. It worked and they passed us before dropping down into the grass along the creek. Trouble was the breeze was gusting and switching around and I was sure any minute we were going to be winded, so I let my



Break time near the rubs.



The freezer filler.

son know what was about to happen. Specifically there was a small, healthy looking boar in my sights.

As I wanted to recover as much meat as possible I was looking for a clean head shot and again, this was something I'd talked over with my son. Letting him know I was waiting for the pig to be in a good position I could see he was becoming impatient so rather than hold the shooting position I dropped my rifle down and assured him "any minute now". When the boar did turn I shouldered the rifle, took aim and fired.

The shot was clean and struck the pig behind the eye for an instantaneous kill. We waited a few minutes then, walking over, I checked the pig was indeed dead before my son moved in for a closer look, which opened up a conversation about what had happened and how we ended up with this particular pig.

As it often the case with my eldest, he began to give his take on the hunt and it was great to hear him express it in his own words and from his point of view. After snapping a few pictures we dragged our eater closer to a vehicle track and waited for our host to arrive and with the boar loaded up, headed to the cold room where my son had a first-hand look at the process of butchering.

It was almost time to go so we packed up our gear, loaded the now-prepared pork into our largest esky and set off for home. Along the way we spoke about next time when we'd finally bag that big boar . . . and maybe bring his younger brother along. ●

An impressive boar tree rub.

Juniors-only competition

Only junior SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on a piece of paper and mail it to us at:

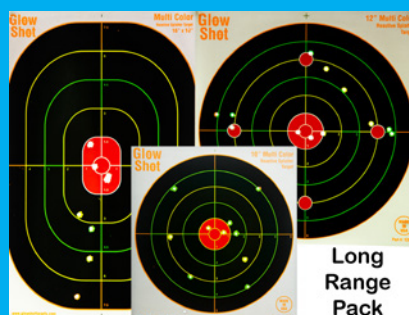
April 2022 Junior competition
SSAA National
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or enter online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes April 30, 2022

GlowShot Long Range Pack

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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.

ssaa.org.au