

We focus on shooting glasses • Joy at the SSAA range • Hunting evolution

AUSTRALIAN

# WOMEN'S SHOOTER



Lecky  
digs deep  
**aiming  
for gold**

Issue 11 • Proudly printed in Australia

An official publication of the Sporting  
Shooters' Association of Australia



# Contents

- 3 Taking aim with Laetisha Scanlan – The importance of lens colour
- Women's-only competition
- 4 Lecky digs deep aiming for gold
- 8 Janet's hands-on approach brings joy
- 10 Shooting glasses – more than just safety and understanding the tints
- 13 Hunting evolution



# Editorial

## Gemma Dunn



SSAA member Lecky Mahoney recently appeared on a renowned Foxtel television show and we've spoken with the avid shooter about her passion for the sport and 'golden' work in Outback Kalgoorlie.

It's safety first with shooting glasses but there's more than meets the eye when it comes to pairing them with the right lens colour for the job, so Laetisha Scanlan and I offer in-depth advice with the help of a sports optometrist.

Kath Heiman documents how her involvement with firearms from growing up in Scotland to now being married with kids in Australia has evolved with hunting becoming a way of life for her and her family.

We also look at Target Pistol shooting and profile Janet Hoskin, whose love for the discipline has led to an array of roles and responsibilities with the SSAA South Australian Para range, where she savours the camaraderie and community engagement.

Gemma

FOLLOW US



AWSmag



australianwomensshooter\_mag

## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

**Editor** Gemma Dunn

**Production Editor** Thomas Cook

**Feature Columnist** Laetisha Scanlan

**Graphic Designer** Natalie Kuhlmann

**Advertising Representative** Karoline Wasiak

**Administration** Debbie Wing, Trudy Sheffield

**Contributors:** Dave Rose, Rachael Oxborrow, Dr Luke Higgins, Kath Heiman

Mail: PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061  
Phone: 08 8272 7100 Fax: 08 8272 2945  
Web: ssaa.org.au Email: aws@ssaa.org.au

The *Australian Women's Shooter* is owned and published by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of this Association.

No text or photographs within this publication may be republished, either electronically or in print, without the express written permission of the SSAA. Copyright 2021.

The *Australian Women's Shooter* is printed by IVE, Silverwater, NSW.

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc (SSAA Inc) is subject to the provisions of the National Privacy Act. We collect personal information from members of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia in the various states and territories. Should you want a copy of the SSAA Inc Privacy Statement or seek further information please write to PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061.

# Taking aim with Laetisha Scanlan

## The importance of lens colour

When we think about the fundamentals of shooting, we focus on the correct firearm for a discipline, the optimal chokes needed, the right load ammunition, proper gun mount and technique.

But sometimes we overlook the simplicity of wearing the right colour lens. And then choosing that correct lens for varying weather conditions and times of day. Every shooter has their 'go to' colour that becomes a favourite, but can we become caught up in this familiarity and sometimes make the wrong choice?

It's obvious that our eyes have one of the most important roles in shooting the target. As shotgun beginners we are told never to look at the end of the gun and always out with soft focus so we can see the target, move to it and shoot it.

Generally speaking, the majority of us will miss a target for the simple reason that we didn't see it leave the trap.

Even with years of experience, I still make errors over my choice of lens colours. I can't count how many times I have seen people go out to shoot, start to miss targets and immediately take off their shooting glasses because they have gone too dark and cannot see the line of the target.

So how many lenses should you have in your shooting bag?

This does come down to personal and financial choice but sometimes the more you have is not always the best. The overall aim of your shooting glasses should be to protect your eyes and enhance your visual clarity of the target.

I would recommend starting with four lenses in your shooting kit – this will cover the majority of weather and light conditions.

For instance, I personally favour clear or yellow lenses for dark, overcast days

or in the winter months. At the other end of the scale I opt for orange lenses on a sunny day that may have cloud cover. Dark lenses fill a similar role to reduce glare and prevent squinting. Red lenses work for me against a green background to improve contrast between the targets.

The best way to decide what lenses to wear is take them out to the layout where you will be shooting and watch some targets or compare with objects that are similar in colour to the targets on the day of competition.

Always start wearing your glasses for a while before you shoot to give your eyes enough time to adapt.

Read more in Gemma's article on page 10. And remember you can't shoot what you can't see!



## Women's-only competition

Only female SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on the back of an envelope and send it to:

Howard Leight earmuffs,  
Australian Women's Shooter,  
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at [ssaa.org.au/win](https://ssaa.org.au/win)

Competition closes June 30, 2021



## WIN a pair of Howard Leight Impact Sport electronic earmuffs

Kindly donated by TSA Outdoors  
[tsaoutdoors.com.au](https://tsaoutdoors.com.au)

Valued at \$149





# Lecky digs deep *aiming for gold*

Dave Rose

SSAA members Lecky and Ted Mahoney have no problem with being dubbed as serial gold diggers. But rather than the gossip column interpretation of the expression, it's what the Kalgoorlie couple actually do for a living.

Yes, they literally dig for gold, that oh so precious metal, from the ground. They have been doing this professionally as a full-time occupation for about 20 years. It's a demanding vocation but the rewards can be highly fruitful.

The pair's reputation has travelled before them as they were recently featured on the acclaimed Discovery Channel program *Gold Rush: Parker's Trail*.

The American-produced phenomenon is a hit with viewers and centres on the exploits of Alaskan-born gold mining

prodigy Parker Schnabel. The show started in 2010 when Parker was still virtually a kid, but he has moved into centre stage. The reality spectacle follows the daredevil antics of Parker as he scours the earth around Yukon and elsewhere for the much-coveted mineral. However, when the COVID-19 virus put limitations on Parker's travel ambitions, he sought fresh spheres to pursue his passion.

This brought him to Australia and the entrance of Lecky and Ted onto the program. The couple had already sampled screen exposure in the Australian show *Aussie Gold Hunters* so they took the progression into the new sideline in their stride.

"In *Aussie Gold Hunters*, we were in series two, three and four," said Lecky.

Lecky relished the opportunity, proudly donning comfortable SSAA apparel for her TV appearances.

The SSAA connections go back about seven years since the couple joined the organisation.

"I grew up on a farm so there were always firearms around to deal with pests like foxes. There was also some duck shooting. We are both country people so share a common bond. We both grew up around guns," said Lecky.

The hard yakka amid potential gold territory can often be a lonely escapade so the couple are grateful that their SSAA links help them to meet up with like-minded friends in a busy and convivial setting at the shooting range.

"Now we enjoy going to the Kalgoorlie Boulder Shooting/Rifle Club which is under the banner of the SSAA," said Lecky.

"We are into practical pistol. It's a real social outlet for us to go to the club as we are away in the Outback so much."

The couple try to visit the range as often as they can but it is more difficult in winter because they are usually out prospecting in the desert.

"I would say we are able to go to the range about once every six weeks. We don't shoot in any competitions but it's all good, friendly banter."

"Ted has been giving me lessons and after about two weeks I've put it all together thanks to Ted and I'm banging them out."

Indeed, when Lecky was contacted she was home in the family's back shed doing just that.

*"I grew up on a farm so there were always firearms around to deal with pests like foxes... We are both country people so share a common bond."*

Lecky has even found time in between digs to add an extra element to her shooting pedigree.

"I have started learning how to reload my own bullets for the first time," she said.

"The day was too hot to go venturing out so we decided to stay at home and do this," she said. "I have finally got the hang of it and it is good fun – I find it very therapeutic. My firearm is a manual and Ted's is an automatic."



Lecky gears for action at the Kalgoorlie range.



The loader is ready to roll.

The gold digger bug runs in the family with daughter Tyler (25), and son Reece (23), following in their parents' path. Both siblings still live in Kalgoorlie though Tyler's various work commitments mean that she spends a lot of her time travelling across Australia.

It was Tyler's glamorous, high-profile social media stature that led to Lecky and Ted joining up with the Parker experience.

"My daughter set off with Parker in a team of four prospectors as she has contacts all around Australia," said Lecky. "Some parts of Queensland are very similar to the layout of the Yukon so that's where Parker started."

It wasn't all a smooth ride though as the American visitor had to cope with some of Australia's unique traits.

"It was December when they were in the Outback and Parker found the heat rather oppressive," said Lecky.

But the show must go on and from there Tyler guided the hardy band along the route of the original Oz gold trail.

The itinerary unfolds in Victoria then goes to Queensland and heads for stops at Halls Creek, Sandstone, Yalgoo and finally Kalgoorlie.

For the uninitiated, Halls Creek came into existence after Christmas Day 1885 when prospector Charlie Hall found a massive 870-gram (28-troy-ounce) gold nugget at a location that in time would carry his name. The resulting clamour alerted more than 15,000 people to what is now Old Halls Creek to attempt to emulate those initial findings. However, the gamble proved too taxing for many in barren surrounds and the evidence can be found in the graves of some in Old Town's cemetery.

The town of Sandstone was initially founded in 1894 due to a gold frenzy as groups of would-be prospectors unearthed the prized element about 20km south of the current settlement.

Yalgoo has existed since the 1890s with the detection of alluvial gold, and there are plenty of echoes of the town's giddy gold rush days, including the railway station and cemetery.



Main: Lecky prepares for the 'scrape and detect' process.

Top right: Lecky and Ted at work.

Right: Lecky with daughter Tyler.

Bottom right: The precious end product.

When the *Parker's Trail* bandwagon reached Kalgoorlie, Lecky and Ted came on board.

Their know-how proved extremely valuable for Parker as the lure of gold consumes their lives.

"For us, it's an occupation that lasts all year," said Lecky. "We have a 45-ton excavator, a Cat loader and a dry blower which we have recently upgraded with a \$30,000 input."

The rigours of the quest for gold certainly sound like an energy-sapping undertaking – and there are also financial overheads to take into consideration.

"You have to peg a lease to have mineral rights on any area and there are rents and rates to pay," said Lecky.

"It literally involves a metal stick which you bash into the ground."

Lecky appreciates that the gruelling demands of drilling, panning and excavating

can inevitably prove too much for many initially aspiring adventurers.

"Only about two per cent of prospectors are full-time. You really have to know what you're doing to survive," said Lecky. "But gold is actually our sole line of income. We start with the metal detector and use a method we call scrape and detect. This means taking a bit of soil from the surface and gradually going deeper."

The schedule is arduous but the couple seem to have worked out a formula that suits them.

"We are on the ground at about 6am before the heat becomes too much and we take it from there," said Lecky.

"You either love it or hate it – it's either baked beans or sirloin. For us it's in our blood."

Throw in the SSAA manoeuvres and it would appear Lecky and Ted can enjoy the best of both worlds.

# Join the Members enjoying these great membership benefits.

Today over 70,000 members have the protection of SSAA Firearms Insurance.

For only \$35 you get \$25,000 worth of Firearms Insurance. Your firearms and fixed accessories will be covered against loss, theft and damage at home and away within the policy conditions.

**Talk to the girls at SSAA Membership,  
Call : (02) 8805 3900\*  
Email: [megan@ssaains.com.au](mailto:megan@ssaains.com.au)**



Before you renew any of your Insurance Policies talk to Megan at SSAA Insurance Brokers for an obligation FREE quote.



Megan can arrange coverage from Australia's leading insurance companies. She will give you professional advice, manage your claims and take care of all the details. So before you renew any policy talk to Megan, a trusted SSAA member working for you.

**Call : (08) 8332 0281\*  
Email: [megan@ssaains.com.au](mailto:megan@ssaains.com.au)**



See website for more details - [www.ssaib.com.au](http://www.ssaib.com.au)

A SSAA member advantage

\*Office hours SSAA Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd | CAR 315403 | ABN 86 077 822 970 is a Corporate Authorised Representative of PSC Connect Pty Ltd | ABN 23 141 574 914 / AFSL 344648 This information is general advice only and may not be suitable for your specific needs. Please review our FSG and the Firearms Insurance PDS, underwritten by certain underwriters at Lloyds, at <http://www.ssaib.com.au/forms.aspx> and contact us directly should you require further information or advice. You should consider the PDS (together with other important information) available on [www.ssaib.com.au](http://www.ssaib.com.au) before making a decision about the product.



# Janet's hands-on approach brings joy

Janet steps up to try her luck on the pistol range.

## Rachael Oxborrow

For Janet Hoskin, nothing beats the camaraderie and inclusiveness of target shooting and if she can do anything to help things run smoothly, she is the first to put her hand up.

Janet's first introduction to target shooting came through her partner Ben obtaining his licence and becoming involved in rifle shooting at the South Australian SSAA Para range.

"I used to come out and watch Ben shoot, but rifles really didn't interest me," she said.

"When he started pistol about 12 months after getting his licence, then I was paying attention.

"Rifles seemed long and awkward to me and I just loved what is involved in Target Pistol."

She promptly applied for her licence and found a hobby she believes has changed her life.

"I will never be the best on the range, but I will always have fun," she said.

"When it comes to target shooting, I'm just happy to be out there having a go."

One year after joining up Janet and Ben set off interstate to attend the SSAA National Target Pistol Championships in Springvale, Victoria. Janet had no intentions of shooting in this event, but some gentle encouragement from fellow Target Pistol shooter and Para Target Pistol Section Captain John Walsh had her on the line.

"I was chucked right off the deep end," she said.

"Everyone was saying 'why watch when you can get up there and do it too'? I was so anxious and nervous, but I ended up having a great time."

Target Pistol was adopted by the SSAA from the American NRA Target Pistol match in 2005. It is an international target handgun discipline where participants shoot at paper targets from either 25m or 50m with a number of different handgun types and calibres.

The discipline includes the four main matches of National Match Course, 900 Match Course, International Mayleigh Match and Short Course Match. Competitors have varying time restrictions to shoot single-handedly in the standing position.

Following her first national competition experience, Janet went on to shoot and help organisers at the 2015 nationals in Canberra and compete in 2017 at Northern Rivers in New South Wales. In 2018 the pair went to Blue Hills, Tasmania and in 2019 they attended the nationals in Belmont, Queensland. This string of interstate competitions gave Janet and Ben the opportunity to become part of a shooting community that is such an important part of their lives. They now plan an annual holiday around attending the national championships.

*We need younger members of our sport, we need partners to come out, particularly females because this is such a fantastic way for people to socialise and compete on an even playing field...*

Janet said this feeling of being welcomed and supported while having fun is just one of the many reasons she had been motivated to help behind the scenes. In 2019, Janet's enthusiasm for Target Pistol and her willingness to help out had her taking on the role of South Australian Discipline Chair for that section. She organised and helped run the 2020 SSAA state championships at Para and is hopeful she can plan a national championship at Para in the next few years.

"I enjoy what I do and I work in other areas around the range to help out," she said.



*"I will never be the best on the range, but I will always have fun."*

*– Janet Hoskin*

All smiles for Janet as she revels being in her favourite environment.

"If I see a need, I try and fill the spot. Having people help out is what keeps our sport alive."

In addition to running the Target Pistol section, Janet is the Vice Captain of the International Shooting Sport Federation at Para and sits on the SSAA Para Council.

Janet said she placed great importance on encouraging the children and partners of her shooting comrades to join in on the range.

"We need younger members of our sport, we need partners to come out, particularly females because this is such a fantastic way for people to socialise and compete on an even playing field no matter your age, sex or ability," she said.

For membership and licence enquiries please call the SSAA Para club secretary on 0467 763 716.

# Shooting glasses

- more than just safety and understanding the tints

Gemma Dunn

In Issue 10 of *Australian Women's Shooter*, we reviewed a pair of Wiley X shooting glasses, touching on the importance of offering different lens colours for shooters. In this practical piece, we explain why variation in lens colouring can be so crucial for some shooting disciplines and how you can work out what's best for you. The article was written in consultation with Dr Luke Higgins, who is a clinical optometrist, sports vision consultant, lecturer at Flinders University, SSAA member and a competition clay target shooter.

To give you an overall idea, coloured lenses are more often used by clay target shooters as the target is brightly coloured. The usual colour on the face of a clay target is orange but, you can come across those that are also black, beige (natural), brown, blue, yellow, white, red, green, pink or a mix of orange and black. In Australia, the most familiar colour you will see is orange and sometimes black in the daylight. At night the most notable colour is orange again, but on the odd occasion you will come across white or yellow.

In the past few years, coloured lenses have also come into play for some pistol and rifle shooters whose target is somewhat coloured as well. Usually, this is because some paper targets are printed on cream/yellow-ish paper, so shooters are looking towards tinted lenses to help them acquire the target faster, particularly in the more rapid-fire disciplines. Also, tinted lenses are becoming used by rifle or pistol shooters who are operating in an outdoor range/environment.





Dr Higgins states that there are two factors to consider when choosing the right lens tint for you – colour (hue) and the darkness of that colour (saturation). It is said that for optimum sporting performance a shooter should choose the tone that alleviates symptoms of glare but be as unsaturated as possible while achieving this. Basically, choose a shade that's as light as possible, lessens glare and feels comfortable.

There is good reason for this, as selecting the incorrect tint reduces speed of target acquisition and will impact on your response time, ultimately making it harder to see and shoot the target. This has been proved by studies that show the darker the tint, the longer the message takes to travel from your retina to the occipital lobe in your brain that's responsible for interpreting the images your eyes have 'seen'.

There are a few variables for reasons why some people will choose a particular darkness of colour, as the level of saturation you may feel comfortable with is dependent on:

#### *Size of the eye's pupil*

Children and young adults generally have larger pupil size and will prefer darker saturation/darker tints.

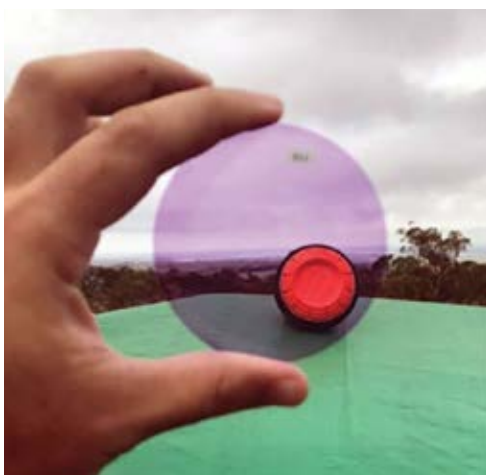
#### *Iris/eye pigment*

Less-pigmented eyes (blue and green) will generally be more glare-sensitive and suit darker tints.

#### *Ocular pathology*

Many eye conditions such as macular degeneration, cataract and glaucoma cause us to be more glare-sensitive and those individuals generally benefit from darker tints with selective hues. Often for patients with a cataract an optometrist will suggest the prescription of a yellow tint and for those with macular degeneration an amber hue.

*Blue light is scattered more as it enters the human eye and causes most of the glare symptoms we encounter, so if we block the blue light, we experience fewer glare effects...*



The choice of lens hue is far more subjective, can vary greatly from person to person and will also depend on backgrounds the target is presented against. As a general rule, a good recommendation is to use colours that block the short wavelength spectrum of light (blue, violet and UV).

Blue light is scattered more as it enters the human eye and causes most of the glare symptoms we encounter, so if we block the blue light, we experience fewer glare effects and often have better contrast with targets standing out against the background. Here are some general guidelines on tints.

### Orange

Great all-round lenses for black and fluorescent targets against broken backgrounds (trees, bushes, grass, sky).

### Yellow

Good for reducing blue light and glare factors, in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky.

### Red/amber/vermilion

Excellent for fluorescent targets and black/banded. Good for reducing blue light and glare intrusions and against broken backgrounds (trees, bushes, grass, sky).

### Purple

Works well in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky.

It is also important to note that when you have selected your lens, make sure you give your eyes an adjustment period of at least 30-40 minutes prior to shooting. This is so you gain the best performance from the tint after your eyes have adjusted and therefore relaxed into the new information being received.

If you have looked into purchasing coloured lenses before, you may notice that there can be a large selection to choose from within certain brands. This is because these varieties have put a lot of time and effort into the science behind creating tinted lenses and have been fine-tuned to maximise the perceptive ability of the eye in an assortment of lighting conditions and environmental backgrounds.

*Correct lens colour not only impacts on your performance as a shooter in acquiring the target. It also decreases eye fatigue and improves overall competition fitness.*

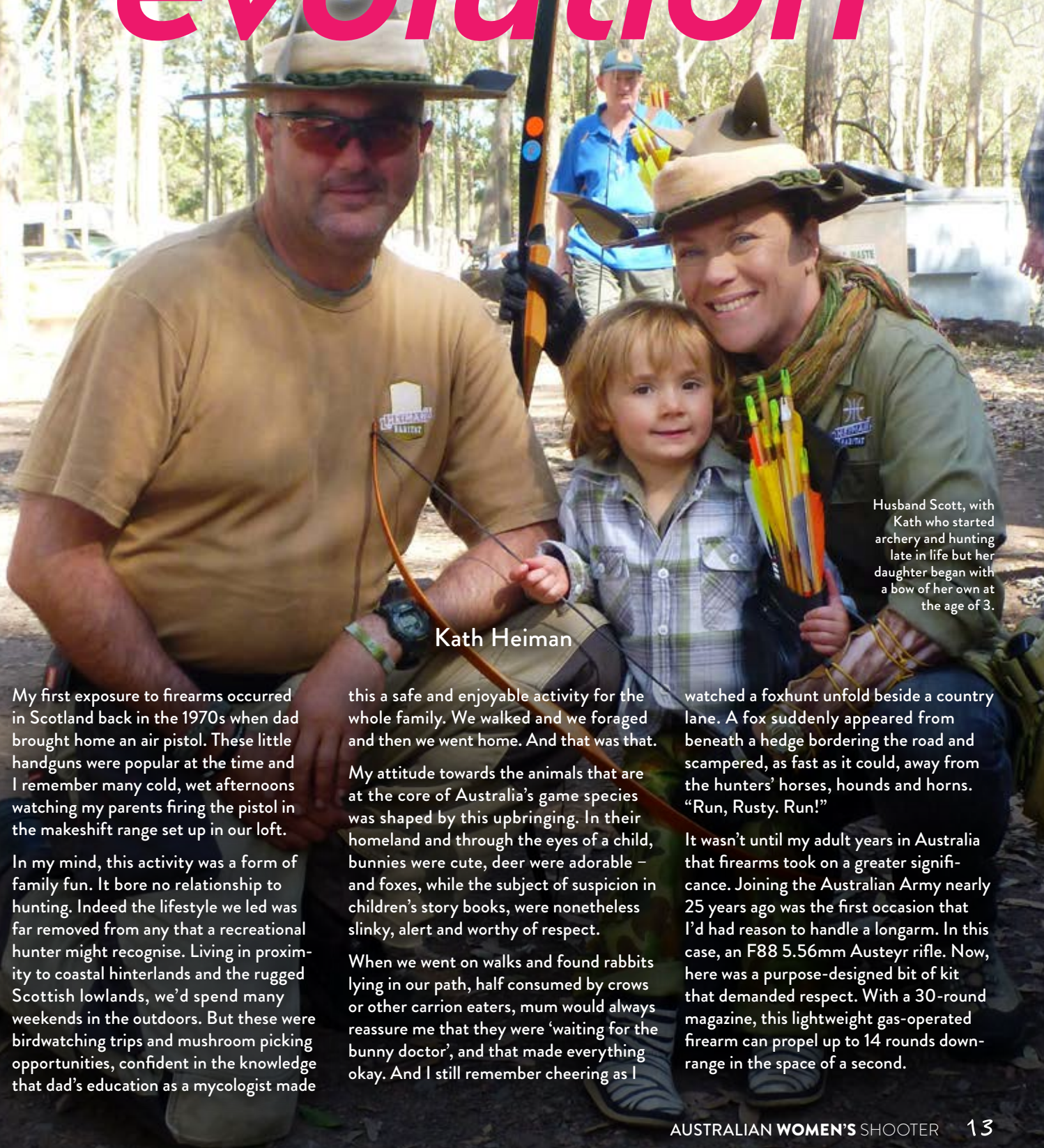
For example, the glasses I use have produced hundreds (no exaggeration) of different lens colours for various applications in not just clay target shooting but other activities such as hunting, action shooting, archery, equestrian and aviation. Although this can become quite overwhelming with such a large array of choice, if you apply Dr Higgins' simple principles to your selection criteria it will eventually become clearer and easier to choose.

You can now see why it is so vital to make the correct lens colour for your application. It not only impacts on your performance as a shooter in acquiring the target. It also decreases eye fatigue and improves overall competition fitness and brings you a lot more consistency with your shooting.

Pilla are just one of the many glasses manufacturers that offer coloured lenses. They also have a really cool simulation feature on their website where you can immediately see the difference that the coloured lens makes to the picture. It's interactive and interesting to play with so have a look for yourself at [pillaspport.com/collections/shooting](http://pillaspport.com/collections/shooting)

Overall, it is really important to consult those who have years of experience in their field to help you navigate topics such as this one in order to reach your goals even faster, or avoid spending unnecessary amounts of money. If you have any questions relating to optometry and your shooting, please reach out to your local practitioner or you can contact Dr Higgins at [lukehigginsoptometry.com.au](http://lukehigginsoptometry.com.au)

# Hunting *evolution*



Kath Heiman

Husband Scott, with Kath who started archery and hunting late in life but her daughter began with a bow of her own at the age of 3.

My first exposure to firearms occurred in Scotland back in the 1970s when dad brought home an air pistol. These little handguns were popular at the time and I remember many cold, wet afternoons watching my parents firing the pistol in the makeshift range set up in our loft.

In my mind, this activity was a form of family fun. It bore no relationship to hunting. Indeed the lifestyle we led was far removed from any that a recreational hunter might recognise. Living in proximity to coastal hinterlands and the rugged Scottish lowlands, we'd spend many weekends in the outdoors. But these were birdwatching trips and mushroom picking opportunities, confident in the knowledge that dad's education as a mycologist made

this a safe and enjoyable activity for the whole family. We walked and we foraged and then we went home. And that was that.

My attitude towards the animals that are at the core of Australia's game species was shaped by this upbringing. In their homeland and through the eyes of a child, bunnies were cute, deer were adorable – and foxes, while the subject of suspicion in children's story books, were nonetheless slinky, alert and worthy of respect.

When we went on walks and found rabbits lying in our path, half consumed by crows or other carrion eaters, mum would always reassure me that they were 'waiting for the bunny doctor', and that made everything okay. And I still remember cheering as I

watched a foxhunt unfold beside a country lane. A fox suddenly appeared from beneath a hedge bordering the road and scampered, as fast as it could, away from the hunters' horses, hounds and horns. "Run, Rusty. Run!"

It wasn't until my adult years in Australia that firearms took on a greater significance. Joining the Australian Army nearly 25 years ago was the first occasion that I'd had reason to handle a longarm. In this case, an F88 5.56mm Austeyr rifle. Now, here was a purpose-designed bit of kit that demanded respect. With a 30-round magazine, this lightweight gas-operated firearm can propel up to 14 rounds down-range in the space of a second.



Testing out whether Kath's new creation obstructs her bow.



The raw materials Kath used to make her ghillie suit.

*Our relationship has been cemented around the essential elements of ethical hunting. These include respect for our natural environment, a sustainable conservation mindset...*

The fact that the military trains us to use it at a far more controlled rate doesn't detract from its intrinsic capabilities. It helps explain why everyone on the mound conducting their initial range practice with me – and our respective coaches – were horrified when a trainee let loose a stream of poorly targeted automatic fire. This was the first occasion that I'd heard the Army Order "Stop. Stop. Stop!" issued at full roar, and it certainly had its desired effect on everyone within earshot. I doubt that the newbie responsible for the error ever quite recovered from the shock.

In the intervening period, my respect for firearms has continued to increase, as has my exposure to them. After my parents moved to a hobby farm in the late 1980s, dad eventually acquired a .22 calibre Brno bolt-action and a .410 bore Marlin lever-action to deal with the rabbits and feral pigs that would periodically set up shop within his property's boundaries. But the real change came when I met, and then married, my husband.

Scott's upbringing was entirely different to mine. Grandson to a Rural Protection Board Ranger and son of a surveyor, firearms were the stock-in-trade of his background. Both his elders were shotgun champions, so after-school activities for Scott involved reloading shotgun shells. Lots of them. Bowhunting was a sport at which Scott had excelled since his teens and his typical family holiday involved camping trips to large rural landholdings where he and his folks would help the owner with their vertebrate pest management activities.

Joining the Army Cadets in his teens, and the Infantry as an adult, Scott was a soldier, then an officer, then Senior Firearms Instructor for the Australian Federal Police International Deployment Group. So he was more comfortable with firearms than anyone I'd ever met. All of which meant that eradicating those cute and cuddly species that I'd cooed over as a child was second nature to him.

So, how could our partnership accommodate these widely different viewpoints? The reality is that our relationship has been cemented around the essential elements of ethical hunting. These include respect for our natural environment, a sustainable conservation mindset and the recognition that there's a place for everything – and everything has its place. These are things that both Scott and I can easily agree upon.

Our colonial forebears actively encouraged European species to establish themselves in Australia's fragile ecosystem but cute or not – foxes, cats, dogs, rabbits, deer and other introduced species don't belong here. So I comfortably approached the prospect of developing skills that would allow me to harvest their meat and skin, while making my own small contribution to reducing their negative impact on the country.

At least, that was the theory. The real issue was whether I'd be so sure of my position the first time that I set out to

despatch a real, live fluffy bunny. And that was a question that would take several years to answer.

Like many things in life, adaptation to change can take time and sometimes it's hard to pinpoint exactly when it happens. So it was with my transition from bunny cuddler to novice hunter. It started the first time Scott and I attended a bowhunters' event where I was up close with ballistic 3D game targets. At home, I worked with Scott to make my own homemade ghillie suit, an outfit originally conceived by gamekeepers in my own country of origin, Scotland.

Then there was my first hunting trip with Scott and his folks to Tenterfield on the New England tablelands. Here, armed with a camera, I joined the hunt, taking photos of the game that Scott and his siblings felled. Many similar outings followed during which I began a slow process of intuitive education about the habits of game and the skill of stalking.

Eventually I joined the Australian Bowhunters Association and then, armed with a custom-made longbow gifted by my husband as a Valentine's Day present, I began an informal apprenticeship as a hunter in my own right. Starting with 3D targets with the animals' vitals clearly defined, I focused on generating the skill and accuracy to strike an animal cleanly in order to achieve a quick kill.

So it was that the day finally came when, armed with a set of broad heads and with a camp surrounded by rabbit burrows popping with floppy ears and fluffy white tails, I set out for my first solo stalk.

Ironically, this was the same property at Tenterfield where, six years earlier, I'd joined Scott's hunt to take happy snaps. Wind direction gauged. 'Check'. Cover identified. 'Check'. Outfit suitable for the temperature and terrain. 'Check'. Water bottle and first-aid kit secure. 'Check'. CB radio working and comms check conducted. 'Check.' All right then, here goes. 'Watch out bunnies, here I come'.

*I spent an afternoon stalking a creature that no longer took on the appearance of a cute, fluffy, doe-eyed cousin of Peter Rabbit.*

And then it happened. I became a hunter, albeit still cautiously and with much to learn. I spent an afternoon stalking a creature that no longer took on the appearance of a cute, fluffy, doe-eyed cousin of Peter Rabbit. I was hunting a feral introduced species that was going to make a great dinner, if only one of the little rogues would stay still long enough. When two of them did, and I took them down cleanly, I couldn't have been more

satisfied. Now there were two fewer pests on the property – and two prime candidates for the camp oven. 'Winner, winner bunny dinner'. With a quiver on my back, a bow in one hand, and two bunnies in the other, I walked back to camp with a smile on my face.

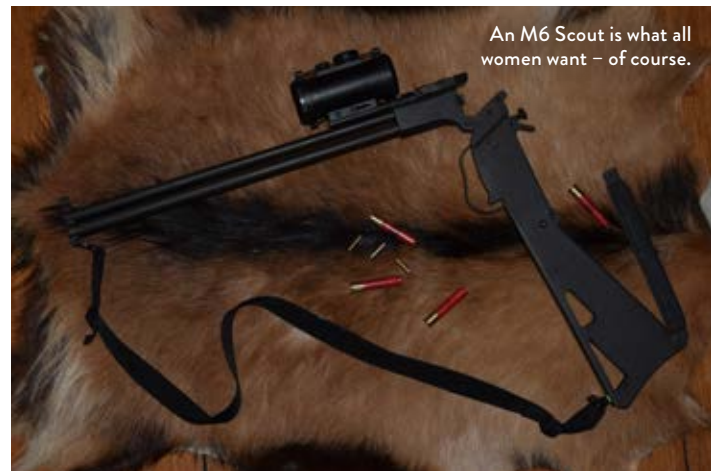
So what's the next step for a novice hunter? Is it fallow deer, pigs and goats with a .243? Is it bigger game and larger bore rifles? I don't think so. Not for a little while yet. I've still a lot to learn and rabbits remain a worthy target for my rookie efforts. They're difficult to sneak up on, move quickly and are small enough to fall, even if my aim is not quite as good as I would like it to be. Just as Scott's dad insisted that he had to despatch 10 bunnies before he'd be allowed to tackle anything bigger, I will do the same.

Besides, I have my sights set on a lovely little bunny bustin' Springfield M6 .22LR/.410 Scout which I'm sure will tuck neatly into my shoulder and be light enough to carry wherever I might like to take it. Luckily I know that this exact same firearm is currently resting – as new in its original case – among some larger calibre friends, behind the locked door of Scott's gun safe.

I'm hoping it's waiting to be signed over to me when I finalise my firearms licence. Until then, Scott tells me that I can look at it when he's using it, but I can't touch it. So I guess it's time to start filling out some paperwork.



A first-ever bunny harvest for Kath.



An M6 Scout is what all women want – of course.



Proudly distributed by Outdoor Sporting Agencies  
[www.osaaustralia.com.au](http://www.osaaustralia.com.au)

# JACQUI FERLING

Ridgeline Ambassador

Jacqui wears Ridgeline

- Ascent 1/4 Zip Top • Stealth Trousers • Camlite Boots
- Mauser M18 Rifle • Zeiss Victory HT 3-12x56 Scope
- Hornady Precision Hunter 300 Win Mag Ammunition

Hardwear



— BUY INSTORE AND ONLINE —

[ridgelineclothing.com.au](http://ridgelineclothing.com.au)

— ESTABLISHED 1996 —

DESIGNED AND TESTED  
IN NEW ZEALAND