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CONQUERING NZ ALPS ON FOOT

MEGA REVIEW ISSUE SIX DETAILED REVIEWS FIREARMS SCOPES BINOCULARS +MORE PAGE 39



New Yildiz 12-gauge isn't just Elegant by name

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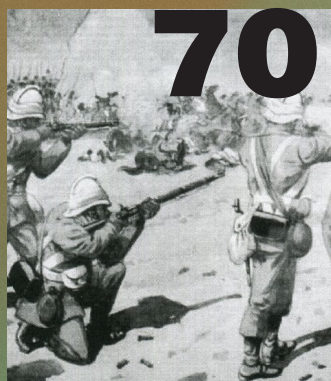
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AUSTRALIAN Shooter

OUR POLICY

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

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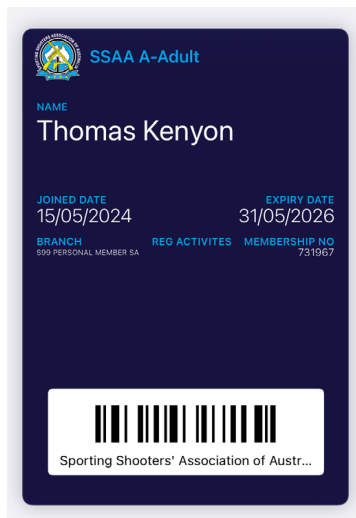
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MY DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP CARD IN THE WALLET ON MY PHONE.

This edition features informative reviews from boots to bins that our correspondents have worked hard to put through their paces, so you have a better idea about the standard of gear out there and how it holds up.

The National Firearms Register continues to be developed and I've been involved in a number of calls with the Federal Department of Home Affairs to discuss how this will work and put our views to them. As you'd expect from a government department, they're wondering what else they can add to firearms regulations and our clear message is to keep it simple and stick just to the national register.

The purpose of the register itself is simple: To share information among states and territories about registered firearms and licences. There's no need to make it more complicated than that. There's no need to standardise legislation across states and no need to tweak gun laws beyond those changes which allow the National Firearms Register to operate. Rest assured your state association will be keeping in close contact with their respective state governments to make sure they don't sneak anything through on the way.

An interesting topic which did arise was the issue of suppressors. Check the SSAA National website for the full position we put to them but, suffice to say, the Association is keen for restrictions around suppressors to be relaxed. Not only would it mean we can be more effective as we help control Australia's introduced species or assist farmers in protecting their livestock and crops, it'll mean less public disturbance and safer shooting for all involved.

Finally, you may have seen some ABC reports in relation to the shooting of police officers in Victoria. Obviously we offer our condolences to families of the officers involved, however we won't stand by while the ABC disparages law-abiding shooters in their handling of that incident. I have formally complained to the broadcaster about the biased nature of their reporting so let's see what happens.

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OPEN SEASON

VIVE LA FRANCE - WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM HER

WORDS:
MATTHEW GODSON



Following on from last month, I continue summarising the report titled *To Explore, Review and Document Wild Game Harvesting in Europe* by Neal Finch. As stated previously, this report investigates how wildlife is managed by hunting in different countries and is certainly something Australia can learn from. In Europe, hunters whether paid or not, tend to be viewed as the same in terms of their ability to manage wildlife populations, something the Australian pest management industry currently fails to comprehend.

The report continues its exploration of European wild game harvesting with a focus this time on France, which ranks as Europe's second-largest game meat market after Germany. Damien De Jong, one of Europe's major game meat wholesalers, is located at Dambach-la-Ville in Alsace, a region with both French and German cultural influences. Originally a fish trading company founded in 1956, the business transitioned entirely to game meat in 1980 and currently imports 45 per cent of its products. While they formerly processed locally harvested carcasses, the company now focuses on value-added products, supplying supermarkets and wholesalers with items made from venison (red and roe deer), wild boar, pheasant, pigeon, partridge, mallard duck and hare. They also deal in exotic meats such as kangaroo, reindeer and ostrich.

The Fédération Nationale des Chasseurs is France's national hunting body, which employs close to 40 staff in Paris and many more across 94 provinces. France has almost one million licensed hunters, the highest in Europe. The Permis de Chasser (National Hunting Licence) allows access either nationally or within specific provinces depending on fees. Applicants must pass an exam and while licences don't expire annually, safety updates are provided every 10 years, this single licence allowing for both recreational and commercial harvesting.

France's main form of big game harvesting is the battue, a driven hunt akin to Spain's Montería. For meat to enter the commercial chain, at least one participant must be trained in game meat hygiene and all wild boar must be tested for trichinella, a parasite not found in Australia. Veterinarians employed by the government inspect carcasses but don't have access to viscera (internal organs), with this inspection handled by trained hunters. Hunters may also sell meat directly to butchers or restaurants if eviscerated and skinned within 80km of the harvest site and documentation is provided.

Most hunters belong to either an Approved Communal Hunting Association (ACCA) or Approved Intercommunal Hunting Association (AICC). Stalking hunts, while common, rarely contribute to the commercial supply chain due to the low volume and distance to proces-

sors, though those who undertake meat safety training can sell directly to a butcher or restaurant.

Like Spain, France views hunting as a primary wildlife management tool, especially for overabundant species. In 2019, the country merged its biodiversity and hunting offices into the Office of Biodiversity, signalling the government's integrated approach to conservation and harvest. In 2023, 850,000 wild boar were culled due to escalating numbers, with 55,000 entering the commercial supply chain. Deer season runs from September to February, coinciding with cold weather for hygiene and occurring after young have been weaned to minimise welfare concerns. Some regions have no closed season for wild boar due to overpopulation.

It's estimated almost a third of large game (deer and boar) is consumed directly and more than half sold outside the formal processing sector, highlighting the importance of informal meat distribution networks in France. Like Spain, shoot-to-waste is rare and the cultural norm prioritises full utilisation of harvested animals. Wild game meat is commonly sold in supermarkets or served in restaurants with kangaroo products also available, reflecting the export relationship with Australia.

Overall, France's approach again reinforces the theme that recreational hunters play a central role in both wildlife management and commercial meat supply, an integrated model largely absent in Australia.

SEND QUESTIONS TO:
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To find out more about the report *To Explore, Review and Document Wild Game Harvesting in Europe* by Neal Finch, scan the QR code below.





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IN PRAISE OF THE FRUGAL FIRE-STARTER

WORDS:
SCOTT HEIMAN



Don't you hate wasting money? Yeah, me too, I work too hard to throw it away and don't want to be part of society's ever-growing 'discard' consumer culture. As Sir David Attenborough purportedly said: "Anyone who thinks you can have infinite growth on a planet with finite resources is either a madman or an economist."

When it comes to firearms I don't reload myself but know a couple of people who do, so I dutifully pick up my brass and ultimately pass it to willing recipients. At home my family recycles bottles, cans and other items to collect the 10c refund. Note I say refund as it was my money in the first place, because we all pay for the containers when we buy their liquid contents at the supermarket. In short it's a tax - it's mine and I want it back. Every trip we receive an average of \$30 and I go halves with my daughter if she helps. I hope this process is instilling in her a sense of resource responsibility as she becomes a young adult.

And how about kitchen scraps? I feed them to the chickens (my backyard primary producers) and make compost for the garden. And when I roast chicken, I make sure to save the bones and leftover bits-and-bobs to boil down into a stock/bone broth to use in tomorrow night's meal (which is usually spag bol). I strain the stock and anything that's still solid is buried in the veggie patch.

Which brings me to firelighters. Whether you use them for the wood-burning stove at home,



WASTE NOTHING FOR A BETTER PLANET!

backyard firepit, campfire or as a survival item, they're useful to have around. Ideally (and particularly in an emergency situation) you want something that'll ignite readily come rain, hail or shine. Better still, if you can make firelighters from waste materials lying around the house, it won't just be campfire flames giving you a warm and fuzzy feeling as you sit cozily under the stars.

My go-to firelighter technique was taught to me by an archery friend and it couldn't be simpler. Grab a methyl bromide-free pallet from the back of a hardware store (ask first unless they're obviously being thrown out). Cut it into one-inch squares, enough to reach the top of a large glass coffee jar or Milo tin, which is sturdier if you intend to take it out bush. Fill the jar with citronella oil, leave it to soak in and voila! You've just made a fire-starter that'll ignite easily and, as a bonus, will also help scare-off mozzies. With leftovers from the pallet, cut it down to kindling size and take it camping, that way you've got dry wood to help kick-start the fire if it's been raining.

Another homemade fire-starter involves collecting and air-drying the rind from oranges and lemons etc. Dry rinds will catch fire from a match or lighter as they contain high levels of highly volatile essen-

tial oils. And if you've a bit more time up your sleeve, there's another technique which also works well. First up, start squirreling away the wax that's left over from things like cheese and candles. At the same time, reserve some of the lint which collects in your clothes dryer and if you have animals all the better, as their hair will be trapped in the lint.

By now you might be thinking I've lost the plot but stick with me. Once you have a decent collection of wax and lint, find a couple of egg cartons then melt the wax in an old saucepan. Place the lint in the egg cup parts of the carton and, when the wax has melted, pour it over the lint and fill the cups half to three-quarters of the way. Once the concoction is dry, cut each egg cup from the carton and you have a bunch of waterproof, long-life firelighters made from scrap. You could even add some of that dried citrus for more effect.

And there you have it: Robert's your father's brother!

IF YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE FIRE-STARTER HACK, PLEASE SHARE IT WITH US BY WRITING TO THE EDITOR AT:
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WORDS:
LAETISHA SCANLAN



Q Over the years I've gradually gained weight and my face has become a bit larger, making it tricky to mount the gun correctly. Any magical solution other than losing weight?
J. Ferreira, via email

A You're certainly not alone in this one! Weight fluctuation, especially around the face is one of the most common reasons shooters start running into gun-fit issues. And yes, it can make correct gun mounting challenging. That's where adjustable combs are handy and have been a game-changer for many shooters.

Personally, I end up tweaking my comb height about twice a year. It's a practical way to adapt the stock to fit you, rather than trying to reshape your face. Sadly, there's no 'magic fix' other than modifying your stock with an adjustable comb, so if your current setup doesn't allow for that, it might be worth exploring.

As you already know a consistent, correct mount, allowing you to look straight down the rib with the right eye alignment is absolutely crucial for accurate and consistent shooting. The good news is once the setup fits you properly again, your shooting should feel a lot more natural and straightforward. Sorry I couldn't offer a secret hack but I hope this points you in the right direction.

Q I've read that shooting's not in next year's Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Is that true?

G. Peterson, via email

A The absence of shooting from the 2026 Commonwealth Games is both disappointing and, unfortunately, not surprising. The issue stems from a series of missteps, starting with the Victorian Government's abrupt cancellation of the Games initially planned for Melbourne. That decision, justified by what many have described as exaggerated cost projections, resulted in the collapse of the event's original planning framework. It's worth noting that even under the Melbourne program, only a reduced version of shooting events was set to be included.

When Glasgow stepped in at the last minute to take over hosting duties, their main focus was keeping costs down. As a result, they've opted for a slimmed-down version of the Games featuring just 10 sports. Sadly that means shooting along with other popular sports like hockey, diving and table tennis have been cut from the schedule. And this isn't the first time shooting has been left out. It was also excluded from the Birmingham 2022 Games, despite being a long-standing part of Commonwealth sporting tradition. More broadly, the Commonwealth Games as a whole seem to be facing an identity crisis. With rising costs and fewer countries willing to host, it's becoming harder to see how the event will continue in its current form. For fans and athletes alike it's a frustrating situation. Shooting has a strong following across the Commonwealth and its absence leaves a real gap in our sporting showpiece. Unless something changes soon, whether new funding models, a rethink of priorities or better long-term planning, the Games as we know them could be on a slow march to extinction.

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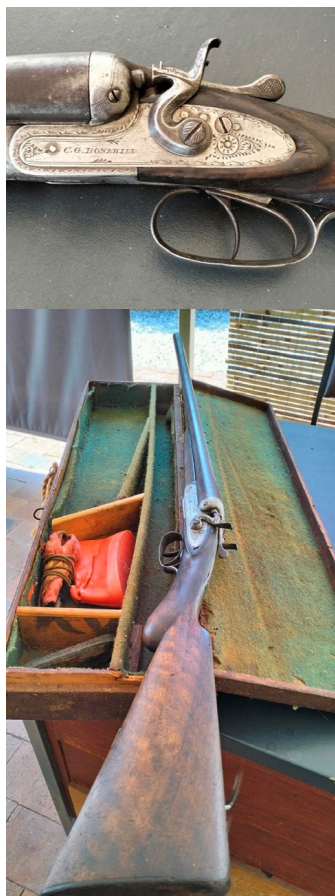
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Q Would you be able to give me any information on the Bonehill firearm shown in the photos below and might it have any value? Lenny Brown, via email



A Your pictures show a double barrelled hammer gun made in the factory of well-known Birmingham gunsmith Christopher George Bonehill (1831-1920). The barrels appear to be Damascus so it shouldn't be fired with modern cartridges. Without seeing the proof marks I can't tell you whether or not it's a 12-gauge, let alone such things as chamber length, whether proofed for smokeless powder, when it was made and so on.

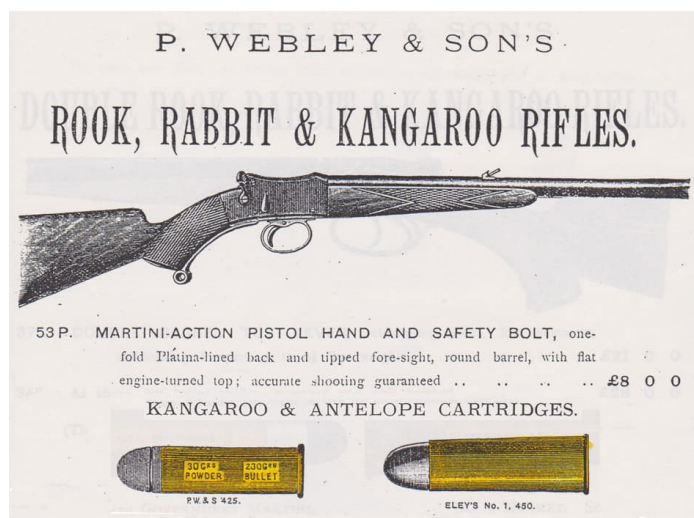
In the 19th century, Birmingham was one of the world's major gun-making centres, producing military and sporting rifles, shotguns and pistols. On completing his apprenticeship, the 20-year-old Bonehill set up his own workshop and was soon contracting for the supply of thousands of military rifles.

He was famous at the time for using the latest machinery and methods. When the military orders slowed he turned to making shotguns, the most modern being the hammerless boxlock 'Belmont' of 1887. In a twist being echoed today, the then US President William McKinley imposed a 35 per cent tariff on imported guns, so Bonehill changed direction to producing the famous 'Britannia' air rifle. He held numerous patents during his long life and his firearms are still well thought of.

The value is difficult to estimate without more detail, but in a 2017 auction a similar pre-1900 Bonehill 12-gauge hammer gun sold for \$55, while one made early in the 20th century which had smokeless proofs fetched \$95.

Geoff Smith

Q I found a cartridge on a property in far western New South Wales. After some research it was identified as a .450 No.1 cartridge made by Eley in England for 'kangaroo rifles'. The bullet has an unusual feature of a copper insert in the centre of the lead head and I assume the cartridge is black



powder charged. I've been unable to find out anything about the 'kangaroo rifle' or the purpose of the copper insert, which I assume is for better mushrooming of the lead bullet. One source suggested these cartridges could be made explosive. Grateful for your Top Shots input.

Dr John Christie, NSW

A Your cartridge is indeed a .450 No.1 and was made for the kangaroo rifle, a generic term used to cover a multitude of firearms by various manufacturers, offering different action types and chambering for a number of relatively large calibre cartridges suitable for kangaroo shooting. These rifles were popular in Australia in the second half of the 19th century and nowadays you'll find mainly break-action rifles in collections. A few were made in Martini action rifles, similar to the .310 Cadet only larger.

Rifles were made by a variety of English gunmakers including

Philip Webley (see attached picture). There are a number of other cartridges with the same .450 No.1 designation, some longer such as the Westley Richards .450 No.1 Carbine, some shorter including the .450 No.1 Bland for revolvers (also made by Eley). However, your specimen at a little under two inches in overall length and having a rimmed case is ideal for the Martini action.

The cartridges are made by a couple of manufacturers usually in black powder loads with, as you correctly point out, a copper 'tube' as it's called, inserted into a hollow cavity in the bullet's tip to aid expansion of the soft lead on impact. You also mention these cartridges could be made 'explosive'. I assume you're referring to removing the copper tube in the bullet tip and replacing it with a small calibre blank cartridge, which would be set off when hitting a hard object such as timber or bone to further expand the bullet on impact.

Rod Pascoe



Q I've just acquired a rifle in .577/450 made by National Arms Co and am having trouble finding information on it. The marking on one side plate is NA&A Co Ltd 1877 and it has a true falling block and unusual locking system on the lever. There's a four-digit registration number on the barrel and on the stock is 'NSW OD' under which is 'S118' then a reverse 'D' along with a company stamp on the butt. On the other side plate the marking is 'Henry Patent'. The rifle's in quite good condition and any information would be a great help.

Peter Semier, via email

A What an interesting firearm you have Peter. This is a military model Alexander Henry falling block rifle built on action patent 1071 dated April 17, 1865, hence the Henry Patent stamp on the side of the receiver. Functionally it's very similar to the American Sharps action except for the finger lever which on the Sharps also incorporates the trigger guard. On the Henry, the lever wraps under the trigger guard and is locked into position by an incorporated latch.

Alexander Henry is famous for his sporting rifles and while he was interested in military contracts for his arms, he'd little room to manufacture them. Accordingly, the order he received from the then Colonial Government of NSW was sub-contracted



to various companies including Westley Richards Arms and Ammunition Co, National Arms and Ammunition Co Ltd and the Braendlin Armoury Co.

In NSW the rifles were distributed to the Police Dept, Prisons Dept, Permanent Artillery, Naval Brigade and the Volunteers, those last three groups making up the Military Forces of the Colony. The NA&A Co Ltd 1877 stamp on the receiver indicates the maker and year the rifle was made, one of around 1600 ordered. The NSW

stamp on the stock is self-explanatory, the 118 is a rack number and 'NB' indicates the rifle was issued to the Naval Brigade.

The over-stamped letter 'S' with an up-pointing arrow above it and down-pointing arrow below is an armoury release stamp applied to surplus firearms sold to the public. I haven't been able to identify the significance of the 'O' and 'D' markings but suspect they may also be part of the surplus stamp. I hope you find this helpful and if you'd like to explore further, I can recommend two books in *The British Falling Block Breechloading Rifle* by Jonathon Kirton (1997, R&R Books) and *The British Single Shot Rifle, Volume 1* by Wal Winfer (1997, R&R Books).

John Dunn



SEND QUESTIONS TO:
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When seeking information on old or antique firearms, please include a photo of the proof marks on those guns which have them. Old shotguns typically have markings beneath the breech. Also outline the firearm's known history or provenance where possible.

CHEF'S SPECIAL

WORDS:
CHARLOTTE FOX

John Ralley is a popular Sydney chef as well as an accomplished hunter who's passionate about harvesting, foraging and the incredible food he creates from that produce. After moving out of Sydney to the Hawkesbury River, he launched The Bush River Kitchen to bring his love of food and hunting together, along with advocating for self-sufficiency and sustainable sourcing of food. John spoke to **Charlotte Fox** about how he transitioned from a teenager learning to hunt with his mates, to a pâtissier and chef in Michelin-starred restaurants to where he is now.

Tell me about the journey to where you are now and how you incorporated hunting into that.

I've been hunting since I was 16 or 17. Growing up I had friends whose parents had a property, so I'd go there at least once a year with my mates and developed hunting skills over time on those trips. At that time I loved hanging out with friends, being in the bush and going for walks and hikes in the mountains. In relation to hunting, we'd shoot a few goats here and there and that's what got me hooked. As far as my career goes, I've been a pastry chef for more than 20 years and now live on the Central Coast of the Hawkesbury River.



HIGH LEVELS OF CONCENTRATION ARE NEEDED AS BOTH A CHEF AND A HUNTER. HERE JOHN IS MAKING BLOWN SUGAR.

How did you start as a chef?

I got into it around my mid-twenties doing an apprenticeship in a patisserie in the Southern Highlands. After that I went to London for five years where I worked in a variety of places including restaurants and hotels.

How did you become a pastry chef from that initial love of hunting?

I'd love to say there's a great story behind it, but to be honest I just happened to land a job and fell in love with it. I tried a few other trades such as roof tiling and plumbing but once I stepped into a bakery that was it. Developing that love of being a chef is what motivated me to move to London, where I ended up working more in restaurants than patisseries. Every time I went hunting while I was a pastry chef made me think more about wild game and working with that kind of produce.

Which restaurants did you work for in the UK?

In London I started at the Park Hyatt in pastry which was a bit too clean-cut for me, so I decided to transition more into restaurants and loved it. At one time I worked at La Trompette which is a one-star Michelin restaurant in Chiswick. I was actually there when we received the star which was great and after that I was hooked on working in restaurants.

Did you do much shooting in Europe?

I did more spearfishing there and have been spearfishing longer than I've been hunting. In the past I spent a lot of time near the ocean and was always in the water, though hunting has definitely taken over as my passion now.

What are some of the most memorable places you've been?

In relation to hunting I grew up in Orange, so that'll always be a place I love to go. I visit the same property now and am grateful the owner



still provides access for me to hunt. It's a little spot I dearly love for nostalgic reasons and I've so many memories from more than 20 years there. I especially love the steep country and accessibility to goats for hunting. While in the UK I lived in Cornwall for a while so was fortunate to do some spearfishing there. In Australia I've gone spearfishing right around the country including Christmas Island, the Coral Sea and Tasmania.

What about the business and how it relates to your passion for hunting?

I've been in Sydney for the past 13 years, including running a bakery for the past seven. I was working 100 hours a week and, to be honest, was over it and wanted something different. Just before Covid we bought this place on the Hawkesbury and had been travelling up here. I built an outdoor kitchen, just for myself but not with a commercial venture in mind.

People were asking what I was doing, so I decided to run a few events and dinners here with some other chef mates and it just took off from

there. That's when we sold the bakery and moved here full-time. In this business I really want to put things on the menu I can personally hunt, forage or fish and if it's not, I'll add something local such as prawns from trawlers or produce from organic farms.

I'm only taking private bookings driven by word of mouth and Instagram. Initially I wanted to keep the business small and host an event once a month, though I've also started doing some offsite catering which has taken off really well. I recently held an event at a winery where the client wanted wild game and that's all, which is perfect for me as that's what I want to promote.

Where do you harvest meat and forage for plants?

I source a lot of meat from the Upper Hunter. I've another chef friend from there who has a restaurant and a lot of local farmers know him quite well. Thankfully their properties have no shortage of deer as well as pigs and goats, so it's really helpful to be able to work in partnership

JOHN AT BUSH RIVER KITCHEN.
IMAGE: DAMIEN BENNETT.



with them. In relation to foraging plants, I like to source coastal varieties such as Warrigal greens and also pick a lot of mushrooms in season, including the European varieties which grow under pine trees. I love truffles but haven't been foraging for them personally.

How do you find Australian attitudes to eating wild game?

It's completely normal in Europe and I don't know why we're so far behind, especially considering so many of us originally came from European countries. I think maybe once an animal is considered a pest, people potentially don't think of them as a food source. The comparison in Europe is those same animals and products are highly prized and considered amazing meat.

How do you use social media to promote your business and engage with people?

I started in social media when I had the bakery. Love it or hate it (and I hate it most of the time) it's how the world works nowadays. I try to keep a pretty simple social media strategy by focusing on posting what I want to promote and, if people want to come and enjoy it, that's great.

What platforms do you use and have you seen much negativity?

In relation to my online presence, I largely use Instagram (@bushriverkitchen) and produce most of my own content. I used to see quite a lot of negativity with some people calling me a murderer, though I don't get much any more. These days I just don't buy into it or care about those types of comments.

I spend some time thinking about my audience when I'm considering content and there are some brands I'm happy to work with, though I only work with content and brands I want to promote. I don't want to be one of those people who sells their soul just for a 'like'.

There's some beautiful images on your website. How did you approach capturing those?

We've worked with a few people including professional photographers and other hunters and chefs. In relation to developing content we captured images from a number of our events, including one we did recently with [celebrity chef] Rick Stein. While he was here, we cooked a whole deer and discussed the challenge of encouraging Australians to eat an animal they might consider a pest, rather than food.

Are there challenges promoting a business which includes a hunting element?

I thought it may have been a bit of a challenge after having the bakery, yet everyone who knows me knew what I was interested in and that I'm experienced in hunting, so it's been pretty good. I'm really just pulling together a couple of important elements of my life I'm passionate about in cooking and hunting. I do what I want to do and if people like it, they like it. I want to respect the produce I have and teach people these animals are an amazing food source.

Do you have any specific goals?

Not really. I'm just enjoying life as it is. ●

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IMAGE: JIWON KIM.

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Italian footwear company **Crispi** have thoroughly impressed us with their Summit GTX super-lightweight boot. Handmade for hunting, hiking and trekking, they pack in features like a waterproof membrane, Vibram Megagrip rubber outsole and shock absorbant midsole, but still somehow weigh in at only 680g. Our full review on page 50.

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JOE NORRIS MADE THE MOST OF A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

I was in New South Wales with time on my hands so asked my good friend Peter if it would be possible to hunt on his place for fallow deer. As it was a while since the rut he agreed, though I was to target only cull animals. This was to include any bucks with badly cleft antlers as he was trying to improve the genetics on his place, while I was also permitted a spiker or two if the chance arose.

Now my Engels holds three fallow once they're broken down into prime cuts, so I was going to try filling it for the trip back to Queensland. With fallow venison tough to come by where I'm from, I wasn't about to squander an opportunity like this. I had two rifles with me in a big Ruger .338 Win Mag and a 'new for me' Thomson Centre Contender in .270 Win I hadn't tried on deer yet. Both were loaded with Barnes TSX bullets intended for hunting sambar, so shouldn't have any trouble with the lightly-framed fallow bucks I was targeting.

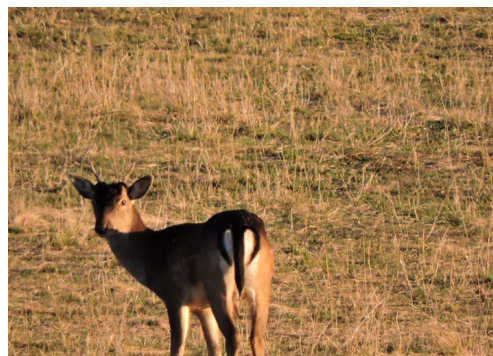
After driving into the hills I set up camp at Peter's shed so I could hang any deer to cool before processing them. The terrain's very steep and not passable by vehicle unless it's a quadbike, even then it's not for the faint-hearted. I'd be walking for the most part and carrying any deer harvested to the few tracks available, so I could haul them out in the ute.

On the first morning I set out while it was still dark and bitterly cold. Before setting off I stood smelling the gentle breeze drifting up the mountain, trying to decide which way to go. I could go down into the breeze or up to the ridge top and hunt down when dawn broke. I chose to go up and contour around the mountain to the next gully system, as the going was rough and I doubted anyone would've been keen to hunt there during the rut so hopefully the area hadn't had much pressure. I took the Thomson Contender as it's considerably lighter than the .338 and I didn't need any handicaps when it came to climbing.

I made it to the summit without blowing a gasket (it was a close thing though) and slowly crept around the hill just below the crest, so I wouldn't be skylighted. Stopping frequently to put my binoculars to good use and check every fold in the ground, I was enjoying a muesli bar when I spotted movement further along and slightly lower down the mountain.

There were three does walking a game trail through the bracken about 400m away and coming towards me. Through Swarovski binoculars I was able to range them and watch as they went about their business and every so often they'd stop and look back, so I was hopeful a buck was following. Eventually one did appear on the trail, walking towards where I was sitting in plain view of them and as I was about 50m further up the mountain, I was hoping if I sat still they wouldn't spot me.

Examining the buck through binoculars I could see he had clefts in both antlers so was definitely a cull in Peter's criteria, though was still in good condition despite the fact the rut had been fairly recent. His skin glistened in the sun and he'd no ribs or hips showing, so I was sure he'd make good eating if I could manage a shot.



SPIKER PHOTOGRAPHED ON FULL ZOOM BEFORE BEING TAKEN FOR MEAT.

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THE BUCK BEFORE LOADING INTO THE UTE FOR A DRIVE TO THE SHED; FALLOW SCRAPE AND RUTTING PAD.



I tried to work out the best place to shoot from, as the game trail wasn't always exposed and often disappeared behind trees and through little gullies before re-appearing. I finally decided my chance was just before they were directly below me, so set up the single-shot for a steady rest and waited. The shot would be almost straight down so I'd have to allow for the angle. Yet as the range was only going to be about 120m the .270 wouldn't be affected, so I decided I'd hold directly on the buck's shoulder if the chance presented.

They took so long to walk into my chosen shooting spot I wasn't even excited and felt perfectly calm when the time came to place the crosshairs on the buck. Aiming for the opposite elbow I held high on his near-side shoulder and squeezed the trigger on the .270. The buck folded with the shot and after a few spasmodic kicks lay motionless. I climbed down and after a few photos gutted him, made a 'Kiwi backpack' and carried him back to the shed.

Next day I went to the bottom country to try my luck there, as I was too sore from carrying the deer the previous day to contemplate that again. I took the .338 this time and was walking up a gully when I came across rutting pads and rub trees which didn't look very old, though the rut had been over for a few weeks. I was taking photos of these rubs and scrapes when a buck jumped up and started to run from his bed where I hadn't seen him.

Typically he stopped to look back at what had disturbed his rest and I was able to see that while he had long antlers, they didn't have any palmation to speak of, so he too qualified as a cull. Taking a rest on a tree the big gun bellowed and the buck hit the deck. This time he was no trouble to recover and after the gutting process I just walked back to the ute, drove up to him and loaded him into the back for the drive to the shed.

Later that afternoon I was watching a flat paddock bordered by scrub when a spiker strolled out to feed among a sizeable mob of roos already eating the sweet young grass. The range was beyond 250m and there was no way to move closer. It was late in the day so I took a photo of the young buck with the zoom lens on maximum, waiting in case a more mature deer appeared to complete the trio I wanted before heading home.

Just before dark I decided I'd take the youngster as there were no others around. My .338 shoots surprisingly flat so, holding just on top of his back, I squeezed off a shot and dropped him on the spot. It was another easy recovery as I drove right up to him and, after gutting, loaded him and drove back to the shed for processing.

On arriving home the following day I rang Peter to thank him for the privilege that hunting access is. I sent him photos of the deer and was relieved when he approved of my choices. It was a happy and grateful hunter who'd turned north towards the Queensland border that morning, both for the experience and a haul of prime fallow venison for the family.



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LEATHER FOR ALL WEATHER

JOHN DUNN MAKES A SIMPLE KNIFE SHEATH

Making a knife sheath is one of those jobs most hunters and fisherman will find themselves thinking about somewhere along the line. There are lots of different ways to do it, some easy and others more complicated than they need to be, given that protecting both blade and user remains the primary function of a sheath, regardless of how good it looks.

As a practical hunter I like my sheaths to be simple in both design and construction, especially now I'm making more of them to suit my own knives. Having played with leatherwork on and off over the years, I'd a bit of experience to draw on when I decided it was time to have another go. Before I started I spent a lot of time online, looking at all the different construction methods touted. I followed that up with a critical examination of the various sheaths which are part of my knife collection before cherry picking what I considered the best from each, then came up with a construction method which suited me.

MAKING A SIMPLE KNIFE SHEATH
The first order of business was to acquire some suitable leather. Once again the internet came to the rescue with contact details for a swag of different suppliers and their offerings. Eventually I settled on two: Artisan Supplies (artisansupplies.com.au) and Birdsell Leather (birdsell-leather.com.au), both of whom supply a range of leather products as well as tools and threads for leatherwork generally. The leather I use is 6-7oz (2.4-2.8mm thick) vegetable tanned with a light, natural finish which can easily be dyed.

CREATING A PATTERN OR TEMPLATE

Take a piece of light cardboard (an old SSAA target is ideal) and fold it over. Lay the spine of the knife along the folded edge then move it in at least a centimetre, as this allows for the fold in the leather that'll come later. Hold the knife in place then draw a line around the edge of the blade. Take the knife away and draw another line parallel to and at least 15mm wide of the blade

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USE YOUR KNIFE AS A TEMPLATE TO DRAW A PATTERN FOR THE SHEATH AND WELT. THE INNER LINE ON THE SHEATH PATTERN INDICATES LOCATION OF THE WELT.



FOLD THE LEATHER READY FOR THE WELT TO BE GLUED IN PLACE. CLAMP TOGETHER WITH THE KNIFE INSIDE TO ENSURE IT FITS AS IT SHOULD.



MARK STITCH LINES PRIOR TO SEWING. THE POINTS ON EACH STITCH LINE ARE EQUIDISTANT AND INDICATE WHERE A HOLE SHOULD BE TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDLES AND THREADS WHEN SEWING. (JOHN SEWS HIS SHEATH ON HIS HAND-OPERATED SEWING MACHINE, A MUCH QUICKER AND TIDIER PROCESS THAN HAND SEWING).

shape, extending it up until it's at least half as long as the handle of the knife, preferably a little more. Some of the handle needs to be exposed to provide a grip to remove the knife from the finished sheath.

Cut the pattern out then wrap it around the knife, holding the cut edges together to ensure the knife fits comfortably within. Make any adjustments as necessary. Fold the cardboard out flat and you (should) have a working pattern for your sheath. Lay the pattern on a single piece of cardboard and draw a line around one edge for the full length of the sheath. Take the pattern away then draw another line at least 15mm inside and parallel to the last line. When cut out, this piece becomes a pattern for the welt that'll subsequently be glued and sewn into place inside the sheath to prevent the knife edge severing the stitching.

MAKING THE SHEATH

Lay both patterns on the leather, mark out with a pencil then cut to shape (a Stanley knife makes the latter job easy). Thoroughly wet both sides of the leather along the centre-line of the sheath then fold over. I generally use a light wooden mallet to ensure the fold is properly formed. When the body of the sheath has dried out a little, put the welt in place and fold the body over. Hold them together in place and test fit the knife. It should be an easy (but not sloppy) push fit.

Apply glue to one side of the welt and press into place on the inside of the sheath with the outside edges of both welt and sheath lined up. Wrap the blade and bolster in gladwrap, ensure it fits the sheath then glue the other side of the welt and sheath together and clamp. At this point the knife should be a nice firm fit with its edge running along the inside edge of the welt, not down either side. Set the sheath aside to dry for another 10 minutes or so then trim up the edge so all three pieces of leather are even. I normally do this with a Stanley knife then finish with a 60-grit belt on my knife grinder.

SEWING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the edge of the sheath as a reference, draw a line 5-6mm in from the edge, the full length of the sheath. An adjustable grooving tool makes this job easy and is well worth the few dollars it'll cost to acquire. At least one line of stitching will be required to hold the sheath together, though two looks better. I usually mark out the second line of stitches 10-12mm in from the sheath edge.

At this point a star wheel can be used to equidistantly mark positions of the holes for sewing. The holes can then be pushed with an awl or drilled with a small drill on a press. Either way, the size of the holes formed should just be large enough to push a needle and thread through. Another alternative is to

use a thonging chisel which punches a series of elongated holes along the edge to accommodate a leather thong.

The edge can then be saddle stitched together using two needles, one working from either side with linen or synthetic thread. This process has been described 'ad infinitum' in craft books and online so I won't go into the details here. It really is quite easy once you get the hang of it and does provide a nice finish, though care needs to be taken to keep the stitches in line.

Due to arthritis I can no longer hand stitch and accordingly use a lever-operated sewing machine now. Prices range from a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand dollars and beyond, depending on how far your budget will stretch. The one I have is a Cowboy Outlaw, sold in Australia by The Sun Valley Trading Company (sunvalleytrading.com.au) and creates a stitch every time the lever is cranked. It's much simpler and less tiring than hand stitching and well worth the money if you have the work for it, which these days I do.

Once the sheath is sewn together I do a final knife fit, looking for a good tight push fit that'll retain the knife when I turn everything upside down and give it a good shake. I then use a piece of deer antler to burnish the edge of the sheath before dyeing the leather and giving it a coat of Dubbin finish.

By now some will no doubt have noted the finished sheath doesn't have a belt loop, a deliberate omission on my part. I've lost too many knives over the years to ever again wear one on my belt, so this sheath is designed to be carried in a day pack. Should the maker wish to incorporate a belt loop it must be cut out, glued and sewn to the back of the sheath before it's folded over. There's a photo attached of the belt loops I fit for those customers who request them.

None of the above is rocket science and, in its own way, leatherworking is both a pleasurable and satisfying undertaking, not a bad way to spend a few hours during winter months when it's too damned cold and wet to go hunting. ●

A BELT LOOP GLUED AND SEWN TO THE BACK OF A SHEATH FOR A RIGHT-SIDE CARRY. IF A LOOP IS REQUIRED IT MUST BE ATTACHED BEFORE THE SHEATH IS STITCHED CLOSED.





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DEREK NUGENT UNDERLINES IMPORTANCE OF HUMANE HUNTING

Undoubtedly the goal of every hunter is to achieve a one-shot instantaneous kill on any game being pursued. There's a degree of empathetic satisfaction (or relief if you like) in seeing your target grassed in the most humane way possible, though sadly this isn't always the case for a variety of reasons.

Clean misses or, worse, a wounded animal on the run may be the result of 'ordinary' marksmanship, underestimation of range, a poorly-zeroed scope, unexpected or inopportune movement by the target at point of firing or an unnoticed piece of foliage deflecting an otherwise good shot off target.

Furthermore, the sight of an animal fleeing in the aftermath of a shot isn't necessarily an indication of a miss or indeed a non-fatal wound. So unless the target is clearly down within your line of sight, there's an ethical responsibility on the hunter to thoroughly investigate the outcome of the shot and, if warranted, follow-up on wounded game and dispatch it post-haste.



APPROXIMATION OF THE TRADITIONAL
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SHOT PLACEMENT

The key to a one-shot kill is obviously accurate bullet placement, which in turn is a function of each hunter's ability as a marksman and their knowledge of game biology. I know as a much younger hunter, confident in my ability with the .308, I was regularly and successfully taking neck shots out to 200m, yet with advancing age and maturity I now limit myself to shots of no more than 150m.

To guarantee that one-shot knockdown I stalk as close as possible before opting for a shot. Indeed most of my kills these days are sub-100m as I'd rather be 'busted' by a target and watch it flee, than be faced with the option of a lengthy

pursuit of a wounded animal. Being mindful of your limitations and, where required, exercising commonsense and restraint in terms of shot selection, is the first consideration in respect to good bullet placement. The second is understanding there's a lot of merit in matching calibre used to game pursued.

What I'm saying is you can't kill a beast deader than dead, meaning you don't have to be toting a shoulder-thumping, flinch-inducing magnum for the majority of game hunting in this country. Far better to carry a calibre of accepted appropriateness and performance with which you can repeatedly place a kill shot on your quarry.

The old-time deer cullers in New Zealand are a perfect example of this rationale, with most of them using .222, .303 or .270 to get the job done with minimum fuss. It's just common sense. I've seen deer dropped on the spot by a well-placed .243 yet flee having absorbed the punishment of a poorly-placed .300 magnum round. Knockdown performance is a question of bullet weight, velocity and construction, each factor crucial in the effective dissipation of the kinetic energy delivered by the round at moment of impact.

Whether manifested as a function of bullet weight and velocity in creating a physically destructive wound channel through an animal's 'boiler room', and/or hydrostatic shock radiating out from the entry point to destroy elements of the central nervous system, the combination of these is negated if the shot's not directed accurately into the kill zone.

Hence the final essential element of good shot placement is knowledge, more specifically an understanding of your quarry's biology in terms of where major organs and blood vessels are located. Colloquially known as the 'engine room' or 'boiler room', accepted wisdom is a chest shot

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is the most humane option. Containing the heart, lungs and major blood vessels, the chest is not only the vital area for sustaining life, it's also the largest easily identifiable target area on an animal and, as such, offers significant margin for error.

A shot which flies a little high or low, right or left will still have the capacity to grass an animal by impacting spine, essential organs, blood vessels and key hubs of the central nervous system, though these considerations don't apply to the more risky head or neck shot. Indeed a good shot into the heart/lung area is inevitably a fatal one with these shots often referred to as 'Hilar' shots, and there are several ways to quickly identify and acquire the 'Hilar zone' when afield.

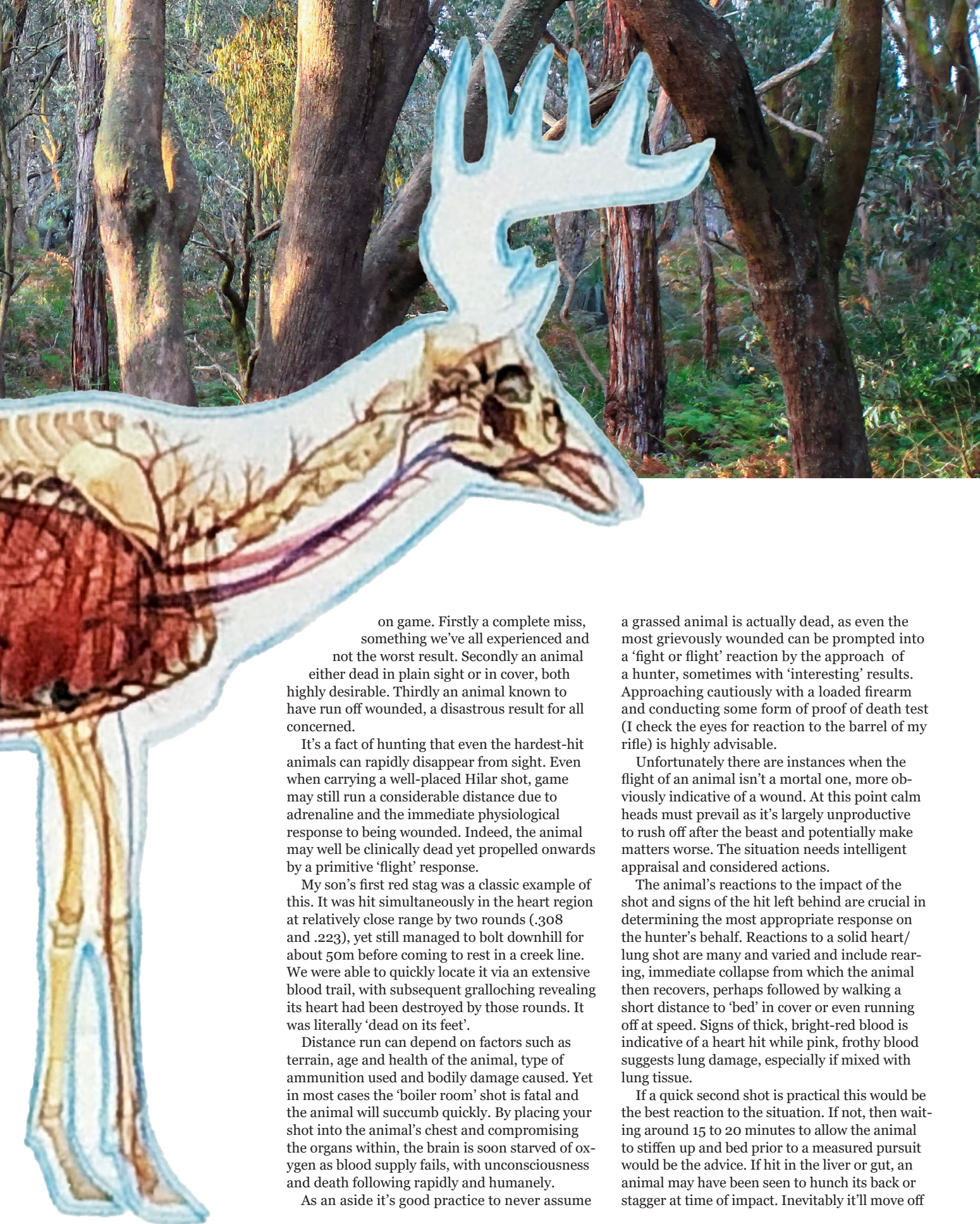
Some describe it as being roughly the middle third of the front third of the animal, while others draw a bead on the middle of the chest area using the line of the front legs as a reference point. I use what I call a 'triangulation' method. I mentally superimpose a triangle, running from the elbow joint along the humerus bone to the shoulder joint and three-quarters along the scapular, to position my shot in the visible 'notch' at its centre. This allows for a shot that'll rake the top of the heart, major blood vessels found there as well as the lungs, all to good effect.

FOLLOWING UP

Ideally the precision of your first shot is going to grass your quarry immediately. Hopefully it'll drop instantly or at worst manage a short staggering run before expiring, though as we know there are three potential outcomes of a shot



ANATOMY OF A DEER: SKELETON, INTERNAL ORGANS AND CIRCULATORY SYSTEM.



on game. Firstly a complete miss, something we've all experienced and not the worst result. Secondly an animal either dead in plain sight or in cover, both highly desirable. Thirdly an animal known to have run off wounded, a disastrous result for all concerned.

It's a fact of hunting that even the hardest-hit animals can rapidly disappear from sight. Even when carrying a well-placed Hilar shot, game may still run a considerable distance due to adrenaline and the immediate physiological response to being wounded. Indeed, the animal may well be clinically dead yet propelled onwards by a primitive 'flight' response.

My son's first red stag was a classic example of this. It was hit simultaneously in the heart region at relatively close range by two rounds (.308 and .223), yet still managed to bolt downhill for about 50m before coming to rest in a creek line. We were able to quickly locate it via an extensive blood trail, with subsequent gralloching revealing its heart had been destroyed by those rounds. It was literally 'dead on its feet'.

Distance run can depend on factors such as terrain, age and health of the animal, type of ammunition used and bodily damage caused. Yet in most cases the 'boiler room' shot is fatal and the animal will succumb quickly. By placing your shot into the animal's chest and compromising the organs within, the brain is soon starved of oxygen as blood supply fails, with unconsciousness and death following rapidly and humanely.

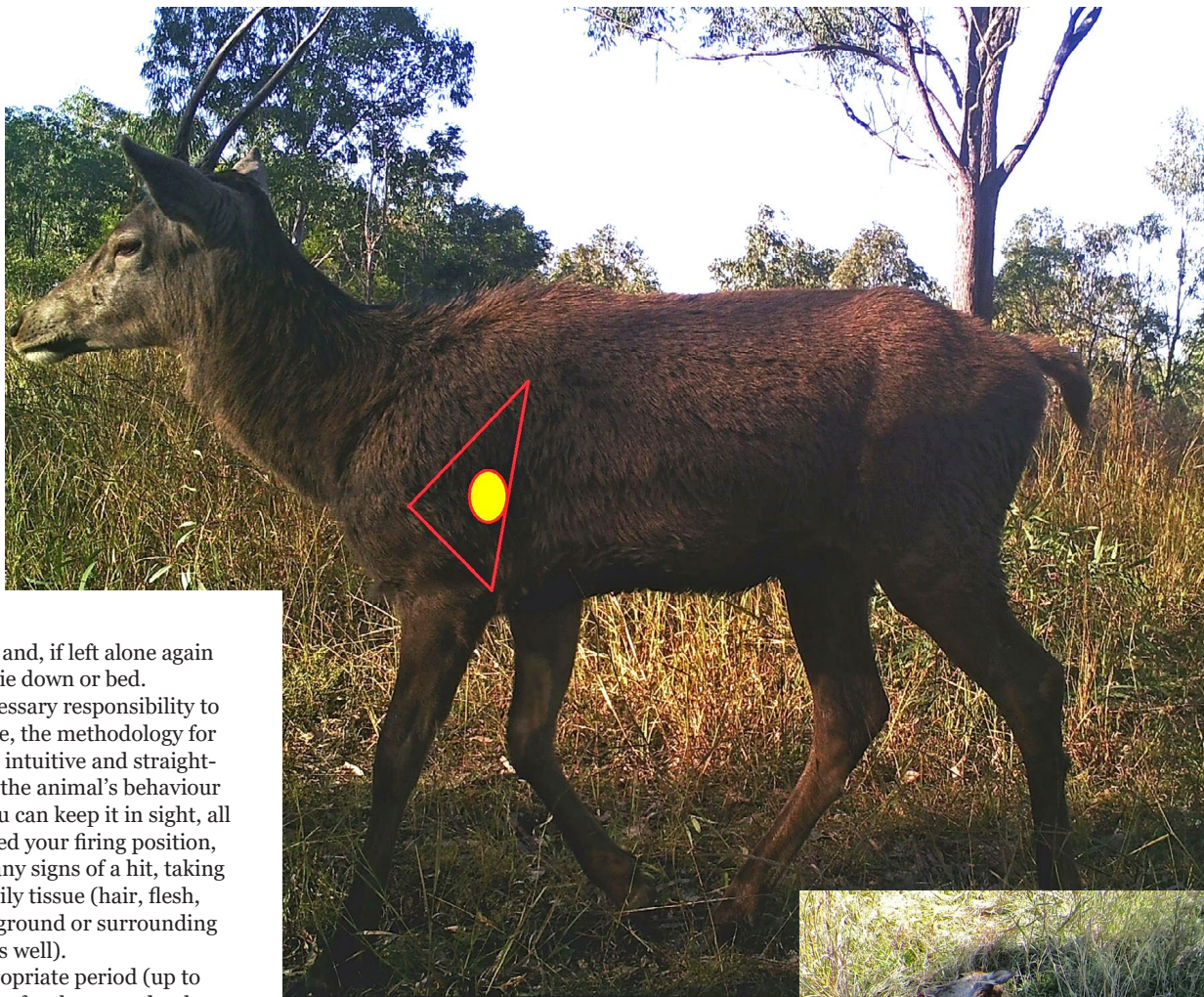
As an aside it's good practice to never assume

a grassed animal is actually dead, as even the most grievously wounded can be prompted into a 'fight or flight' reaction by the approach of a hunter, sometimes with 'interesting' results. Approaching cautiously with a loaded firearm and conducting some form of proof of death test (I check the eyes for reaction to the barrel of my rifle) is highly advisable.

Unfortunately there are instances when the flight of an animal isn't a mortal one, more obviously indicative of a wound. At this point calm heads must prevail as it's largely unproductive to rush off after the beast and potentially make matters worse. The situation needs intelligent appraisal and considered actions.

The animal's reactions to the impact of the shot and signs of the hit left behind are crucial in determining the most appropriate response on the hunter's behalf. Reactions to a solid heart/lung shot are many and varied and include rearing, immediate collapse from which the animal then recovers, perhaps followed by walking a short distance to 'bed' in cover or even running off at speed. Signs of thick, bright-red blood is indicative of a heart hit while pink, frothy blood suggests lung damage, especially if mixed with lung tissue.

If a quick second shot is practical this would be the best reaction to the situation. If not, then waiting around 15 to 20 minutes to allow the animal to stiffen up and bed prior to a measured pursuit would be the advice. If hit in the liver or gut, an animal may have been seen to hunch its back or stagger at time of impact. Inevitably it'll move off



slowly in search of cover and, if left alone again for say 20 minutes, will lie down or bed.

It's an ethical and necessary responsibility to follow-up wounded game, the methodology for doing so being relatively intuitive and straightforward. Firstly observe the animal's behaviour as it moves off and, if you can keep it in sight, all the better. Having marked your firing position, investigate the area for any signs of a hit, taking note of any blood or bodily tissue (hair, flesh, bone fragments) on the ground or surrounding foliage (mark this area as well).

Secondly wait an appropriate period (up to 20 minutes) to allow time for the wound to have 'stiffened', had an impact on the animal's state of consciousness, ability to flee further or encouraged it to bed. Finally follow the escape path which is hopefully revealed by a blood trail of varying intensity, broken vegetation, tracks and scattered leaves or perhaps even an obvious 'dew' line if hunting early morning.

It's good practice to mark parts of the blood trail in case you lose and have to relocate it. If this happens a simple, systematic grid search will likely be of assistance as will the understanding that most wounded game, for a variety of reasons, head downhill as a first resort. A thorough, considered search is going to be more effective and productive than a cursory haphazard one and it's the former which is owed to any wounded animal.

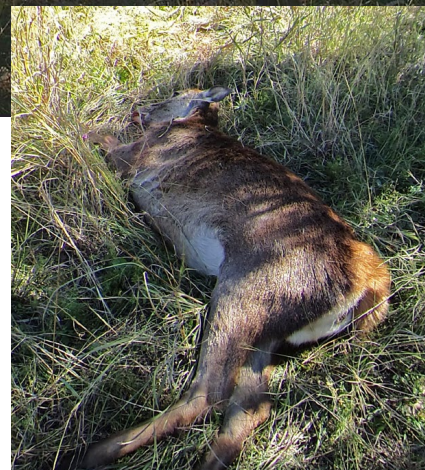
FINAL ANALYSIS

Being seen to be ethical and humane in our pursuit of game is an essential precondition to the ongoing acceptance of our sport by the wider community and all tiers of government. There's a moral obligation to take all necessary steps to grass our quarry with a single, well-placed shot. Yet the reality is sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, an animal doesn't immediately succumb and a timely follow-up is essential.

TRIANGULATION METHOD OF IDENTIFYING THE KILL ZONE ON A STAG.

Having the disposition, knowledge and ability to do so are an important part of every hunter's skillset. Being a competent and disciplined shot, using an appropriate calibre with which you can, with practiced ease, consistently place rounds into the known kill zone of any target species is essential from minute one of a hunt. I'm primarily a deer hunter so this article is based on my observations and experiences in relation to deer and has been written with that particular bias in mind, though I like to think the practices advocated can be applied to all game.

In closing, I'd like to use Hollywood as a source of inspiration and quote Robert de Niro's character Michael from Vietnam War classic *The Deer Hunter*. The ethics embodied are for every hunter to embrace regardless of their favoured quarry: "You have to think about that first shot. One shot is what it's all about. A deer (animal) needs to be taken with one shot." ●



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 **SCAN ME**

A cut above

JIM DICKSON ON SOME OUTSTANDING SCANDINAVIAN BLADEWARE

Scandinavian countries make some of the best value knives, offering good steel and performance at lower prices. This is a direct result of the demand for quality products which can withstand years of hard use in these countries, combined with a natural frugality. The knives tend to be small as the Scandinavian woodsman is also an expert with the axe.

Traditional Norwegian boatbuilders often use the axe almost exclusively when shaping wood, including the fine finishings. Their knives tend to have little or no guard as they get in the way of the traditional style of sheath (the dangler), which swallows up half the handle in lieu of a safety strap. Leather sheaths as well as extremely tough and durable plastic options are offered.

As a former Alaskan trapper I highly value big double guards to keep my wet, cold and numb fingers away from that sharp blade. Having made lots of knives when I was running a blacksmith shop, I know hand-making and fitting a guard

is a skilled, labour intensive job. So it's possible previous generations of Scandinavians weren't prepared to pay for that extra cost, just as cheap kitchen knives are made without guards today.

The trend toward smaller knives is a result of the taming of the wilderness and modern civilization. Hundreds of years ago when they had to deal with the harsh realities of wilderness living, many knives were larger with 10" blades and longer being common. When you have to live in the wilderness with few tools available a big knife becomes indispensable, the current Scandinavian version being the Fallkniven modern Bowie all-purpose survival model.

There's more emphasis on handles than anywhere else in the world, as traditional Scandinavian woodworking uses sheath knives for hours at a time, therefore a comfortable working grip is more important than in most other countries. Just look at the slab handles on so many great knives from other countries and you'll see what I mean. These are fine for most work but,



THE HELLE VIKING KNIFE IN ITS NATURAL HABITAT, THE WILD NORWEGIAN WOODS, A REPRODUCTION OF AN ACTUAL VIKING KNIFE FOUND IN A TOMB OUTSIDE THEIR TOWN.



LEFT: THE MORA COMPANION HD IS STRONGER, SAFER AND EASIER TO USE FOR LONG SPELLS THAN ANY FOLDING KNIFE; ABOVE: FALLKNIVEN MADE THE F1 TO MEET A SWEDISH AIR FORCE REQUIREMENT FOR THE SMALLEST AND LIGHTEST KNIFE PRACTICAL FOR FIGHTER PILOTS.

compared to a finely-contoured and designed Scandinavian handle, are far more tiresome to use for hours on end.

Scandinavian countries are sub-Arctic with parts of Norway and Sweden extending into the Arctic circle. Extreme cold makes metal more brittle so you often find knives made of three-piece lamination with a core of tool steel and soft iron welded on to this for the sides. These are some of the toughest and most break-resistant blades ever made. Helle in Norway and Fallkniven in Sweden still make some of their knives this way, the former's three-piece lamination available in both carbon and stainless steel versions, while the latter uses stainless.

The choice between carbon steel and stainless can be settled at a glance, simply by looking at how easily the former stains and rusts in use. The high quality stainless steels used in modern Scandinavian knives also hold an edge better than the best carbon alternatives. Norwegians and Swedes see little point in using a folding knife with its relatively uncomfortable grip, when they can opt for a sheath knife with the same length of blade that's infinitely stronger and less tiring to use. It's also much safer as it can't close on your fingers.

Years ago when my wife and I had trappers' licenses and were living in a log cabin deep in inner Alaska, we saw a foolish fellow using a famous make of lock-blade knife like an ice pick to work on a frozen moose carcass. Any Alaskan knows to use an axe or a saw for that sort of work as the lock on a folding lock-blade knife is pretty weak. Sadly on one occasion the lock failed on him, resulting in horrendous injuries.

The Helle family from Norway were traditionally the town blacksmiths and in 1932 established the knife company which bears their name. Some of their knives are of traditional three-piece lamination construction and come in both stainless

and carbon steel versions. Their products are noted not just for their fine steel but also the comfortable handles, the Viking knife they make being a good example. The original was found in a Viking grave near their town and the oval handle fitted to it is one of the most comfortable I've ever used.

In Sweden there are two extremes in price, Mora being good examples of just how economical a really good knife can be and Fallkniven, designed to be the best that money can buy. Mora started out with carbon steel three-piece laminations, though now mostly make knives from one piece of steel to keep costs down, generally with plastic handles and scabbards which hold up well in hard use. Their products are used by the Swedish military which is as good a reference for quality and durability as you could ask for.

Fallkniven are also Swedish with owner and famous woodsman Peter Hjortberger making the best possible knives he can and pricing them accordingly. It started when the Swedish Air Force contacted him in the wake of his notoriety as a woodsman. They wanted a high quality but compact pilot's survival knife, as a fighter pilot bailing out may encounter G-force of up to 9. The result was the little F1 pilot's knife which weighs just five ounces, has a 4" blade and plastic sheath with a special lock to withstand the G-force.

Peter then went on to make a real survival knife in the Fallkniven Modern Bowie, the finest factory-made example currently in production with its 10¼" Bowie blade that's 1¾" wide and ¼" thick. It's balanced for woodchopping with the balance point 1¼" in front of the guard, while the 600-gram weight gives it the heft to chop wood effectively. In a survival situation, sometimes all you have to make tools, traps, shelters etc is wood and you'd better have something that'll cut it.



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MEGA REVIEWS

SCOPES BINOCULARS +MORE SIX DETAILED REVIEWS

Flash, bang, wallop!

CHRIS REDLICH LIGHTS UP A TARGET HIT INDICATOR BY CALDWELL



AN ALLEN TOOL IS USED TO REMOVE THE BACK COVER FOR BATTERY INSTALLATION. ON/OFF SWITCH SHOWN.

If ever there was a need to confirm a contentious call at a friendly target shoot, I think Caldwell might just have the answer. Lately I've been enjoying long-range shoots while testing scopes and rifles and, rather than keeping it a solo affair, have brought along mates and relatives to share in the fun.

I honestly couldn't think of a better way to test rifles than in an afternoon's session ringing gong plates at the expense of a shooting supplier's ammo. At three and four hundred metres the gong will usually let you know with a visible shake and audible chime at each strike, which is usually enough to settle any disputed calls. Handshakes and high-fives generally start to wane however, when strikes become fewer and harder to hear on long range targets.

The Caldwell Flashbang does exactly what the name suggests, despite the bang being followed by the flash. This is essentially a motion detector unit which picks up a strike for each hit on the target. The unit responds to a positive strike with 10 bright intermittent flashes followed by two fading final flashes from the light panel. The strip of 10 green LEDs are highly visible to the shooter and would most likely quash the suspicions of any cynical bystander.

The complete unit weighs next to nothing and is about 3x2" in size, a supplied Allen tool used to unlock four little hex screws on the back to install the batteries. The Flashbang comes supplied with three AA batteries which apparently provides enough life to light up more than 30,000 hits. Caldwell claims the unit has a low enough detection sensitivity to react and light up struck targets



CARL TESTS HIS OFFHAND SKILLS USING THE FLASHBANG; INSET: A CLOSE-UP OF THE TARGET AND FLASHBANG AFTER A CONFIRMED HIT.

by a .223 Rem as far as 1000 yards, or rimfire cartridges such as the 22LR at close range.

The Flashbang attaches securely to the back edge of a steel target (no smaller than 5"), using the supplied Velcro adhesive tape which allows it to be removed and reattached with each use. An on/off switch panel on the rear will activate the unit to standby mode. The light panel is supposed to be mounted on the edge of a target and exposed just enough for maximum visibility but not enough to be a potential target itself. The risk of a wayward strike or ricochet is a slim possibility but, with the Flashbang retailing for around \$60 at time of writing, I don't think a replacement will break the bank.

I mounted it to the back of my regular 12" gong plate and used it at varying ranges and with a few different rifles including my Remington .22LR. My son Carl enhanced his offhand shooting at a mate's property and, with each hit by the little .22 rimfire, there was no disputing his 100 per cent strike rate at 60m. The green flashing LEDs worked a treat on every occasion and were easy to see through different phases of daylight. All up the Flashbang was a fun inclusion to our target shooting by adding practical animation for each hit. More at nioa.com.au



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PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE



The Aussies' American friend



CON KAPRALOS SALUTES THE SUPERB CZ600

In 2021 Ceska Zbrojovka, or CZ as it's more commonly known, took a bold step into the future with the release of their CZ600 range of sporting rifles. Purists and aficionados of the marque mourned the end of the much revered 550, 555 and 557 as well as the smaller-framed 527 models as a 'deal-breaker', yet CZ had to change its rifle portfolio for the betterment of the company on a global scale.

The early 600s did include some very exciting models catering to all rifle shooting and hunting aspects. The Trail, Alpha, Ergo and Lux were some of those and, despite initial setbacks with the interchangeable barrel issue, the models have since gained a worldwide following among shooters seeking a cutting-edge firearm made to the highest quality.

The CZ600 embraced modern materials in its design yet their only 'traditional' rifle, sporting a walnut stock and blued metalwork, was the European-flavoured Lux. It was quite continental in design and features, and not at home in one of CZ's

biggest markets, the US. The company had to do something about this and introduced the CZ600 American. A traditional hunting rifle made with that market in mind with a clean, straight stock devoid of cheekpieces or Monte Carlo combs, as well as an uncluttered barrel with no iron sights to get in the way of your optics. The CZ600 American was destined to be a hit in the US, not to mention another market where similar rifle tastes abound: Australia.

CZ importer and distributor Winchester Australia sent Australian Shooter a demonstrator model CZ600 American in .308 Win along with a Meopta Optika 5 riflescope. Initial impressions of the rifle were positive, with the handsome Turkish walnut stock adorned by some fancy Fleur-de-Lys checkering and the barrelled action in a nice matte black, anti-corrosion finish. The review rifle (bare) weighs 3.36kg and measures 1025mm with 'The American' available in selected calibres from .223 Remington up to .300 Winchester Magnum.

THE CZ600 AMERICAN ACTION IS NEATLY LAID OUT AND AESTHETICALLY VERY PLEASING.



BARRELLED ACTION

The rifle comes in three different action lengths to cover the eight chamberings offered. The receiver is milled from steel with a slab-sided profile in a black corrosion-resistant finish. The front receiver ring has a small gas port on the right side to vent away ignition gases, while the top of the receiver has a slightly rounded front ring and flat rear ring to accept Remington 700-style scope fittings.

The end portion of the rear receiver ring is scalloped, which is more aesthetic to blend in with the bolt shroud, while the left side carries the CZ insignia, rifle model and country of manufacture. Removing the barrelled action from the stock, the front split receiver ring and barrel retaining screws are easily evident, though it must be stipulated barrels can only be replaced by Winchester Australia approved gunsmiths and are not available on the open market.

The barrel itself is of a semi-heavy No.3 contour profile and made by cold-hammer forging. In the review rifle it's chambered in .308 Winchester and 510mm long, finished in the same corrosion-resistant black as the receiver and well matched against the dark woodwork. The 1-in-10 rate of twist is well suited to most popular .30-calibre bullet weights, while the muzzle is threaded M15x1 and accepts any devices the user deems fit.



SPLIT FRONT RECEIVER WITH THREE BARREL-RETAINING NUTS.

BOLT

This is of a 60-degree throw which seems to be standard fare these days. However, the lug design is akin to the Weatherby Mk.V with two rows of lugs making up a total of six to provide rock-solid lock-up. The bolt's also easy to disassemble for ease of maintenance without any special tools and while I don't know how many hunters would regularly strip a bolt, the process is straightforward if required. One unique feature of the bolt is it's of a controlled round feed (CRF) design.

It's not a Mauser 98 but engineered to employ a small claw extractor, with the bottom-facing lug being milled back to allow a cartridge case to slide up against the bolt face when it leaves the detachable box magazine.

The ejector in the bolt-head is held in recessed position by a spring until the bolt is pulled all the way back, when the ejector protrudes from the bolt-face and flicks the cartridge well clear of the ejection port. The bot-handle is profiled nicely and comes to the hand well with the walnut knob a nice touch. The bolt-shroud completes the assembly and is tapered to flow in with the rear tang and design of the safety mechanism. The bolt release is a departure from the norm in that its on the right of the receiver just in front of the bolt-handle notch and simply pressing the tab when drawing the bolt back removes it with ease.

TRIGGER AND SAFETY

Safety on the CZ600 (including the American) is of a vertical tang design. It's been done before on numerous rifles and basically involves a safety mechanism with buttons on top of the tang and bottom, just behind the trigger-guard. To place the rifle in 'safe' the button is pressed up from the bottom and to 'fire' is pressed down from the top. I found this design somewhat challenging to



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DETACHABLE BOX MAGAZINE HOLDS FIVE ROUNDS IN A DOUBLE-STACK MANNER; THE MAGAZINE RELEASE BUTTON IS LOCKABLE BY SLIDING IT FORWARD.

use, as a linear toggle safety behind the bolt notch (integral to the trigger design) would be preferred by many. Its CZ's call to make something a bit different and they can't be faulted for that.

The trigger on the other hand is magnificent, super-easy to adjust with a small Allen key to any of four pre-set positions through the small dial on the base of the trigger unit (in front of the trigger blade). Its single-stage design with miniscule take-up and overtravel is one of the best I've used in recent times on a factory-made rifle.

MAGAZINE SYSTEM

This is of a detachable box design, made from polymer and housing the rounds in a double-stack manner. In .308 Winchester calibre it holds five rounds and works perfectly, clipping into place easily and sitting flush with the underside of the stock. The release button is also smartly designed, as it allows the magazine to be locked into place by sliding the flat knurled button forward. Pressing the button once it's locked into place won't do anything, another nice touch by CZ designers.

STOCK

CZ have always made excellent walnut stocks and the one on the 600 American ticks all the boxes. American means no unsightly cheekpieces or Monte Carlo combs, just a handsomely profiled stock made to shoot and hunt with the aid of an optic. The walnut on the review rifle did show some lovely figure under the darker coloration, which may have been part of the lacquer finish. That finish, while excellent for sealing and

protecting the wood, is easily marked with those marks appearing white in colour.

The rifle wasn't short of the odd mark or scratch, with one fairly serious ding in the butt-stock done prior to us receiving it. Lacquer finish aside the 'fleur-de-lys' checkering pattern adorning the stock was superb, giving the American that classic hunter rifle look. The recoil pad is also done well with a 20mm Sorbothane unit fitted along with QD sling-swivel studs.

Internally, inletting of the stock was flawless in typical CZ fashion. A steel brace just behind the magazine box cut-out lends additional strength, while an alloy bedding plate forward of the magazine cut-out provides an excellent platform for the barrelled action. If only the stock was oil-finished rather than lacquered it would've done justice to the gun's aesthetics.

AT THE RANGE

The CZ600 American in .308 Winchester was matched to a brilliant optic in the Meopta Optika 5 in 4-20x50 magnification. While the overall weight of the combination was a tad over 4kg, it still had an excellent feel in the hands and would make an ideal general purpose hunting outfit for stalking and shooting from a stationary position.

The rifle was given a thorough clean before use, bore-sighted at 25m then taken out to 100m for accuracy testing with several off-the-shelf hunting loads and a handload used in my own .308 Winchester sporter. The American shot exceptionally well with all loads tested, three-shot groups averaging between 0.75-1 MOA. I'd happily recommend this one on performance in the accuracy stakes alone and, if I didn't already have a .30-calibre sporter in the safe, it wouldn't have made the trip back to Winchester Australia!

WHO'S IT FOR?

This handsome rifle would take pride of place in any collection. Older shooters who recall the days when walnut and blued metalwork was the norm, will instantly appreciate its clean lines. Yet those new to shooting will also take a shine to it, to break-up the stainless and synthetic monotony which seem to abound in modern sporting rifles.

SUMMARY

The rifle's available in a huge range of calibres and, priced around \$1995 at time of writing, makes it one to include when looking for a traditional hunting rifle adorned with walnut and blued steel. Its aesthetics and features will certainly appeal. More at winchesteraustralia.com.au

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer:

Ceska Zbrojovka, Czech Republic

Model:

CZ600 American

Action:

Bolt-action repeater, control round feed

Calibres:

.223 Rem, .243 Win, 6.5 CM, .270 Win, .308 Win (tested), .30-06, .300WM, 7.62x39

Barrel:

510mm (20") semi-heavy contour, chrome moly steel, cold hammer forged construction

Magazine:

Detachable box, polymer, double-stack

Stock:

Walnut, lacquer finish, 'fleur-de-lys' checkering

Trigger:

Single-stage, four-position, user adjustable

Safety:

Vertical tang

Length:

1025mm (review rifle)

Weight:

3.36kg (review rifle)

RRP:

About \$1995



INLETTING ON THE STOCK WAS TOP SHELF AND CONDUCTIVE TO GREAT ACCURACY.

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PFI-M425	384x288	800 x 600	25mm	\$1,650

PIXFRA ARC LRF

THERMAL MONOCULAR WITH LASER

≤ **20** NETD
mK



WiFi

ORDER CODE	SENSOR	DISPLAY	OBJECTIVE	PRICE [SRP]
PFI-A425 LRF	384x288	1440 x 1080	25mm	\$1,990
PFI-A635P LRF	640x512	1440 x 1080	35mm	\$2,900
PFI-A650 LRF	640x512	1440 x 1080	50mm	\$3,490

PIXFRA SIRIUS ZOOM

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≤ **18** NETD
mK



WiFi

ORDER CODE	SENSOR	DISPLAY	OBJECTIVE	PRICE [SRP]
PFI-S650-LRF	640x512	1920 x 1080	50mm	\$3,990
PFI-S650D	640x512	1920 x 1080	50mm	\$4,150

PIXFRA PEGASUS PRO

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mK



WiFi

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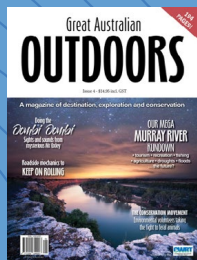
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CHRIS REDLICH DOES THE HARD YARDS IN CRISPI BOOTS

It surprises me how many shooters and hunters spend big bucks on high-end scopes yet don't seem to think their feet are worth the same attention. To be honest I was one of those who, years ago, was happy to pull on a dirty pair of work boots before a climb and wonder why my feet screamed in pain back at camp. It's no wonder our hunts used to end prematurely due to leg fatigue, so investing in an alternative hunting 'tool' became a priority. The importance of correct footwear is just as vital as good optics on your favourite rifle, as the success of a remote hunt can weigh heavily on the quality of boots.

If you're after reliable outdoor boots you'd usually consider one of the top three brands from Europe. Celebrating their 50th anniversary, Italian manufacturer Crispi has been producing top quality footwear for the serious hunter, outdoors person and mountain climber since 1975 and, despite being half the size of their German competitors, have built a reputation as one of the best.

Enjoying enormous popularity in New Zealand became obvious to us, where almost every outdoor store we visited stocked a wide range of their boots. Kiwis seem to have a knack for knowing what works and, after my hunting guide's glowing endorsement, my interest was piqued. With an impending Alpine hunt drawing closer, I felt my veteran pair of Meindls may or may not have enough life left in them to last another gruelling mountain trek.

Crispi were always going to be in the mix for serious consideration and after seeing their new Summit GTX boots advertised, I felt I'd found what I was looking for. Lightweight was an important consideration this time, as many previous leather boots I'd owned were heavy. For starters, Summit GTX boots have blended their leather uppers with strong Cordura nylon fabric in non-critical areas of wear.

This was key to saving weight and by using this material they're more than 200g lighter than my others. Cordura is by no means an inferior fabric, though compared to leather is no equal. Importantly however, where the boot would usually be exposed to abrasion, Crispi have used 1.8mm high-quality suede leather, lapped and double stitched on the uppers and all critical points of wear.

A distinguishing feature of mountain boots is the unique wraparound 'rand' which seems an unusual choice of name, as to me it looks more like a band. Yet most mountain boots have a protective rand of some sort, which wraps around between the top of the sole and entire base of the leather uppers.

Generally speaking when choosing a suitable boot, the wider or higher its rand indicates the higher level of wear your boots would be adequately protected from in the areas you choose to climb or hunt. In many instances, as terrain gets steeper the threat of wear from sharp rocks rises with it.

Usually a rubber rand is glued to the leather base but Crispi have incorporated a high-rise leather rand on the Summit GTX. I was unsure at first what it was made of, then discovered the leather's coated with black protective polyurethane, giving an appearance of the traditional rubber rand. Crispi have glued and reinforced all joins and edges with triple stitching.

The beating heart of any quality boot is its sole and for this Crispi, like most manufacturers, use the tried and tested Vibram brand. Vibram produce arguably the most durable rubber soles in the world and the Summit's aptly-named Megagrip does just that. The open rubber tread and heel have a firm and reassuring feel for pushing up and down steep hills, while flared serrated edges provide plenty of grip for cutting across angled faces.

A good rubber sole is determined not only by its ability to grip but how it allows the foot and ankle to flex easily over uneven surfaces. Additionally, the low impact 'micropore' midsole and removable (replaceable) padded insoles with arch support, provide an extremely comfortable and shock absorbent platform for the foot, vital for heavy-pack trekking. The arrangement of lower closed eyelets, upper hook eyelets and nylon speed lacing are a breeze to do up and, once tightened, feel snug and secure.

The single-piece tongue design is stitched to the full height of the boot, promoting a good seal against the ingress of water. The Gore-Tex inner lining on the other hand protects the feet from excessive moisture including perspiration, by allowing the foot to breathe during hard use. In the event of water ingress over the top (sometimes unavoidable when deer hunting), the Gore-Tex combined with body temperature will help shed water from wet socks and disperse through the boots 'outer'.

Cheaper boots lack this level of detail and the importance of Gore-Tex lining can't be understated. I experienced water saturation firsthand after crossing a mountain stream at the start of our trek into the mountains. It wasn't pleasant at first though surprisingly, the discomfort of squishy feet soon evaporated after few kilometres and my feet returned to an acceptably dry condition.

Sizing is critical to good fit and before you buy Summit GTX boots it's important you refer to the Crispi sizing guide and available charts, particularly handy for remote purchase. As ever, trying a boot off the shelf is recommended if possible. Quality boots shouldn't need breaking in and many will remember with dread the painful blisters involved in that process with inferior products. I'm happy to report the new Summits were ready for the hills out of the box. From the moment I tightened the laces and my feet set foot on the NZ Southern Alps, I felt I'd made the right choice.

While vertically challenged and heavily laden across everything the mountains threw at us, my feet felt snug and ankles well supported at all



times. Moreover, the razor-sharp rocks of the faces and scree bluffs tested the durability (with minor wear) of the Vibram sole, while the Summit's high-rise rand avoided damaging abrasion. These boots brought an increased level of confidence to someone not familiar with such steep terrain, and helped me enjoy a successful summertime Chamois pack hunt without blisters.

CARING FOR SUMMIT GTX BOOTS

Your favourite hunting rifle requires a clean after use to remain in good condition and the same should apply to your boots. It's important your footwear enjoys the correct treatment and supplied with the boots was a little tub of protective waterproofing and conditioning cream. After the hunt and following the instructions, I removed the laces then softly scrubbed and washed with tap water, allowed the boots to air dry then re-applied cream to all leather uppers. This process not only ensures the Summit's preservation but satisfies Border Force requirements for quarantine and cleanliness on re-entry to Australia.

CONCLUSION

Crispi market their boots as 'The Pro Hunters' Choice and after my foray into the land of big hills, they lived up to their reputation and pedigree. Looking after my feet is something I now take seriously and wouldn't tackle the tough stuff without a good quality pair of boots. I'm glad I chose the Summit GTX as replacements and with plans to hunt winter tahr again in a couple of years, Crispi will be my choice for the trip back across the Tasman.

Importantly however, for here in Oz whether chasing sambar deer in Victoria or reds up the Brisbane Valley, you'd be doing yourself a favour by checking out one of the many quality boots in the Crispi range. For maximum comfort and foot support with the added protection of a 12-month warranty, I reckon the Summit GTX are worth checking out and worth the investment. More at crispiustralia.com.au



CARING FOR YOUR CRISPI BOOTS IS VITAL FOR EXTENDED LIFE AND SATISFIES QUARANTINE REGULATIONS.

It feels like cheating!

**HI-TECH
STEINER COMBO
LEFT DANIEL
O'DEA HIGHLY
IMPRESSED**

Picture yourself glassing across a gully to a face that's heavily timbered, broken occasionally by a series of small open patches. It's in one such patch you hope to spot your elusive quarry as it warms itself in the sun's first rays. Your patience is rewarded when suddenly a stag appears. Trophy assessment is made easy as you view the beast through your new Steiner eRanger LRF binoculars, whose clarity and depth perception highlight the animal's impressive features.

The decision to engage is quickly made but the topography prevents closing the distance. With your eRangers still up, you press a button to activate the rangefinding feature and a reading appears almost instantly. At 300m it'll be a longer shot than preferred but your rifle and calibre choice are both up to the task. You've practiced, are prepared and have an edge. Your rifle's also fitted with a Steiner, this time an eRanger 8 scope so there's no question of ethics in taking the shot.

Preparation started weeks before when you sighted-in your Steiner eRanger 8 scope mounted to your favourite rifle. At the same time you uploaded ballistic data for your favourite loading using the Steiner app on your phone and that's programmed into the scope. Back on the side of hill you've automatically transferred the range data via Bluetooth directly from your eRanger LRF binoculars to your eRanger 8 scope. Using the elevation turret on the eRanger 8 you dial up to match the range data transferred. But the scope hasn't just matched for elevation, it calculated a ballistic solution including inputs for temperature, air pressure and inclination, the latter adjusting for true ballistics.

At this point it's back on you, the shooter, but your rest is solid, rifle true and with Steiner eRanger you have the ultimate confidence that doing your job right almost assures the outcome. As the rifle kicks, your sight picture recovers in

time to see the impact followed closely by the whack of a solid hit echoing across the gully. The stag crashes into the tree line just metres from where he last took in the sun.

Now for recovery. Back on the eRanger LRFs you can see your prize lying peacefully inside the tree line. It's going to be an arduous track down and up through the scrub and won't be direct due to both landscape and other obstacles. It's obvious from here but without line of sight travel and no clear markers, locating your quarry might not be easy when you get there, if you can even find where 'there' is.

Luckily the LRFs step up as you view and mark the position from where you stand. Again the data is transferred, the Steiner app using Google maps imagery to guide you in with compass headings included. You're there before you know it though unfortunately, Steiner hasn't come up with a gut, field-dress or carry-out feature but they've certainly given you an edge. Of course the above is a work of fiction, created in my mind using collective memories of past hunting experiences. But it's no fantasy, the technology is real and this example could just as easily play out in the field using these Steiner products.

Call me old-fashioned as I've been a slow adopter of electronic optics. But as Steiner themselves refer to this system as somewhat of a hybrid, you've the benefits of high-grade European glass with all the modern technology to make the most of it. When combined, the binoculars and scope work in unison and not just as described in my analogy. If hunting as a team, one as shooter and the other as spotter, the process could potentially be even more seamless.

STEINER ERANGER BINOS AND ERANGER 8 SCOPE
TAKE GUESSWORK OUT OF THE LONG-RANGE GAME.



ERANGER LRF

Taking a quick look at the individual products and with the eRanger LRFs, at first glance we have what would otherwise appear a pretty much standard-looking pair of modern roof prism-style binos, maybe a tad longer than some. But there's some clever innovation trading into great ergonomics. For instance, the focus wheel is forward on the hinge as opposed to rearward, placing it more in the centre of balance when holding. Sounds a small thing but can help reduce fatigue when glassing for long periods. Likewise, controls are simple with two small rubberized buttons just rearward of the focus wheel controlling everything and easy to reach.

There's diopter adjustment for both eyepieces, folding rubber side shades on the eyecups having matching lens covers for both. At the front the lenses are protected by push-in rubber covers which are hinged and cleverly clip into slots incorporated into the lens housing. These stay in place hanging below each lens when not in use, ready to pop back in when needed. In another clever move the single CR2 battery sits in the hinge body, accessible by a small screw cap at the front.

Base dimensions are 210mm long, 140mm wide and 56mm deep and they weigh 1.1kg. So it's fair to say they're not the smallest or lightest in class but how much size matters can be subjective against features and price when the difference is measured in millimetres and grams. I know weight can be an important factor in binoculars, yet I wouldn't be overlooking these on that criteria alone. They come with a padded strap and Cordura carry bag for protection.

As indicated the eRanger LRFs are 10x42 in magnification with exit pupil of 4.2, light intensity is 85 per cent with a twilight factor of 20.49. Field of view is 105m at 1000m. They're nitrogen-filled and rated for operation between -20C and +50C and, if you fall in the creek, make sure it's no deeper than 1m and you'll be fine. Distance measurement is significant from 25m to 3000m which is greater than most and everything's covered by a 10-year warranty.

ERANGER 8 3-24X56

There are two variants of eRanger 8 scope, a 4-16x50 and 3-24x56 and I tested the latter. A fairly imposing unit with both a 34mm main tube and 56mm objective lens, it's 385mm long and weighs just under a kilo. Three large turret towers dominate the centre and serve the following functions. Left has a large outer cap which screws off to reveal a compartment housing a single CR123 battery. An inner ring on the same turret provides 11 stages of illumination with an instant 'off' position between each setting, while the top turret provides elevation adjustment and has a zero-stop feature.



ERANGER LRF BINOCULARS HAVE A CENTRALLY LOCATED FOCUS WHEEL AND EASY-TO-REACH BUTTONS.



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Image from 1958



MAIN ELEVATION TURRET HAS CLICK ADJUSTMENTS AT A 1CM/100M VALUE AND, ON THE LEFT TURRET, THE ILLUMINATION HAS AN OFF POSITION BETWEEN EACH OF THE 11 BRIGHTNESS SETTINGS; MOUNTED ATOP THE OCULAR HOUSING IS A CONTROL PAD, THE ERANGER 8'S BALLISTIC COMPUTER.

To set this the turret top has a couple of small grub screws, the zero stop aligning to the 'O' marking so, once sighted-in, just loosen the grub screws and align the 'O' on the turret with the zero on the tower base, retighten and zero stop is set. The right and smaller of the three turrets does windages and has an inner larger ring controlling parallax adjustment from 20m to infinity. All adjustment values have one click equalling 1cm at 100m (0.1 Milrad).

The ocular housing has a raised portion on top containing the controls and ballistic computer. Settings are adjusted using a cluster of rubberized buttons with four directional ones and a centre menu one which also acts as the power on/off. Just forward of this is the power ring for magnification adjustments, being wide and rubberised with raised ridges for positive grip.

With the 56mm objective the scope provides an exit pupil from 2.3mm to 8.5mm, the latter being about the maximum the human eye can process. Light intensity is rated at 90 per cent, field of view measures between 1.7m and 13.7m at 100m (highest to lowest power setting), diopter adjustment is -3/+2 and eye relief 95mm.

Like most new tech, at first it can seem a little daunting so here's the rundown on basic set-up. Having downloaded the Steiner Connect app it's easy to link both scope and binoculars via Blue-

ILLUMINATED DATA APPEARS ABOVE THE RETICLE WHEN LOOKING THROUGH THE SCOPE.

tooth, the process no different to connecting your phone to the car audio. Turn the units on, place them near each other, the app finds the scope or bins and you accept the connection. Once in the app, devices auto connect when turned on and in proximity. In the app all your compatible eRanger devices are stored and conveniently listed.

For testing I took my trusty KRG-stocked Howa in 6.5 Creedmoor fitted with GCDP muzzle brake, a superbly accurate long-range rifle I can rely on for testing such optics. I mounted the eRanger 8 using a set of rock-solid Element 34mm rings and was off to the range, sighting-in a breeze with the rifle locked in my Led Sled. With my first round on paper, I dialled both elevation and windage to the point of impact. Second round was 20mm high of the bullseye so two clicks up to cover the POI and the third round was in the bull then a fourth punched in beside it to confirm, the scope tracked perfectly. I'd note the optics are conventional so I've done all this with the scope's clever electronics not even turned on.

Next is to program ballistics for the ammo I'd be using by creating an entry in my 'Cartridge List' on the app. This is a walk-through step-by-step process starting with naming the load then entering the zero range, bullet data, if factory ammo selecting brand and load by dropdown menu or if a hand load entering data manually, then finally muzzle velocity before saving. You can save multiple loads in the cartridge list.

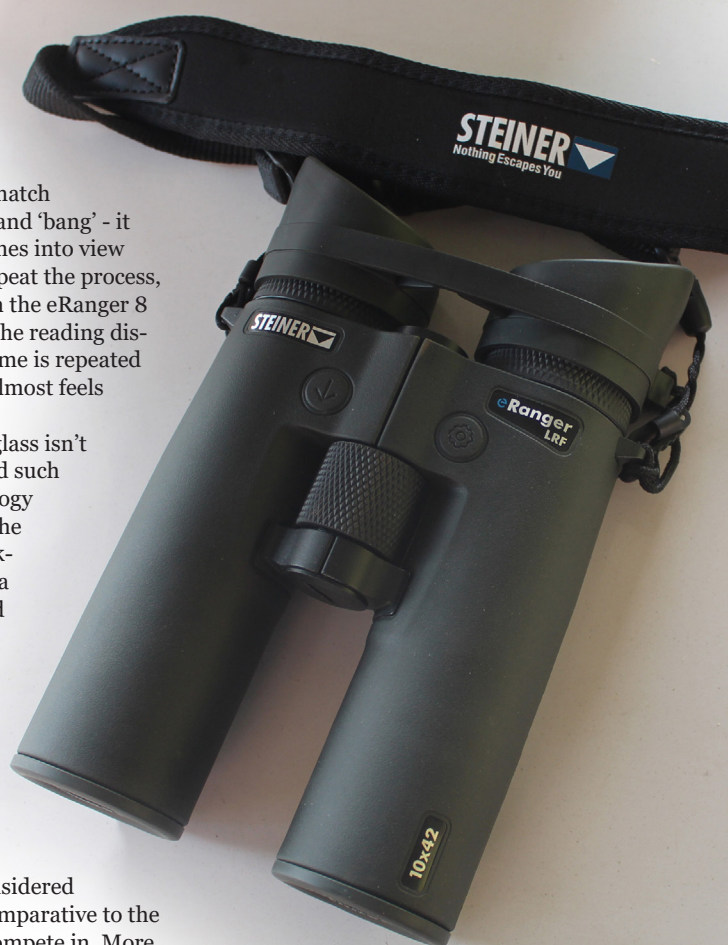
Still on the app you select the load you're using from the cartridge list and, when the scope's on and connected, it'll ask you to confirm the turret is set to zero and press 'ok'. With that done a small, illuminated information display above the reticle shows the current (zero) range setting, in this case 100m, ammunition selected, battery life, connectivity etc.

All sighted-in I first measured up some steel targets with the eRanger LRF, first reading came back at 235m, picked up my rifle and that same range now appeared in the display above and to the right of the zero reading. Moving to the turret, I start dialling up and the range displayed changes in unison until I reach the desired match at 235m. Fire, centre punch the steel, next target repeat and so on.

Late afternoon I set up on a veranda scanning the blackberry and scrubby hillside across the way in the still evening air. I was looking for ferals moving out of their beds and in and out of a few little clearings. A small pig comes into view, I

range it at 258m with the eRanger LRFs to the rifle, I dial it up to match the measured distance and 'bang' - it rolls over. A second comes into view ranging at 381m so I repeat the process, dialling up the turret on the eRanger 8 until the zero matches the reading displayed and at the outcome is repeated with an instant kill. It almost feels like cheating!

Premium European glass isn't cheap to being with, add such state-of-the-art technology and it's not surprising the price rises. Yet on checking the Beretta Australia website, I was surprised to find the eRanger 8 as tested (3-24x56) listing for \$4759 RRP and eRanger LRF 10x42 at \$2499. I'm not saying they're cheap by any means but, considering all the features, they could be considered competitively priced comparative to the market segment they compete in. More at berettaaustralia.com.au



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CHRIS REDLICH GIVES NEW LEUPOLD BINOS THE THUMBS-UP



GLARE PROTECTORS ARE JUST ONE OF THE USEFUL EYECUP OPTIONS. NOTE DUAL-HINGE OPEN BRIDGE DESIGN.

It came as a pleasant surprise recently to learn I'd be receiving a pair of Leupold binoculars for review. Sometimes the products I like to assess aren't always available on request but, on this occasion, the decision was out of my hands and when the opportunity presented, I grabbed it. Is it a coincidence or is it just me who's noticed many new products these days are being labelled Gen 2? It likely has something to do with the gear I've reviewed recently being a second-generation release of some sort or another.

The new BX-4 Pro Guides I received are an updated version of Leupold's highly successful Gen 1 HD (high definition) binocular models. My association with Leupold binos go back almost 20 years with their bullet proof 10x42 Gold Rings. They were the company's signature offering at that time and accompanied me on many successful hunting trips both here and overseas. I retired those Gold Rings a couple of years ago in favour of a new pair of Swarovski EL 10x42s which are now also serving me well.

The new Leupolds came supplied with a raft of extras including a soft carry pouch, padded neck-strap with dual reinforcing, two pairs of alternative eyecups, lens covers and cleaning cloth. Unlike the closed bridge of those old Gold Rings, the BX-4 Pro Guide HD are a dual hinge, open bridge design very similar to my current Swarovskis.

Many closed bridge binos appeal to me, though I do like the practicality of an open bridge design simply because I can comfortably wrap my gorilla

fingers around the lens barrels from any angle without having to fold them. The parallel roof prism lens barrels of modern design generally allow for a slimmer package overall and, considering these BX-4s are less than six inches long and much smaller than my Gold Rings, they're the most compact binos with 42mm objectives I've ever handled. Despite that small size they accommodate an individual interpupillary distance of 55mm out to a wide-eyed shooter of 76mm.

Leupold claim the BX-4s are extremely rugged which may have something to do with the lens barrels being made from notoriously strong magnesium alloy. They definitely feel solid in the hand which belies their modest weight of 710 grams. After conducting the 'tap test' I'm pretty sure the two loops on the side are at one with the alloy barrels and give confidence in a super-strong connection for a harness strap. Enhancing impact resistance and overall grip is the durable, rubberised external coating, while detents on the base add a subtle yet practical rest for the thumbs. Importantly, but as to be expected, the BX-4s are nitrogen purged for fog-proofing and the box states they're 100 per cent waterproof.

The fitted rubber eyecups over the ocular lens provide a gentle chamfered edge which offers a comfortable connection between the face and promotes correct image relief. The BX-4s also have twist-out eyecups in three different positions to suit the most challenging eye relief (and



for those wearing spectacles). Each rotation of the clicks locks in firmly and doesn't annoyingly push in when pressed against the face like some I've used. The two extra swappable 'fit-form' eyecups add that little extra to a custom fit and include a pair with glare protectors.

Once again my favourite kind of dual dioptre adjustment is located on the focus dial and not the eyepieces. By simply pulling the dial cap rearwards, you can fine tune each eyepiece to your eyes and a forward push will lock that adjustment. The centre focus dial needs no explanation other than that it moves well and does exactly what it's supposed to with ease.

Every brand seems to have one, two or maybe a few fancy marketing names for their lens coatings and manufacturing process and while the Leupold BX-4s aren't as extravagant here, they don't need to be. The 'Guard-ion' HD coatings aren't just designed to maximise wear resistance in harsh environments, more importantly they offer the hunter a crystal-clear image of their quarry and surrounding environment. At least that's what they reckon and, by now, I expect most modern bins in the upper price bracket will be built to handle the weather and not be challenging to use.

THE SUPPLIED SMALL SOFT POUCH WAS MORE VERSATILE THAN FIRST THOUGHT.



THE ROBUST INTEGRAL STRAP CONNECTIONS WILL SUIT FIXTURE TO A HEAVY-DUTY HARNESS. NOTE DUAL DIOPTRIC ADJUSTMENT CAP TO REAR OF THE FOCUS WHEEL; THE GUARD-ION LENSES PERFORMED BEAUTIFULLY ON LATE AFTERNOON PIG HUNTS.

I'm happy to report they impressed with my first view straight out the box and I noticed instantly how sharp the image was all the way out to the edges. While it's pointless arguing over a few metres less than my Swarovski ELs, the Pro-Guide's 10x magnification and six-degrees angular FOV (field of view) provide an ample viewing window of at least 105m at a range of 1000m.

So with the technicalities dealt with I couldn't wait to test them in a real-world hunting scenario. During our time afield, my wife Sue-Ann and I enjoyed these new binos and both agreed the BX-4 HD lenses twilight credentials lived up to the hype. I noticed hardly any peripheral blurring and while chasing pigs on a few late afternoon hunts, the colour clarity of the lens was evident while scanning vegetation for the destructive feral swine.

I'm honestly not a fan of neckstraps and at first didn't give the supplied pouch much of a wrap ei-

ther. Yet to Leupold's credit I was quite surprised at how practical their novel design complemented the binoculars. As mentioned, the BX-4 Pro-Guides are impressively compact and the pouch is also much smaller than most of my regular aftermarket ones. The soft pouch doesn't have a harness attachment, but the rear loops connect to any pack strap or hunter's belt with ease and felt secure enough to protect their valuable cargo.

CONCLUSION

Despite their feel I can't testify as to just how rugged the BX-4s really are, as I haven't had them long enough to bounce them around on multiple hunting trips. However, if my heritage Gold Ring binos are anything to compare after years of hard use, I'm certain Leupold haven't taken a backward step. I'm confident the BX-4 Pro-Guides won't be calling on the warranty any time soon but, as with all their high-end (including Gold Ring) optics, they're supported by Leupold's Lifetime Guarantee. The 10x42 configuration is by far the most popular for hunters these days, though BX-4 Pro-Guide HD models are also available in 8x32/42, 10x32/42(tested), 10x50 and 12x50.

The entire fit, feel and finish are pure class. Every point of adjustment and mechanical workings gave confidence of a quality-built pair of hunting binos and it came as no surprise they're made in Japan. I reckon they deserve the Pro-Guide moniker as they'll be right at home in the bush or mountain tops scanning for game and, retailing for around \$1300 (at time of writing), the price was too good I actually ended up buying the review binoculars. More at nioa.com.au



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Doubly delightful

**THIS YILDIZ
ISN'T JUST
ELEGANT
BY NAME,
SAYS JOHN
MCDUGALL**

It comes as no surprise to see the Turkish Gun Works in Burdur also making an elegant range of double (side-by-side) shotguns for distribution worldwide. At first glance the Elegant A1 E Special looks a very nicely produced sporting arm, though for a 3.25kg gun it certainly set my shoulder back when using the 76mm cartridges it was designed for. The spritely Saga loads supplied for testing also had my jaw rattling but later, changing to 21gram 67mm loads or even 1200fps trap loads, the gun was a delight to use either in the field or over the sporting traps.

I haven't quite worked out why it was chambered for semi-magnum loads but that's the situation. Of course you don't have to use semi-magnum for great results, as lighter loads performed extremely well, particularly with trap steel shot now mandatory for all game shooting in Victoria. My good friend and hunting companion Henry shot quail with steel shot trap

loads and found them deadly through the Yildiz, so let's take a closer look at what's on offer with the Elegant A1 E Special.

BARRELS

At just over 76.5cm these are slim and well suited to the lines of the gun. As with most interchangeable choke tube shotguns, the muzzle's slightly 'belled' to accommodate the choke tubes of which five are supplied along with a flat spanner for installation, a bit fiddley but nothing a Briley speed wrench couldn't fix. The tubes are 37mm and notched on the end for ready identification.

Blueing on the barrels is faultless. Twenty years ago as Turkish gun manufacturing was evolving, it was common to see flux along the ribs of their guns. Thankfully this has been resolved and the barrels produced, especially by Yildiz, experience no such result on blueing (I did like the semi-matte finish as well as the colour of their blueing). At the muzzle end is a single brass bead



CLOSE-UP OF THE BARRELS DROPPED, EXPOSING THE SPLIT EJECTORS; THE BARREL LUMP WHICH ROTATES THE BARRELS AT THE FRONT AND LOCKS THEM TO THE RECEIVER VIA THE REARWARD BITE.

while the top rib is 'swamped', starting level with the receiver then dropping below the barrel line only to be level again at the muzzle. There's no mid-rib sight though the top rib is treated with a non-glare finish.

At the breech end as mentioned, the Yildiz Elegant A1 E Special is chambered for 76mm cartridges of 12-gauge configuration, the bores identical at 0.728". There didn't appear to be any forcing cone modifications so I assume they remained standard. The lengthy monobloc lump is quite significant in length and would assist in keeping the barrels perfectly aligned from twisting, even when firing the heaviest semi-magnum loads. Automatic split ejectors work perfectly with the opening of the barrels.

RECEIVER

According to the Yildiz catalogue the engraving here is hand-cut and has been tastefully completed, depicting an English Pointer flushing a partridge. This engraving features on both sides of the receiver with a Pointer's head on the underside. The silver nitride finish complements the gun superbly, set between the barrels and high-grade walnut stock, all inletting completed to perfection and the metal-to-metal fitting faultless. Beautiful scroll engraving is somewhat deeper than on the game scenes but provides an excellent border around the dog and partridge.

The trigger guard, fore-end iron and top tang are also nicely engraved to complement the receiver.

Most double guns of yesteryear sported twin triggers and didn't have a barrel selector, you either pulled the front or back trigger first to activate the left or right barrel. The Yildiz Elegant has a single selective trigger that's mechanically operated as opposed to inertia, whereby the first barrel must fire before the second firing mechanism can be operated. With mechanically operated trigger mechanisms, if there's a misfire with the first shot the second barrel can always be fired, unless you have two misfiring cartridges.

The trigger guard isn't overly large but sufficient to accommodate those who choose to wear shooting gloves. The single trigger's non-adjustable for increasing or decreasing the user's reach for the triggerfoot when the pistol grip is firmly grasped, so any adjustment must be made by moving your hand up or down along the neck of the pistol grip. Weights of the triggers are quite safe at around 2kg each and there's little between them, with the right barrel having 200g more. One thing I did find with the firing mechanism is the first trigger has to be completely released to fire the second barrel.

Design of the top lever is perfect and activated to release the barrels for fast reloading, which many may not recognise as one of the virtues of a double gun (or side-by-side). The reason they



HAND-CUT ENGRAVING ABOUT THE RECEIVER AND UNDERSIDE EXTENDS TO THE TRIGGER GUARD.

can reload faster is due to the horizontal configuration of the barrels, which don't require to be dropped down so far as with an over-and-under shotgun. Some shooters also like the wider horizontal sighting plane a double gun offers and remain dedicated to their side-by-side for those reasons (there are now also competition shoots offered specifically for them). The Yildiz Elegant A1 E would be perfect for such events, especially with those interchangeable choke tubes.

STOCK AND FORE-END

This is where Turkish guns shine, given all mechanicals are in perfect working order. The stock work here is grade three walnut, chosen to suit the Elegant character of the grain in the matching stock and fore-end. I'd expect to see such nicely-featured woodwork on a gun costing at least \$1500 to \$2500 more. Design of the stock is standard, without an adjustable comb

or similar and features a full pistol grip and standard comb line. Thankfully, as the gun's proofed to fire 3" semi-magnum shells, it has a reasonably solid rubber recoil pad fitted.

Design of the fore-end is quite novel and appears to be a cross between a 'splinter' and 'beaver-tail'. The release catch is located on underside of the fore-end and chequering on both pistol grip and fore-end wood ran out to around 20 lines per inch, both pieces of woodwork being oiled finished.

OVER TRAPS AND IN THE FIELD

The Yildiz Elegant A1 E Special was a delight to use over the traps at Frankston Gun Club. While many of my targets were completely destroyed using a combination of quarter and three-quarter choke, I may have been even more successful with quarter and half chokes. Nevertheless there were plenty of targets which visibly disappeared. As it's a while since I'd used a double gun it took some time to become accustomed, though performance-wise I couldn't fault it.

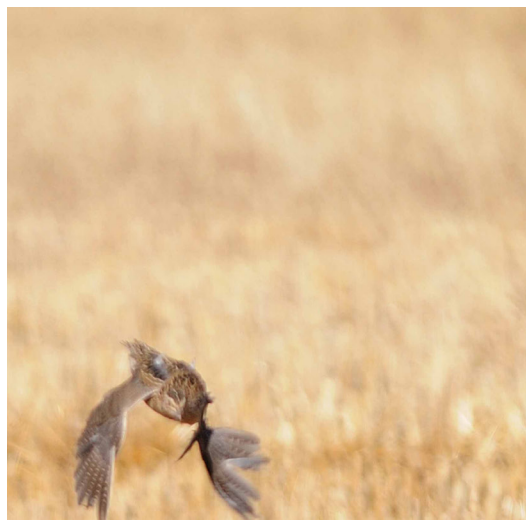
For those who enjoy the challenge of using a side-by-side over the sporting clays grounds, the Yildiz Elegant A1 E Special would be perfect, especially since it has a barrel selector and interchangeable choke tubes. The gun swung well and felt balanced between my hands. The sighting plane was obviously different but head down on the stock produced reasonable results.

I was also delighted I had the gun to test during quail season. Although birds were scarce in our hunting area, the Yildiz managed to bag six or seven during two outings. Once again, the interchangeable choke tubes were a bonus as quail succumbed to steel shot trap loads which were made mandatory this season using more open chokes of cylinder and quarter.

In conclusion, I was most impressed with the Yildiz double in 12-gauge. For around \$2779, cased and with all accessories and five-year warranty I found it excellent value, ideal for sporting clay competitions and well suited to hunting. The finish of Turkish guns has come a long way during the past 20 years and, with excellent back-up from distributor OSA, it would be difficult to find better at this price. ●



CLOSE-UP OF THE STOCK SHOWING EXQUISITE CHEQUERING AND GRAIN CHARACTER IN THE OILED WOODWORK; CHOKE TUBES, SPANNER AND FLAT CHOKE TUBE SPANNER FOR INSTALLING CHOKE TUBES.



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer:

Yildiz, Burdur, Turkey

Distributor:

OSA, Melbourne

Model:

Yildiz Elegant A1 E Special

Barrel length:

76.5cm

Barrel weight:

1.54kg

Overall length:

1208mm

Overall weight:

3.25kg

Chamber and gauge:

76mm, 12-gauge

Bore sizes:

Both barrels 0.728"

Trigger pulls:

Left barrel 2000g, right 2200g

Drop at comb:

42mm

Drop at heel:

65mm

Length of pull:

370mm

Chequering:

About 20 lines per inch

Warranty:

Five years

Price:

Around \$2779 with ABS case and accessories

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HTI
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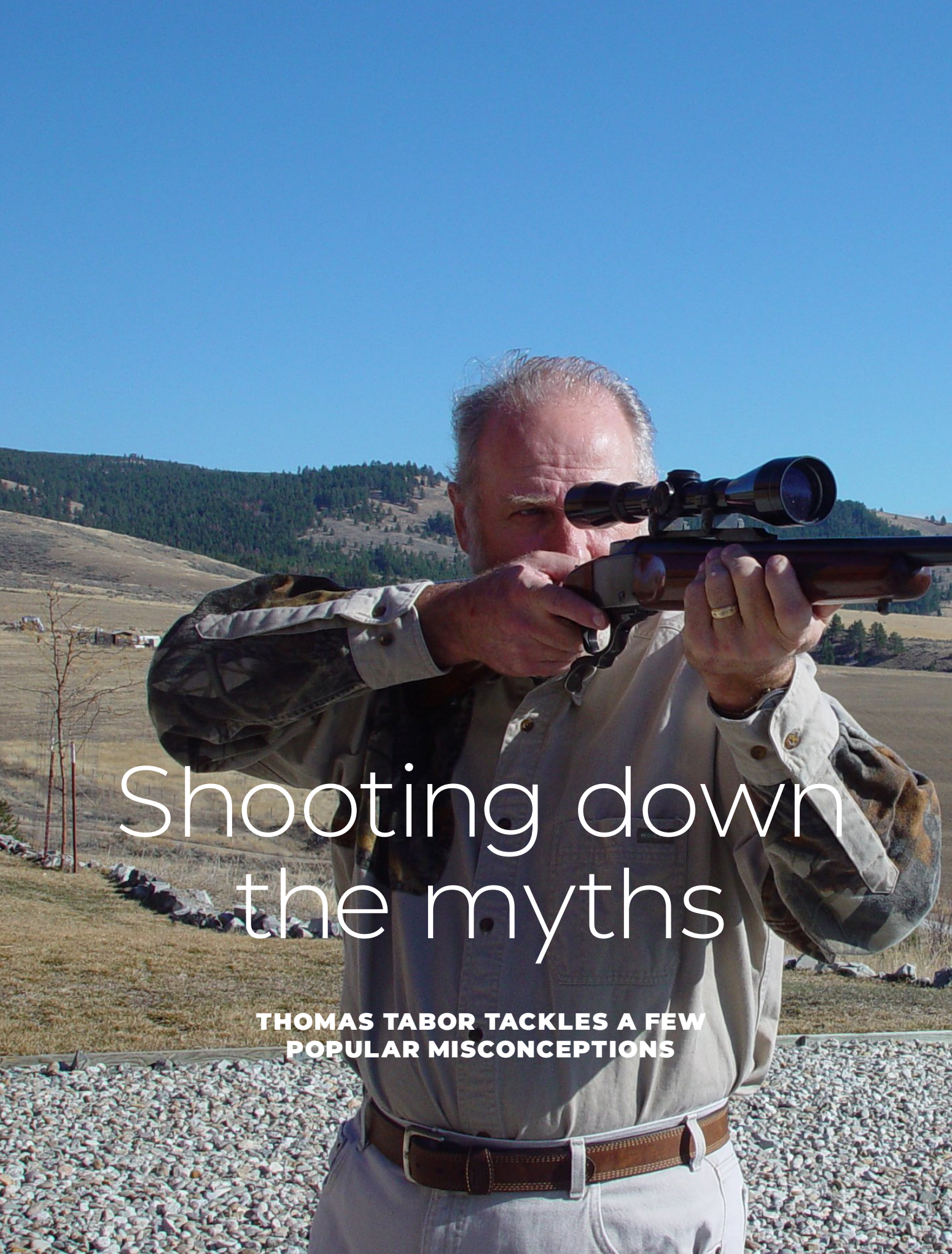
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SCAN QR
VIEW THE
FULL
RANGE



A man with grey hair is aiming a dark-colored rifle with a large scope. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and camouflage-patterned sleeves. He is standing in a field with a gravel path in the foreground and rolling hills in the background under a clear blue sky.

Shooting down the myths

**THOMAS TABOR TACKLES A FEW
POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS**



As long as shooting has been with us, misinformation has plagued those activities and in some instances hindered our success. And ironically, many times those very mistruths have come from people we trust the most like manufacturers, equipment suppliers and even some outdoors writers. So in an effort to dispel those wrongful assumptions, let's dig into some of these and see where it takes us.

STAINLESS STEEL FIREARMS

In recent years there's been a tremendous upsurge in the popularity of stainless steel firearms. I suppose some of that popularity is because many shooters prefer the looks of stainless over that of blued firearms, yet there are significantly more important issues at stake here than simple aesthetics.

BORE-SIGHTING IS A GREAT WAY TO PUT BULLETS 'ON PAPER' BUT SHOULD ALWAYS BE FOLLOWED BY RANGE TESTING TO FINE-TUNE IMPACT POINT.

I believe in some cases we've been led to believe stainless is a harder, more durable metal than carbon steel but that's not necessarily a correct assumption. Stainless is actually a softer metal than the carbon steel used in firearms production and, as such, is less resistant to normal wear and tear. Another point favouring carbon steel over stainless is the fact the latter is a more expensive metal for manufacturers to buy, with those additional costs generally passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices.

But possibly one of the most misunderstood things about stainless pertains to its moisture resistant capabilities. While stainless possesses chromium which does have some rust-resisting properties, it doesn't make this metal completely rustproof. Under certain conditions a stainless firearm can rust just like carbon steel and I saw a classic example of this on a hunting trip a few years ago. One of the guides spent a significant amount of time scouting on horseback in wet conditions and, while doing so, frequently carried his rifle in a saddle-mounted scabbard.

He eventually came to the conclusion a stainless rifle would be more appropriate for that kind of exposure and bought a Remington bolt-action for that work, thinking it would need less maintenance to protect it from decay. Yet within weeks he pulled out the new stainless rifle he'd paid a premium price for and found it covered in a layer of rust.

He was so angry at being misled about its rust-inhibiting resistance, he packaged up the rifle and shipped it back to the factory demanding his money back. I never heard whether Remington complied with that demand but it certainly changed his opinion on the superiority of stainless over blued carbon steel.

CLEAN BORES V DIRTY

While it's extremely important every shooter keeps their firearms in a good state of repair and properly cleaned, there's one instance when total cleanliness isn't necessarily next to godliness. The first shot through a clean bore will often print slightly differently than following shots. So whether hunting or shooting in a competitive environment where a few millimetres can make the difference, it's a far better idea to fire a single shot through a clean bore in order to lightly foul it before participating in any main event.

DIFFERENCES IN AMMO

Many shooters arbitrarily will switch from one brand of ammunition to another, one bullet weight to another or bullet style, with little thought as to how those seemingly minor differences could affect impact point. Yet frequently what a shooter may see as a minor difference in ammunition can significantly affect overall accuracy.

Different powders will frequently have different burning rates, while various primers can often possess different flashpoints or intensity of ignition. Bullet designs could differ and in some cases even cartridge cases could show variations in metal thickness or internal shape, which can affect powder capacity of the case. Any of those differences can have an effect on bullet placement, so it's always a good idea to verify on the range whether or not any sight adjustments will be necessary.

ZEROING-IN YOUR RIFLE

Bore-sighting is a great way to put your first shots on paper but should never be considered an alternative to actual live-fire sighting-in. It should be regarded as only the first step in the process. As a gun writer I shoot and test many different firearms, which often requires swapping scopes around frequently. I'm always careful in doing so but don't believe I've ever encountered a single instance when at least some minor adjustments to the reticles weren't necessary.



That results in usually bringing out the bore-sighting equipment to recheck first, then heading to the range for fine-tuning. I have, however, found one exception to this situation which pertains to modern high-quality, quick-detachable scope mounts and rings, like the QRW ones produced by Leupold & Stevens. Frequently these outstanding innovations are superb when it comes to maintaining bullet impact points after the scope has been removed and remounted.

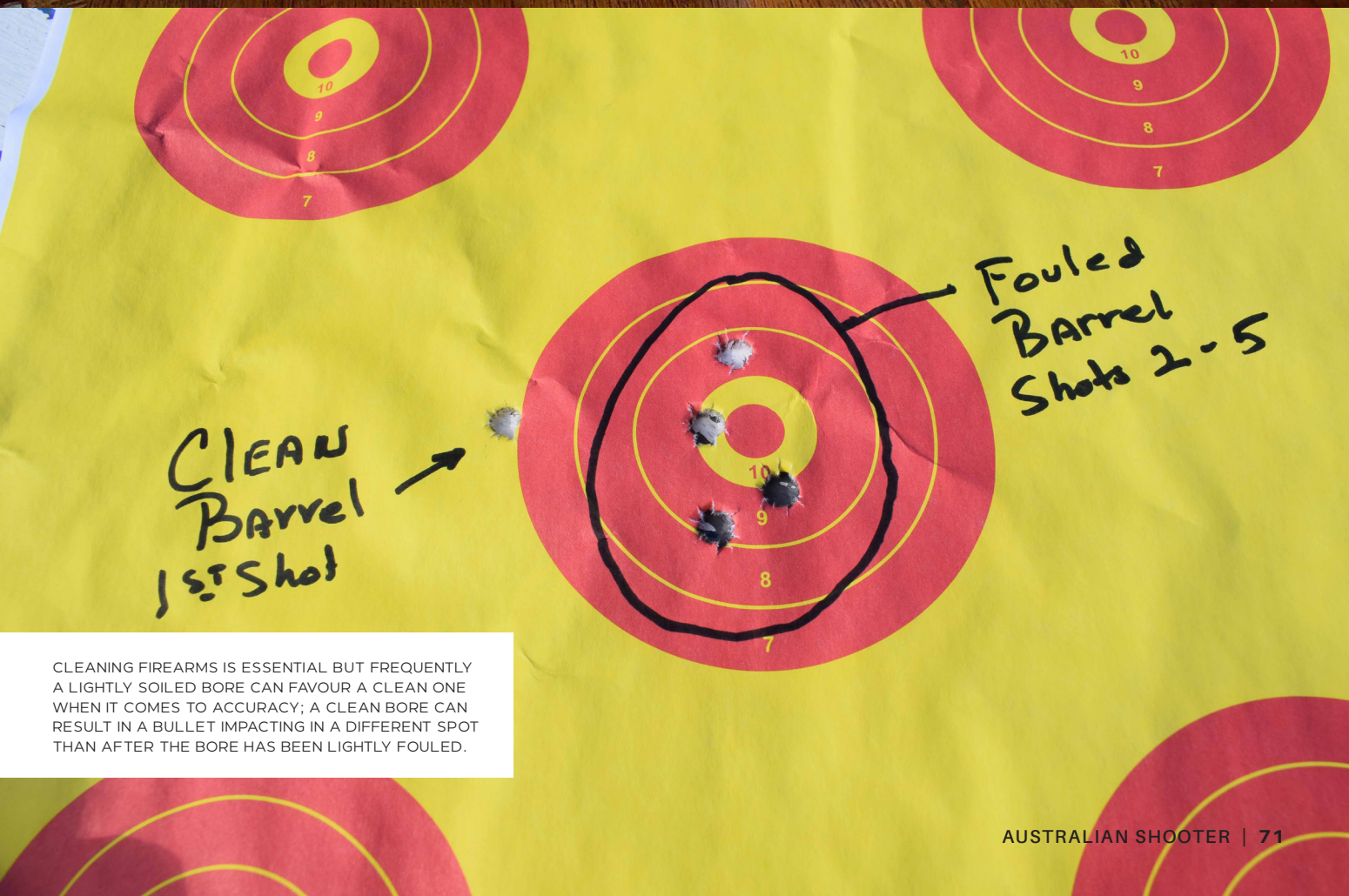
BORE-SIGHTING INSTRUMENTS VARY IN STYLE. BOTTOM LEFT IS A SIMMONS MODEL 1480 STUD BORE-SIGHTER NEXT TO THE ZERO-POINT ILLUMINATED AND A COUPLE OF CARRY CASES. TOP LEFT IS THE AIM SHOT LASER BORE-SIGHTER (CARTRIDGE AND CALIBRE SPECIFIC AND MUST BE INSERTED INTO CHAMBER OF RIFLE AND ACTION CLOSED), THEN A LEUPOLD & STEVENS SCOPE SMITH MAGNETIC BORE-SIGHTER AND A FEW OTHER BITS AND PIECES.

OIL AND ROT

Most shooters know the importance of keeping firearms oiled and properly lubed in order to keep metal wear to a minimum and guard against corrosion. Yet sometimes those same products we use can result in serious damage to wood stocks. Oil and solvent that's allowed to seep into the inside areas of a wood stock can, over time, result in rotting the wood. And many times those same areas hidden from view aren't even finished, making them even more susceptible to this type of damage, so for that reason oils and solvents should always be used sparingly.



RUST AND CORROSION CAN BE A PROBLEM BUT LIGHT OILING HELPS PREVENT THIS.



CLEANING FIREARMS IS ESSENTIAL BUT FREQUENTLY A LIGHTLY SOILED BORE CAN FAVOUR A CLEAN ONE WHEN IT COMES TO ACCURACY; A CLEAN BORE CAN RESULT IN A BULLET IMPACTING IN A DIFFERENT SPOT THAN AFTER THE BORE HAS BEEN LIGHTLY FOULED.



MINOR DIFFERENCES IN CARTRIDGES CAN EQUATE TO MAJOR DIFFERENCES ON IMPACT POINTS; STORING FIREARMS IN THIS UPSIDE-DOWN MANNER CAN AVOID DETERIORATION PROBLEMS FROM OIL AND SOLVENT.

I avoid spraying lubricants or solvent materials directly on firearms, preferring to keep an oil-soaked rag in a sealed container to lightly rub down metal surfaces. Another way to protect double barrels in particular from this kind of damage is to store them upside down. Consider having the muzzles pointing downward, rather than the usual position with butt-plate or recoil pad on the floor and muzzles looking skyward. In this case, any excessive applied liquids have a tendency to run away from the wood stocks.

DAMAGED BULLET POINTS

It's another common belief that when the point of a bullet becomes flattened or damaged, it will adversely affect its shooting accuracy. When the point of a bullet becomes misshapen it results in dropping the bullet's coefficient value, which in turn can affect its abilities to resist such things as wind drift and gravitational pull to a degree. But is that drop in performance significant enough to be concerned about?

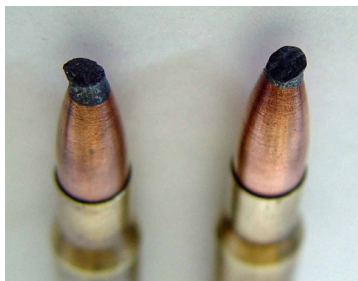
To find out for myself how much it would affect a bullet's accuracy, I purposely damaged the lead tips of bullets I typically shoot in several of my rifles and compared accuracy against pristine bullets at 100m. To my surprise I found the impact points to be almost indistinguishable. As the range

increases though, the likelihood of those cartridges being affected by changes in wind drift and gravitational pull may be more problematic, but at moderate range there seems little to worry about.

ANYONE CAN SIGHT-IN YOUR RIFLE

I have a friend who's so sensitive to the effects of recoil he always has someone else sight-in his rifles, yet most people would never believe Gary would have such a recoil problem. He's a large-framed fellow standing well over two meters tall who hunts and frequently shoots competitively, yet when it comes to sighting-in his rifles he literally cringes at the thought of impending recoil. Usually he finds someone else to check his rifle on the range and while this has him shooting close to his desired needs, it certainly isn't the best approach.

You may think we all see and recognize things the same when peering through a scope or set of open sights, yet that's not always the case. If you're like Gary and find yourself shuddering over the thought of squeezing the trigger, maybe it's time to trade that gun in for one which doesn't have quite so much recoil. If you're that fearful of a moderate punch to the shoulder, it's likely you'll eventually develop a severe case of flinching (if you haven't already) and this should be avoided by any means necessary. ●



DAMAGED BULLET POINTS MAY NOT AFFECT SHOOTING PERFORMANCE AS MUCH AS YOU THINK.



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TSA OUTDOORS

Own the night

JOSEPH NUGENT TACKLES THE THERMAL V NIGHT-VISION DEBATE

There's no denying one of the fastest-growing areas of Australia's outdoor recreation market is thermal optics. Present in drones, cameras, binoculars and sights, thermal technology is finding its way into everyday life more than ever before. Technological advancement during the past decade fuelled by both ongoing international conflicts and proliferation in civilian applications, has resulted in thermal technology coming a long way in a short time.

And while they're not cheap, thermal optics are becoming more accessible for the everyday shooter. The option to operate after dark provides those with this ability a significant advantage over those who can't. The effectiveness of thermal technology in the hunting world, primarily as a means of pest control, can be seen on multiple levels on YouTube and one channel in particular.

Edge of the Outback is run by an Australian occupational shooter whose videos serve as an ever-growing library of thermal hunting and pest control. Often using higher-end equipment, the thermal imaging seen on these videos provides an insight into newly-released and emerging technology for Aussie shooters. For those 'on the fence' over the effectiveness of thermal optics in hunting, these videos are a real eye-opener.

THERMAL V NIGHT-VISION

An initial point of confusion for those new to night-time optics is mistaking thermal for night-vision. Put simply, thermal optics use sensors within the device to detect and measure heat

signatures from whatever it's pointed at. It can then use the information received to generate an accurate image of what it's viewing. As thermal optics operate on heat signatures only, they can be used accurately in situations with no ambient light at all. They're highly sensitive and capable of detecting a thermal signature from more than 1km on most devices.

Night-vision on the other hand uses sensors to absorb any available light from the surrounding environment and amplify it in order to generate an image. Generally speaking, night-vision devices work best at close range with an ambient light source and, under those conditions, will create a clearer image than thermal optics. But as distance increases and light fades, night-vision devices will be unable to generate an image, therefore thermal optics are superior in most instances. Their detection range is far greater, they're less affected by vegetation blocking a target and, due to the typical contrast options available, animals viewed through a thermal device are easier to spot.

Similarly, both are affected to some degree by screening, a situation where fog or vegetation blocks the target, as both have limited ability to gather heat or light sources when physically blocked. Thermal devices will still be able to operate effectively through light vegetation such as

JOSEPH USES SHOOTING STICKS
WHILE SCANNING A RIDGELINE.





grass or an environmental screen like fog, as some heat will still be emitted. But night-vision devices can't see an object which ordinarily isn't visible during the day. As such, the effectiveness of both thermal and night-vision devices is reduced in poor weather, thick vegetation and long grass.

A common misconception about both is they can only be used at night, yet while the image may not be as clear, thermal devices can still be used effectively throughout the day. They'll display a similar image to what's seen at night, though clarity may be reduced due to lack of distinct contrast in temperatures between animals and surrounding environment. Night-vision devices can be used in daylight but are make/model dependent. Some contain highly sensitive sensors which may be damaged or 'burnt' by bright daylight, so it's important to check specifics prior to daytime use of a night-vision device.

DEVICE TYPES

Generally speaking there are two types of thermal devices advertised in Australia - scanners and sights. Think of the former as the night-time equivalent of a spotting scope as they're hand-held and usually in a monocular or binocular style. They operate using the same technology as a thermal sight, though can't be mounted on a firearm or used to assist in aiming at a target. It's for this reason scanners are usually far cheaper than sights.

As the name suggests, scanners are typically used to scan or 'glass' large areas to detect animals or thermal signatures which may merit further investigation. Like most thermal devices they can be connected via Wi-Fi and live-streamed to a mobile device, particularly useful with scanners as it allows the unit to be mounted to a vehicle and used in similar fashion to a spot-

HARES AT 50M VIEWED THROUGH THE TL35 SE; RED STAG AT 150M. AS MAGNIFICATION INCREASES IMAGES BECOME MORE PIXELATED; FERAL DOG SPOTTED HUNTING AT NIGHT.

light. Driving the edge of a paddock searching for problem pests has proved an effective way of using a scanner. Further to that, the use of a mobile device to view the image allows someone other than the operator to track it.

Thermal sights can be broken into two categories - clip-ons and scopes. The former work by being attached to or in front of an existing day sight. They operate in similar fashion to a scanner by detecting thermal signatures and displaying an on-screen image. A clip-on device may be appealing due to its perceived versatility, though they do present some issues with the most obvious being mounting one to a firearm.

These units can be quite large and require a fair amount of space in front of an existing sight, so their length and weight can make a firearm quite heavy and cumbersome. They also need to be aligned and zeroed over the existing day sight, which may create confusion when shooting as you'll be viewing two reticles at the same time. They have their place as a versatile option for shooters who choose not to set up a dedicated night-shooting firearm, though not something which appeals to me.

Thermal scopes are the most specialized and useful piece of equipment for hunters. They're mounted directly on a firearm in the same way as a regular scope and operate in essentially the same manner, coming with all the standard features of a day sight including magnification and focus adjustment.

Because thermal images are displayed on-screen, it's important to note they'll become more pixelated with increased magnification and need to be focused accordingly. Unlike a standard day sight they're zeroed electronically through a menu option within the scope, a process that's generally straightforward and explained in the manual.

Functions and menus vary from scope to scope so it's important to read the manual before attempting to zero. A useful feature within the zeroing menu of most thermal scopes is the option to save a number of settings, most offering up to five which may be used to zero different ranges, calibres and loads. Some thermal scopes come with built-in or externally fitted laser rangefinders, a useful tool given judging distance through a scope can be tricky.

CHOOSING A DEVICE

With such a variety of thermal options varying greatly in price and technology, it's tough to decide which might be right for you. Selecting one comes down to a combination of intended use and pricing, with many choosing to start with a scanner on its own. Thermal scanners are significantly cheaper than scopes but are really only useful in helping identify animals at night.

Where I've seen them used successfully is pest control in open paddocks and crops, a scanner used to identify and stalk close to the animals before using a torch or spotlight at close range for

shooting. Thermal scanners cost anywhere from \$500 to \$3000, though I feel a scope is a better introduction to thermal optics as you can scan with a scope but can't shoot with a scanner.

Buying an entry-level thermal scope seems a wiser option as it opens up more doors than a scanner. Paired with a set of shooting sticks or tripod, the scope can be used to scan the landscape and detect animals or other thermal signatures. Once identified and stalked, a scope can be used to safely and accurately engage targets without the need of a light source. An entry level scope retails for \$2000-\$4000.

Thermal optics vary greatly in technology and price. Fluctuations in price are generally due to field of view, detection range, battery life and other internal features such as range-finding and recording capabilities. When determining which to buy, it's wise to set a price you're willing to spend and do some research as to which will give the most for your money.

There will be some factors which are more important to your circumstances, however field of view and detection range should be uppermost. Online retailer Hunt the Night has a series of videos on their YouTube channel explaining the intricacies of buying a thermal scope and tailoring it to your needs. These go into great detail and help explain the specifications to beginners and are worth seeing prior to shopping.

MY EXPERIENCE

With my intended use being predator and pest control in a mixture of open grassland and timbered terrain, I decided a thermal scope would suit my needs best. After some research and reading online reviews, I bought an InfiRay TL35 SE, an entry-level option designed for hunting small to medium game, suitable for rimfire and medium-sized centerfire rifles.

It was perfect to pair with my Tikka T3 in .223 and boasts an impressive 1800m detection range, 8-11hr battery life and can be paired with a mobile device to record images and video. Being entry-level it does have a fairly narrow field of view but is adequate for what I need, particularly when set on its base magnification of 3x.

It came with a basic instruction manual though a more detailed version is available on the InfiRay app. I found zeroing straightforward once I got the hang of the buttons and wasted no time heading afield. It does have a detection range as advertised and I was able to identify heat signatures beyond 1km. Although unrecognisable as an animal at that distance, it provides an indication of where to start when checking a paddock.

When using the scope on its own it also takes on the role of a scanner, so to reduce fatigue from holding the rifle and scanning for extended periods, mount it on some sort of rest or shooting system. I'm very happy with my thermal scope which has opened up more opportunities for targeting predators and pests. ●



JOSEPH PUT THE INFIRAY TL35 SE TO WORK CULLING HARES FROM A NEWLY-PLANTED CROP.



THE REDS

DICK EUSSEN CHARTS THE RISE OF THE ICONIC SNIDER- ENFIELD

On April 10, 1868 a 4000-strong British expeditionary force under the command of General Robert Napier, confronted the huge army of Abyssinian (Ethiopia) Emperor Theodore II. And while the British were exhausted after a forced two-month 650km march from the Red Sea, the men formed battle lines against the waves of opponents who swept down on them. The battle has been recorded as one of the most memorable of the Victorian era. Historians who studied it concluded the real hero was the new Snider-Enfield rifle the troops had been issued with to replace

their ageing muzzle-loading Enfield muskets.

Those muskets were loaded with paper 'cartridges' which held a black powder charge and lead ball. The case was torn open with the teeth, powder poured down the barrel followed by shoving the paper case down it (it acted as a wad), ramming down a lead ball and seating it. Then a percussion cap was placed on the nipple and the hammer cocked and fired, with a trained soldier capable of firing three shots a minute.

It was the introduction of a brass case which expanded in the chamber to form a perfect gas seal, that started new research and development



CENTRE FIRE STRIKER

of centrefire metallic cartridges and rifles in Europe, while in America breech-loaders and repeating guns were already using rimfire cartridges. Following the success of those cartridges in the America Civil War, the British wanted a new battle rifle based on a shell-loading system. Colonel Edward Mounier Boxer was working on the development of a coiled brass foil cartridge with an inbuilt percussion cap, loaded with an explosive compound which, when struck, exploded and ignited a black powder charge.

As the Boxer brass foil cartridge cost was low compared to US brass-drawn Berdan rounds,

it forced the cash-strapped British military to adopt it. However, after the Ethiopian campaign of 1885, the War Office was inundated with complaints to replace the Boxer coiled brass case with a drawn case. That was ignored and even the later military .450/577 rounds of 1871 were initially of rolled brass foil case design.

Yet the Boxer percussion cap was improved to the point that today it's the preferred universal primer of modern cartridges. The Berdan primer, invented by Colonel Hiram Berdan of the US Ordinance, was popular in Europe but not in his own country. Two small double-flash holes are in

BEFORE THE 'RULE OF THE .303' THERE WAS THE SNIDER-ENFIELD WHICH PROVED ITSELF A BATTLE RIFLE IN THE ABYSSINIAN CONFLICT.



THE .577 ENFIELD-SNIDER IS A BIG RIFLE. NOTE THE SLING SWIVEL POSITION ON THIS WELL-WORN 1862 SPRINGFIELD CONVERSION MODEL.

the Berdan primer pocket compared to one large hole in the Boxer single-flash hole case, making it ideal for reloading.

At the time the British were armed with the muzzle loading .577 Enfield rifle and even though, with lessons learned from the American Civil War and the future demanding rapid-reloading weapons, the government decided new rifles were not in the budget after testing 47 arms by the Ordinance. Seven were considered finalists, one being an Enfield rifle converted to a breech-loader, the Snider-Enfield.

The Snider conversion consisted of cutting 2½" off the breech end of the Enfield muzzle loader, then installing a vertically pivoting longitudinal breech block which was lifted to directly load a cartridge into the chamber. The block was then pushed into lock position, hammer cocked and the rifle was ready to fire. Brilliant!

The conversion was the brainchild of New Yorker Jacob Snider and Francois Schneider of Paris, though there were problems with it, mostly blamed on the cartridges of the day. The Snider conversion enjoyed its greatest acceptance in Britain and, thanks to the improvement made by the them, it's generally recognised a British design. Several inventors claimed the right to the model, but only Thomas Wilson of Birmingham was provided with a grant of royalty payments due to his improvement in the Enfield-Snider block.

The open-breech Snider engineering was simple. The block was fitted with an angled firing pin which, when struck by the original percussion hammer, detonated the primer and ignited the black powder charge to fire a round. When the block is lifted it engages a slide which holds the cartridge rim for easy removal of the fired case. There were long trials and tests before the Snider-Enfield rifle became a reality. Tests concluded that at 500 and 800 yards no rifle of the day matched the conversion in accuracy, though the .577 round was 'weak' as it failed penetration tests with various brands of ammunition.

Colonel Boxer initially introduced a cartridge for the Snider-Enfield which had a body of brown paper with a thin sheet of brass rolled loose and glued at the edge. It held a 520-grain lead bullet of .573" diameter but there were problems. Next, Boxer presented a rolled brass foil case which was deemed acceptable by Ordinance selectors. The new foil case round was tested in March/April 1866 with a 480-grain bullet and penetration proved excellent. More importantly, a trained rifleman could fire 15 shots a minute, a marked improvement on the three shots a minute with the original muzzle loading Enfield rifle.

Yet there were concerns over soldiers wasting bullets. There was a belief that enlisted men weren't overly bright and complicated rifle systems were beyond their grasp, thus the simplicity of the Snider-Enfield and Boxer cartridge was a real asset for the army.

The Ethiopia conflict was started by a man named Kasa, a Christian with a real dislike of

Muslims. In his earlier years he'd been a bandit leader who married into the Royal Family and soon took charge, awarding himself the title of Emperor Theodore II. He had a good trade relationship with Europeans, because to stay in power he required a well-armed army. The British were more than happy to trade and appointed Charles Cameron as British Consul.

He visited Abyssinia bearing gifts from Queen Victoria, a pair of pistols and a rifle. But then a missionary, the Reverend Stern, published some nasty comments in European newspapers about Theodore's treatment of Muslims, which raised the ire of the Emperor who ordered that God's man be placed in chains. Just for the hell of it he had a few more Europeans also chained when insults were traded between nations.

Cameron sent word back to England about the conditions chained prisoners were having to endure. London requested all prisoners be released but, when diplomatic efforts failed, the powers decided military action was the only solution and ordered Indian troops be used to free the hostages. Lt. General Sir Robert Napier was put in charge and 4000 Snider-Enfield rifles were shipped to India along with ammunition. The force consisted of cavalry, artillery, engineers and infantry including some British soldiers, with every man issued 90 rounds of .577 ammunition.

The fleet sailed from India to the Red Sea with the first landings in early October 1867. Contacts were made with local Muslim tribes who sided with the Brits as the Emperor had made many enemies. When the force had been assembled they started the long march inland, encountering little resistance apart from an internal mutiny started by Irish troops in their midst.

At last, on a high flat massif with Theodore's headquarters in sight, battle lines were drawn. Masses of troops faced the British, who held their line as the Abyssinians charged. When they were 250 yards away the British opened fire, volley after volley pouring into the enemy backed by artillery and rocket fire. The King's Own regiment was said to have fired 10,200 rounds of ammunition, about 20 per rifle, in a battle lasting roughly half an hour. More than 700 of the enemy died in the skirmish and 1200 were wounded with the British counting 20 wounded, two of whom later died.

Emperor Theodore refused to surrender but, as a goodwill gesture, released around 50 prisoners who were welcomed into the British camp. On April 13, 1868 Napier ordered a direct attack on Theodore's fortress which involved heavy hand-to-hand fighting, but soon the regimental colours flew alongside the British flag in victory. Theodore committed suicide with one of the pistols he'd received from Queen Victoria. Much hype was made of the battle when news reached London, Napier was feted and the Ordinance applauded on the right choice of the army's 'new' battle rifle.

The Snider-Enfield was widely used across the British Empire and its colonies, including Australia where police and explorers battled



THE CONVERSION FROM A MUZZLELOADER TO BREECH LOADER WAS A BRILLIANT INVENTION, THIS MODEL MARKED 'SPRINGFIELD 1862.'; BREECH BLOCK SWINGS OUT TO ALLOW REMOVAL OF AN UNFIRED ROUND OR FIRED SHELLS; OPEN BREECH OF THE SNIDER CONVERSION ON THE ENFIELD MUSKET.



THE RIMMED .577 ENFIELD CARTRIDGE IS HUGE. THEY WERE INITIALLY ISSUED IN A COILED BRASS FOIL VERSION; THE .577 ENFIELD CAN BE RELOADED WITH 20-GAUGE SHOTSHELLS. THE .577 ROUND IS HUGE COMPARED TO THE COILED BRASS FOIL .450/.577 CASE AND LATER BRASS .450/.577 ROUND WHICH REPLACED IT.

hostile natives and bushrangers. It was replaced by the more efficient Martini-Henry rifle from 1871-1880, though in Australia remained in use by volunteer and militia forces until 1890. It endured ever longer in India, where the British issued it to Indian troops and records indicate the Indian Army was still using it until 1905. Night sentries in army camps carried Sniders and buckshot cartridges to give them a better chance of hitting intruders in the dark.

The Snider has several variants, the most common being the Rifled Musket or Long Rifle, the Short Rifle and Cavalry and Artillery Carbines. The Snider was widely copied including the Nepalese Snider (an exact copy), the Dutch and Danish Sniders and 'unauthorised' clones of the French Tabatière and Russian Krnka. Other models are 'custom' and 'trade patterns' made for the domestic market by various gunsmiths and for sale to the public and volunteer army members.

Also of interest is the .577 Snider cartridge. Colonel Boxer invented the centrefire rolled brass foil case for the .577 Snider-Enfield rifle, settling on a 480-grain .577 bullet and 70 grains of black powder for a velocity of 1250fps. The original

case was of cardboard with a metal base, like a modern shotgun cartridge, and in fact 20-gauge shells can be used to make .577 cases by shortening it by half-an-inch. The coiled brass case was later replaced by a drawn brass shell, except by the military who continued to use it in the .450/577 Martini-Henry rifle in 1871. It originally had a coiled brass foil case and was also chambered in .577 Snider for sporting use.

FOOTNOTE

Snider-Enfield rifles in good condition are rare and I've only ever seen the one displayed with this article, an early model made by the US Springfield Armory in 1862 which may have been used in the American Civil War. It belonged to the late Ray Fraser, a collector of military arms, and sadly when he passed away some years ago the collection was lost. Original rifles now sell for anything from \$800 to more than \$3000 on domestic and international markets. ●

Hard-duck story

NICHOLAS MCCONNELL LAUNCHED HIS WING-SHOOTING CAREER THE HARD WAY

 verhead the birds are talking even before the 5.30 alarm sounds. I'm cold, tired, lying in a drenched swag 300km from home on a trip I've invested several thousand dollars in. And for what, a few ducks at \$40 a kilo? Everything's soaked and anything I try to cook turns to soup, thanks to a combination of the unrelenting wind and incessant rain.

But the money's spent so I sit and wait, looking out over the lake as a heron teases me, oblivious to the conditions which he actually seems to take solace in. As I watch him I'm just praying for something to change, anything, a break in the clouds even.

Eventually I start to feel the heat of the sun on my shoulder and as it radiates I realise I'm staring at the ground. As I raise my head to look over the lake again there are no ducks, yet there is something. Hope maybe? Well that's the very reason I'm 300km from home, hoping to return with a bag limit of ducks for the freezer and, while my first foray into duck hunting may not be going to plan, at least I'm happy.

Seems I may have chosen an unfortunate time to launch my duck-hunting career. The first sign things might not go to plan lay in the fact my home state of South Australia was attempting to switch their Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT) from paper-based to online. For the unaware, to hunt ducks you have to pass a test which proves you can accurately identify both ducks and birds/waterfowl you're likely to encounter.

I ended up completing a Victorian WIT and received the corresponding duck hunting permit. I still planned to go hunting in SA but was mistaken about my Victorian permit being valid there. The added cost of acquiring another permit and the

fact a lot of the already limited number of public duck-hunting lands were either closed, restricted or only accessible via watercraft, meant my trip was now going to be to Victoria. Before the trip I had to and/or wanted to buy several items including a swag, waders, decoys, steel shot and a new 4WD dual-cab ute, not all essential but they ended up making for an interesting outcome.

The trip started in Mid-April as I packed the car, picked up my partner and after a couple of false starts found ourselves heading for Peronne to check out a spot I'd read about. In my wisdom I also decided leaving the bedding in the swag would be a smart idea. It wasn't. On the way to Peronne we passed the impressive Lake Bringalbert and, pulling in to take a look, discovered camping there was an option. Furthermore, it was a hunting-permitted zone.

With camp decided we headed to a little hamlet called Minimay, having noticed a sign for their general store. We'd attempted to buy eggs leaving SA only to find there were none in the roadside fridge but luckily the Minimay store came up trumps.

While there I attempted to ring VICPOL to confirm I was allowed to shoot at Lake Bringalbert and wouldn't cause alarm to other campers. I never really got an answer but did learn the VICPOL number, which is the same as SAPOL's, will direct you to the latter if you're in Minimay. Back at Lake Albert we alerted a few of the close campers to the fact we'd be shooting in the morning but they showed little concern. Time for bed.

I woke early, set up my makeshift duck blind consisting of two tripods and some camo material and waited for sunrise. About four hours in and with nothing other than cockatoos and avocets coming near, I finally managed to take a chestnut



FINALLY: RETRIEVING THE
CHESTNUT TEAL AT BRINGALBERT.



WAITING GAME: BEHIND THE DUCK BLIND AT LAKE ALBERT; DUCK WALK: NICHOLAS PLACES DECOYS TO NO AVAIL.



teal. Sadly that was it for the day so I called it quits mid-afternoon and took the poultry shears to the duck. Later that afternoon the rain and wind really ramped up, meaning we were unable to cook any dinner and went to bed early yet again.

The next morning we woke to drenched swags and bedding yet undeterred, still went in search of ducks. This was the start of a new routine of waking up, sitting by the lake all day and not seeing any ducks, though luckily that afternoon the people who'd been camping by a small shelter left, so we could set the swags under there and start drying stuff out. We tried cooking on a little stove which only operated on one burner yet chewed through two canisters of gas. Our stuff eventually dried but for some reason I could barely coax any power from the solar panels, which meant running the car most of the afternoon.

The following day was mixed with a few sightings of mountain ducks but I wasn't comfortable with the distance, though at least we enjoyed some variety with grebes and coots appearing but we needed a break. We booked a spot at Edenhope Lakeside Tourist Park to do some washing and take the strain off the battery running the fridge and freezer.

The final day of hunting was spent at Toolondo Reservoir where I enjoyed myself despite managing to trip and fall in the water, lose my duck call and be harassed by mass numbers of blue bills and grebes. Even though there wasn't much I could aim for, I'd actually enjoy going back there.

And just when you think things couldn't get any worse . . . they did. The lack of solar power and almost incessant rain really was a pain during those first few days but that wasn't the end of it. We'd left Victoria behind and were 15 minutes from the Crown Inn Hotel in Kingston, south-east SA, when a fallow deer appeared from nowhere and smacked into my essentially brand new ute.

Now from the countless kangaroos I've encountered on the road I've never actually had a problem, yet the first deer I see I hurtle into him while my new bull-bar is back at the workshop waiting to be installed! So I may not have a one-piece front bumper any more but, on the bright side, it's about to be replaced with a bull-bar anyway. So I taped it up, drove straight to the pub then spent the night at my grandmother's house in Kingston.

So what do I have to show for it all at the end of the day? One chestnut teal, a smashed front end and, more importantly, a great time in spite of all the annoyances and setbacks, as that's all they were in the scheme of things. Overall it was a good trip and I look forward to continuing my duck hunting sojourn next season, though preferably without the impromptu deer cull. ●



CLOSE ENCOUNTER: THE FALLOW DEER WHICH WRECKED THE NEW BUMPER.



QUEENSLAND: PLEASE EXPLAIN

Can someone explain how this situation of SSAA Queensland going it alone has transpired? When was the idea floated, when were members consulted and what is the Australian Shooters' Alliance? Is it a political lobby group or political party?

What's the purpose of having a separate titled entity? How can a state-based organisation wield greater influence than a national body and why are we doubling up in every way on what already exists and seemingly functions well?

As a staunch Queenslander, if you cut me I'll bleed maroon but this smacks of yet another 'Joh for PM' movement. I joined the SSAA in the 1980s because it was a national organisation. I enjoy reading the national magazine and no, I don't want to have to search the internet to get my national news and coming events.

In this new magazine *The Report*, someone obviously has a 'thing' for knives which is nice to see, however the recent Sam Talbot article on the Lithgow Arms Factory was pure flim-flam. Really, a page and a half to describe how the guns are made! Was the information lifted from a promotional brochure supplied with copy for the full-page ad? And what about addressing the elephant in the room - when will Thales authorise the re-opening of the famed museum?

Peter L. Dutkowski, Qld.

- Thanks for your letter. We can't explain why Queensland have made the decision they have or give you any insight into the processes they've gone through internally, though what we can say is we're disappointed with their decisions. We feel a truly national organisation is stronger and more effective with everyone pulling in the same direction. We also believe it's more beneficial for every member to receive the national magazine.
- This letter is one of many on the subject we've received at the National Office, though space restrictions prevent us from printing them. Unfortunately, only members of the Queensland executive are qualified to give a full and valid explanation.

TRIPLE WHAMMY EDITION

Just when I was in danger of becoming a bit bored with *Shooter* you drop an edition like this (August, 2025). My first love, 'lever' rifles, followed by a Stevens single-shot then tears on reading Chris Redlich's story on our guys in the Western Pacific campaign.

My dad served in Morotai with the AIF Engineers, driving those damn bulldozers with no protection from Japanese snipers, clearing crashed planes off the strip into the jungle after the medics had done their work so the next one could limp in.

Old photos in the family collection show the landing craft unloading and bulldozed bombers piled up in the jungle to clear the strip. I'm 'guilty' of enjoying the freedom of being able to shoot, both on the range and in the bush in this country.

John R. Hallett, NSW

THAT'S THE RIGHT DECISION

I found your July edition devoted to 'lefties' fascinating and read it from cover to cover. I was born right-handed and approached everything with that attitude, the funny thing being shooting was the exception for some reason. Weird eh? In years past I found shopping for dedicated left-handed gear a real nightmare so, in my mid-thirties, decided to make life easier by training myself to shoot from the other side of the stock.

In 2023 I hunted for plains game in Namibia. I had four animals on my bag list and all but one was taken shooting right-handed. The only possible option for a shot at an oryx was if I took it left-handed, which I did and it was the only animal I took cleanly on that safari without the need for a second shot. Coincidence? Maybe it's something to do with a leopard never changing its spots, though I've been confidently shooting right-handed now for 35 years.

Name and address supplied

HATS OFF TO QANTAS

With all the negative hype around regarding firearm owners, I'd like to share an encouraging experience I had when I travelled with a firearm and ammo. For many years I've been travelling to Adelaide from Cape York in Queensland to take in Anzac Day (my grandfather came from Adelaide and was KIA in World War Two fighting the Vichy French in Syria). Then I go to the footy.

After I've paid my respects I catch up with a couple of mates and we head to the Flinders Ranges for a week of goat shooting. I take my own rifle, a Sako 85 Hunter S/S in 7mm Rem Mag, and also reload my own ammo to suit my pride and joy. I travel with Qantas as they're the only airline which flies out of my home town.

On my most recent return trip on checking into Adelaide airport to fly home, the lady at the counter had a trainee with her and, when I presented my rifle and remaining ammo, she kindly asked if she could use my check-in as an education session for her trainee. Naturally I replied 'yes' and almost immediately another assistant with a trainee asked if they could be part of the process too, as they don't see this very often.

They took the novices through the process, I presented my DG clearance and shooter's licence when asked and the whole process went smoothly. At no stage did I feel frowned upon because I was a hunter, in fact they even asked about my trip and what I was shooting. One of the trainees said she was keen to learn to shoot a rifle, so I suggested she contact the local SSAA branch who'd be glad to help.

I was soon heading home after a most enjoyable 10 days. It was pleasing to see the Qantas staff at Adelaide Airport training their young up-and-coming on how to check-in people traveling with firearms, and gave me an opportunity to show we're not what some organisations portray us to be.

Quinton Small, via email

SEND LETTERS TO:
edit@ssaa.org.au

National

Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

July 1-December 31, 2025

Events: Military 50m offhand Class 1; Traditional 50m offhand Class 2; Flintlock 50m offhand; 100m Benchrest Class 1 & 2; 100m Benchrest Class 3; 25m Precision Revolver Class 1 & 3; 25m Precision Pistol Class 2; 25m Snap Pistol Class 1 & 2; Percussion Shotgun (25 clays); 100m Benchrest Black Powder Cartridge Rifle (ASSRA Target). All scores to Muzzleloading chairman by December 31. Prizes: Medals for first three in each event. Contact: Steve Nicholas 0419 805 299. Full details on National website.

SSAA IHMS National Championships

September 26 – October 3, 2025

Eagle Park Shooting Complex, Vic
Program: Sep 26: Smallbore and Field Pistol practice. 27-29: Small Bore and Field Pistol competition for Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlimited Any Sight, Unlimited Standing. 30: Big Bore practice. October 1-3: Big Bore competition for Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlimited Half Scale, Unlimited Any Sight, Unlimited Any Sight Half Scale, Unlimited Standing. Facilities: Camping with showers and toilets. Daily use of clubhouse. Canteen available Friday - Monday. Contact: Peter Mannu: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

Single Action National Championships and Chisholm Trail

September 28-October 5, 2025

Millmerran, Qld

Program: September 28: Long Range pre-shoot; 29: Long Range; 30: Long Range, 1911 Match, Plainsman Match; October 1: Pat Garrett Match, Warmup Stages; 2-4: Main Match; 5: Closing ceremony. See National website for full event itinerary. Facilities: Hot breakfast to buy from Monday, sandwiches and evening meals for sale, on-site cabins for hire. Contact: chisholmtrail@ssaaqld.org.au

BPCR Silhouette National Championships

October 3-6, 2025

Monarto Silhouette Range, SA

Program: Oct 3: Set-up and practice. 4: 40-shot BPCR iron sights. 5: 40-shot BPCR any sights. 6: 40-shot BPCR smallbore iron sights. Facilities: Camping available on range, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: John Visnyai johnviz@hotmail.com or 0421 117 391.

Lever Action National Championships

October 4-6, 2025

SSAA Northern Rivers, Casino, NSW

Program: See National website for full event itinerary. Facilities: Saturday night dinner included in fee for competitors, self-help tea and coffee, barbecue lunch at cost. Camping on range with toilets and showers, caravan park 500m from range and motel 1km away. Contact: Don Chesworth drchesworth@iinet.net.au or Jim Ellis leveraction@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

Gallery Rifle National Championships

February 27-March 2, 2026

Riddell Range Complex, Runnymede, Tas.

Program: Friday 27: 9am Registration and practice, 12.30pm Rimfire supplementary events. Feb 28-March 2: 50m Precision, 1500 Match, Timed and Precision 1, Multi-Target (Gallery Rifle C/F, Classic Rifle C/F and Open C/F will be contested over these days). Facilities: Limited canteen, limited camping at 770 Woodsdale Road. Contact: Andrew Judd 0418 374 008.

International

Law Enforcement Activities 10th Anniversary International Tournament

October 11-12, 2025

SSAA Majura, Canberra, ACT

Program: PPC 48, PPC 72, APS 90, APS 150. Facilities: The ranges in use for this event have toilets, barbecue and tea/coffee facilities, accommodation nearby. Contact: See National website for full details.

Law Enforcement Activities Discipline PPC International/National Championships

October 11-12, 2025

Majura, ACT

Program: The event will comprise of LEAD PPC Matches (48 for Duty, 72 for Production and Open) and the APS 90 Match. If enough interest is expressed the PPC 150 match may also be run. Range open from 8am with briefing at 8.45 and match start 9am. Nominations accepted on day of competition but prior notification appreciated. Facilities: Clubhouse with coffee and drinks for modest fee, barbecue sausage lunch provided, toilets, camping at main range complex. Full details on National website. Contact Lawrie Whiley 0418 609 112.

NSW

NSW Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

October 25-26, 2025

SSAA Snowy River, Coolamatong Range, Berridale, NSW

Program: Practice 7-8.45am each day plus 30 minutes prior to event change. Saturday: 40-shot Centrefire, 40-shot Centrefire Hunting, 40-shot Air Rifle. Sunday: 40-shot Rimfire Silhouette, 40-shot Rimfire Hunting Rifle. Medals in each grade. Facilities: Camping in defined area on range with toilets and tank water, showers at Coolamatong Golf Club, canteen both days. Contact: Tim Barry 0419 405 696 or tim-barry@bigpond.com.

NSW Muzzleloading State Championships

November 7-9, 2025

Windamere Regional Shooting Complex, NSW

Program: 9am start each day, see National website for full event rundown. Prizes: Medals for first three in each category. Facilities: Basic camping with toilets and hot showers, barbecue lunch available Friday, Saturday and Sunday, dinner available Saturday night after AGM. Contact: Shayne Barnsley 0418 302 062 darth_royce@hotmail.com; or Alison Hughes 0407 853 393 alisonleehughes123@gmail.com

WA

SSAA (WA) Big Game Rifle State Championships

October 19, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Gates open 8am, first detail 9.30. All eight core matches for Big Game Rifle will be shot, nominations taken on the day, \$20 for all eight or \$5 per event. Medals for first three, shield for top shooter Open. Note there are no facilities at PBGR, temporary shade only. Contact Steve Pearson steve@variflow.com.au or 0417 178 262.

SSAA WA Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

October 25-26, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: October 25: Centrefire Silhouette (40 shot), Centrefire Hunter (40 shot). October 26: Rimfire Silhouette (40 shot), Rimfire Hunter (40 shot). Facilities: Some camping and hot showers available. Contact: Paul Dunn 0407 428 175 / pauledd1939@gmail.com

SSAA WA Sporting Clays State Championships

November 9, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Shotgun. 100 targets = 4 rounds of 25. Facilities: Hot food, cool drinks and snacks available for purchase. Tea and coffee free. Contact Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 / neilcobb@bigpond.com

Vic

Victorian Muzzleloading State Championships

November 15-16, 2025

SSAA Eagle Park, Vic
Program: Class 1 and 2 Muzzle Loading Rifles, Breech Loading Rifle 200m, Handgun Precision, Muzzle Loading Shotgun. Facilities: Limited onsite camping. See National website for full program of events. Contact: Craig Kinder.



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SSAA MEMBER ALERT

If you are using membership of the SSAA as your genuine reason for your firearms licence, you must ensure you renew your SSAA membership in time. 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.

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**AUSTRALIAN
Shooter***Little wonder*SCALED-DOWN W&S IMPERIAL
IMPRESSED PAUL MILLER

In last month's edition we reviewed the Kilworth 12-gauge side-by-side boxlock shotgun by Webley & Scott and at the same time were provided with a 20-gauge version known as the Imperial. This was particularly interesting as the latter is a more upmarket version in terms of it having a side-plated action and higher grade wood, while the fact it's chambered in 20-gauge

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LEANING AND LEARNING AT THE SAME TIME

WORDS:
MARK VAN DEN
BOOGAART



Enjoying a coffee at my local, I watch the black puffer jacket parade, a phenomenon of Brisbane's western suburbs. As the day-time temperature drops ever closer to 20 rather than 30C, the jackets appear for their annual three weeks of service (for anyone interested I'm in a blue North Face).

Oddly I'm scrolling through ultra-lightweight hunting clothing, real hot-weather gear. The reason is planning has begun for our trip north to hunt buffalo, big toothy boars and maybe catch a barra or two. Even this far out there's lots to do as the logistics of moving six blokes, all their gear and enough refrigeration to bring back buffalo meat and trophies takes some doing.

Sure we could fly to Darwin, be met by one of the top-notch guiding services and have a great time. Trouble is collectively we thrive on challenge, so the trouble and overcoming that trouble is all part of the bigger picture, a case in point being our previous trip to the Territory. The combination of pre-trip preparation, lots of driving and overcoming the odd hiccup produced eight buffalo, 10 pigs, a barra, about half a year's worth of buffalo burgers and, for me, a fantastic trophy for the wall.

I've heard it described as 'comfortable with being uncomfortable'. If you choose to hunt, you best look forward to the difficulty coming your way, if not you're going to be uncomfortably uncomfortable. You can experience it on most hunting



SOME YOU WIN (THIS ONE) AND SOME YOU LOSE.

adventures, even a short weekend away and recently we (that's me, Adam and Graeme) decided to visit a new forest. After e-scouting the location we made the drive south and, arriving late in the day, spent a little while finding a suitable campsite then went to work setting everything up.

Next morning at dawn we walked out of camp and in front of us lay a forest we knew little about, other than the challenges of its layout and access points. We also had our assumptions of what game it may hold, and certainly knew about the truly horrible northerly wind which was substantially cutting down the available hunting land.

Things being as they were we decided to lean into them and first thing was that wind. We toughed it out and walked the long way round to the far southern boundary. Once there we turned into the wind, began to climb and apart from having to navigate a particularly thick scrub line, were moving well and seeing plenty of sign.

I was a little ahead of Graeme and Adam when they spotted three pigs. Not little pigs mind you, a big black boar and two similar-sized brindles. Going for it, Graeme aimed up for his first hunting shot on his first game animal with his newly-minted rifle. The sound of the shot filled the

air and, for Graeme, it was unfortunately a miss.

Hard luck, though from his attitude you'd have assumed he dropped all three. With a well-earned sense of accomplishment he'd put himself in a difficult situation and made the most of it. In other words he was hunting. After a few laughs while reliving the event, we continued and eventually reached a topmost ridgeline and, continuing to battle the northerly, began a long slow loop back to our starting point.

Along the way we bumped a mob of five little pigs, one of those little 140-grain fellas met a 150-grain projectile and, as Porky once said, that's all folks. We hit out again in the afternoon and the following day, discovering more sign which was probably goat and maybe deer. We also encountered another pig but the macropods gave us away. That pig would dart in and out of view but was only ever a glimpsed and there was no shot.

Over those two days we covered about 37kms on foot, saw and had a chance on game both days and learned a lot about a location none of us had hunted before. As it has been throughout my hunting life, effort was rewarded with experience and all the little difficulties soon forgotten as nothing much at all. ●

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