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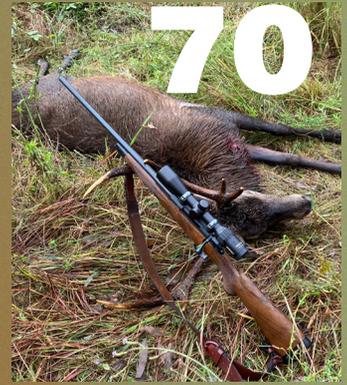
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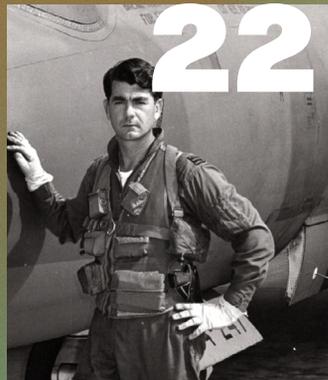
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AUSTRALIAN Shooter

OUR POLICY

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

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A BUSY YEAR OF PROGRESS

WORDS:
TOM KENYON
SSAA CEO



We have another great edition of *Australian Shooter* for you this month.

November already and it's always a little surprising how quickly the year flies by, though the good news is the festive season is almost upon us. We have another AS Team Christmas Wishlist in this issue and December. There are some great gift ideas and thanks to the generosity of our valued advertisers, we'll also be giving away some of the items on the list to SSAA members,

and remember, there's no need to enter, as being a member already puts you in the draw.

By now, many of you will have received an email from SSAA National with a personalised link to your digital membership card. This can go in your smartphone wallet. There are instructions included in the email on how to do that but if you'd still prefer a plastic card, call our membership office and we'll send one out.

If you take a look at our YouTube channel (SSAA TV) you'll see we've been releasing a steady stream of videos from firearm reviews, 'how-to' tutorials as well as a monthly podcast. The channel's growing but we'd really appreciate if you could help it along by liking a few videos and subscribing. This will allow the channel to grow and help the SSAA spread its message to more members and the general public alike.

In late September, SSAA (WA) President Paul Fitzgerald appeared

in the West Australian parliament at the committee investigating the Firearms Act in that state. He's hopeful there'll be changes to the regulations and possibly even to the Act itself. This is slow progress but progress nonetheless and only came about through the efforts of WA firearms groups led by SSAA and firearms owners. Consistent pushing over a sustained length of time can yield results. There's a long way to go but rest assured Paul and the WA team are working hard to walk back the worst elements of a rushed and poorly-considered piece of legislation.

Finally it's congratulations and a warm welcome to Melissa from Victoria who, along with Steve who referred her, have both won five years' membership of the Association through our Sign Up a Mate competition. Enjoy your SSAA flagship magazine and thanks for being a member.



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UK DEER MANAGEMENT A COMMONSENSE APPROACH

WORDS:
MATTHEW GODSON



As discussed last month, the report *To Explore, Review and Document Wild Game Harvesting in Europe* by Neal Finch examines wildlife management practices across several countries, offering valuable insights for Australia. European hunters, whether paid professionals or volunteers, are regarded equally in their capacity to manage wildlife populations while in contrast, our pest management industry largely overlooks the potential contributions of non-professional hunters.

This month we focus on wild deer management in the UK and highlight how populations there are controlled, used and integrated into both conservation and game meat industries. Britain is home to six species of wild deer: red and roe (native), fallow, sika, muntjac and Chinese water deer (introduced), all six now widespread and growing in number. There are no natural predators and minimal environmental constraints on their population growth and it's widely accepted the UK has more deer now than at any time in recent centuries, estimates suggesting there are around two million.

Despite the lack of formal census data, there's agreement among stakeholders that wild deer cause a range of problems. These include agricultural and forestry damage, habitat degradation, an estimated 50,000 vehicle collisions a year and public safety risks during rutting season. They also pose welfare challenges when overabundant

(including starvation) and may hybridise with native species (eg sika and red deer).

UK deer aren't privately owned and are managed under national legislation. Laws vary slightly between countries but are generally covered under the Deer Act 1991 (England and Wales), Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and Wildlife Order 1985 (Northern Ireland). These laws regulate seasons, calibres to be used and culling methods. Closed seasons are designed to protect breeding animals and ensure juveniles are weaned before culling resumes, the exception being muntjac which breed year-round and have no closed season.

In Scotland, deer overabundance has become a significant barrier to conservation goals such as rewilding and carbon sequestration via tree planting. In 2023 the Scottish Parliament removed the closed season for male deer, lowered minimum calibre restrictions and approved night-vision and thermal optics for culling. Permits for night-shooting are easier to obtain in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, with dogs trained to find wounded deer recommended under official night-shooting guidelines.

Deer management on public and large private estates (e.g. Forestry Commission, National Trust, Defence estates) is often conducted by paid professionals, yet across the broader landscape most are culled by private individuals. Around 500,000 deer are estimated to be culled annually across all tenures, though only about 60,000 of these come from public land. It's believed 750,000 animals must be culled each year just to stabilise current populations.

Firearm ownership is strictly regulated with county police forces administering the Firearms Act 1968. Prospective deer hunters must demonstrate a genuine reason to own a rifle and training, while not mandatory, is highly recommended and often required by landowners. The Deer Stalking Certificate (DSC) system provides structured education in deer biology, humane shoot-

ing and meat hygiene. Since 1998 more than 35,000 individuals have passed the DSC1, with another 3500 completing the more advanced DSC2. The Game Meat Handling Certificate is required to sell venison into the public food chain.

The British Deer Society with around 5500 members promotes deer welfare and supports the training of hunters. It works cooperatively with groups like the RSPCA and offers a Humane Animal Dispatch course for trained volunteers who assist police with deer euthanasia. The British Association of Shooting and Conservation has more than 150,000 members which represents hunters and trains most DSC candidates, its membership including public liability insurance, a major incentive for hunters to join.

The now-defunct Deer Initiative was a collaborative forum bringing together conservationists and land managers, with welfare organisations including the RSPCA (UK) playing an active role in deer policy. Though it opposes hunting for sport, the RSPCA supports lethal control of deer where necessary and advocates full utilisation of carcasses, including participation in the commercial venison industry. This UK model highlights how recreational hunters, industry bodies and welfare organisations can work together to ensure sustainable management and ethical utilisation of overabundant wildlife. Scan the QR code for more on Neal Finch's report.

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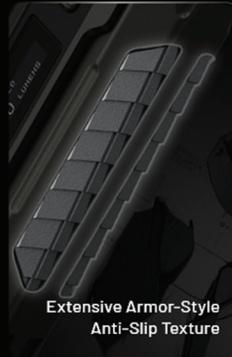
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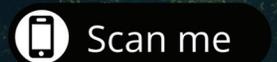
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RIGHT PROJECTILE CHOICE VITAL FOR SUCCESS

WORDS:
BARRY WILMOT



The primary function of any cartridge is to send the bullet or projectile accurately to the target in question and it's the projectile which actually puts a hole in the 10 ring or drops that trophy deer. The type and weight of projectile we use depends on many factors. Some of these are the calibre of firearm we're using, type of game being hunted (small, medium or large), the range we're shooting at (near, medium or long) or perhaps we're shooting at targets, in which case accuracy is the main concern.

There's a host of projectile manufacturers, some who've been in business for years, others who've come into existence recently by finding a niche market, with the projectiles they produce representing the best-proven designs available (shooters will sort out and abandon those which don't perform to expectation). Brand names like Silvertip and Core-Lokt have been made by Winchester and Remington for years and are still very popular, while others like Barnes and Woodleigh have a good following for target shooting and hunting.

First up we'll talk about hunting small to medium-sized game like rabbits and foxes. Usually a small calibre rifle such as a .22 Hornet, .223 Remington or similar would be suitable, using light 40, 45 or 50-grain projectiles. Because these smaller animals are thin-skinned the need for penetration isn't an issue, so a projectile with a light copper jacket and exposed lead or plastic tip



THICKER-SKINNED GAME LIKE FERAL PIGS REQUIRE A MORE ROBUST PROJECTILE.

that'll expand rapidly like the Nosler Ballistic Tip will do the job.

If we're hunting larger game like kangaroos or goats the same cartridges could be used, though it would be preferable to step up to heavier 55 or 60-grain projectiles. I tend to increase the calibre of rifle I use rather than projectile weight, though I know a lot of kangaroos and goats are taken effectively with lighter-weight projectiles.

If many of your shots are taken at what I call long-range (300 meters or more), I'd opt for a boat-tail projectile. These have a higher ballistic coefficient than similar projectiles of the same weight and calibre and, because they have lower air drag, retain velocity better. This means they've more energy at the same range and drop less. That's a distinct advantage at longer distances where we need knock-down energy to be at a maximum and where estimating range is more difficult, so holdover is kept to a minimum.

Moving to medium and larger-sized game like deer and feral pigs, because we want the projectile to penetrate these animals and not

blow up on the surface, a heavier and more robustly-made projectile is needed. The cartridges used should also be heavier, so the .243 Winchester, .270 Winchester, .308 Winchester and similar using 80 to 150-grain projectiles are ideal. Also popular for this type of game are even heavier calibres like the .30-30 Winchester, .44 Magnum and .45-70, using round-nosed or flat-nosed projectiles in weights varying from 150 right up to 400-grains. These heavy projectiles, although moving at only medium velocities, if placed right will put down any of these animals.

Using the right cartridge to quickly and humanely dispatch hunted animals is a skill in itself. Choosing the right combination of cartridge, calibre and projectile weight and type to cleanly drop your prey brings a sense of satisfaction at the end of a hunt.

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TRAINING MUST HAVE PURPOSE

WORDS:
LAETISHA SCANLAN



Q As an experienced clay target shooter, can you offer any advice or tips on training drills in practice?

John W, Vic.

A Good question John. I often reflect on the way different shooters train at the range and have come to believe the traditional approach isn't always the most effective. Too often, competition shooters believe going out and firing round after round, double barrel after double barrel is key to success. At first glance it makes sense as surely the more you shoot, the better you become? Yet in reality this method doesn't always translate to improved competition performance.

Now don't get me wrong as in the early stages of learning, repetition is incredibly valuable. Shooting round after round is how we develop correct form, refine technique and establish consistency which is the foundation every clay target shooter needs. Yet once those fundamentals are in place, endlessly repeating the same routine can become counter-productive. I know this firsthand as I was guilty of training without any real purpose, hoping sheer volume would somehow make me a stronger competition shooter. It didn't.

The truth is that training and competition are completely different beasts. In the former there's no external pressure and no real consequences on missing a target. In competition, however, every shot counts. That difference is enormous and it's incredibly difficult to replicate competition pressure in a



FOCUS: TRAIN WITH INTENT AND NOT JUST REPETITION.

practice session at your local club, which is why simply shooting more doesn't always prepare you for the realities of competitive conditions.

So how do you bridge that gap? My advice is simple: Bring structure and intention to your practice and, before heading out, set yourself specific drills or tasks. Have a clear plan and measurable goals for each session as this doesn't just keep training fresh, it forces you to engage your mind as much as your technique.

One effective approach is what I call 'game play', essentially setting yourself challenges which simulate the pressures of competition. Take Olympic Trap for example. A great drill my coach taught me is the 'sevens' game. The rules are straightforward where you shoot seven targets in a row, single barrel without missing and, if you do miss, it's back to the beginning until you complete the sequence. Sounds easy enough but in practice it can be incredibly difficult.

Why? Because the pressure isn't from an opponent, it's from yourself. The closer you come to achieving the goal, the more your mind starts to wander: "I just need one more

so don't mess it up." That creeping pressure is the perfect training tool as it mimics the mental challenge of competition. Completing the drill requires discipline, focus and the ability to trust your routine under stress and distraction.

And that's the beauty of game play as it pushes you beyond mechanical shooting into mental resilience and makes practice engaging. Instead of falling into autopilot, you're working towards mini-goals within your broader training objectives. Over time these structured challenges build both skill and confidence which translate directly into competition.

So ultimately the lesson is this: Purposeful training is always better than mindless repetition. By thinking outside the box and incorporating interactive drills, you give yourself a reason to stay sharp and motivated. Every training session should have intent. Without purpose development stalls yet with it, progress becomes inevitable.

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Q I was at the range recently and all was going well firing handloaded 130gr ammo in my Sako in .270 Winchester. I decided to try some 150gr Winchester factory ammo and, after about three rounds, the next shot produced a louder, more unusual sound and smoke trailed out of the bolt area for a bit. The case didn't extract so, attracting the attention of the Range Officer, we found the bolt extractor had disengaged also.

We managed to put things back on track again and after a good look over, the gun is now shooting as it should, though this time using only my handloads. I've included a photo of the case in question showing some darker flash marks. These factory loads are at least 10 years old and, while I've used them on random occasions as I have about 100 rounds of the 150gr ammunition left, I'm now wondering if I should discard them.

Tom Kallista, Qld.

A Mishaps involving commercially-loaded factory ammunition are extremely rare though not unheard of. Over the years I've experienced only a couple of occasions where defective rounds have been discovered in a packet before being loaded and fired, hence no damage to firer or firearm.

Generally, incidents such as you experienced arise from a fault with a firearm or handloaded ammunition, though not so in your case. It's hard to know where the problem lies exactly, but the stuck case does indicate a higher than normal pressure. This is most likely at the base or web of the case, which could've been caused by failure of the brass in that part of the case or an issue with the primer, primer pocket or flash hole. An over-charge is another possibility but unlikely.

I think you should make the manufacturer aware of this incident and, while the ammunition was made in the US, a letter to Winchester Australia can be forward to the factory. Along with the photo and description of the event, include the batch number from inside the packet. It may seem like a waste of time but you never know, there may've been similar incidents reported. Ten years is not too long to keep ammunition, provided it has been stored in cool, dry conditions. Having said that, you might want to think about not using the remaining 100 rounds.

Rod Pascoe

Q My grandfather, Bob Stowe, has been trying to find out more about an old rifle he obtained at a gun show recently. He couldn't find much on it and for him that's a rare thing. The dealer from whom he bought the rifle said he thought it had been made for use at the Hahndorf Rifle Club in South Australia. The stock is stamped 'G.S. Medlycott, Adelaide' but that's all.

It is an eight-shot .30 calibre revolving chamber percussion rifle with a 2³/₄" chamber and no proof markings or serial number.

It has a double-action trigger which operates an internal bolt and can't be cocked but simply fired by pulling the trigger. It shows little sign of use. Any help appreciated.

Kade McDonald, via email

A Thanks for your question about this probably unique old rifle. So far I've been able to establish that George Steavens Medlycott had premises in Freeman St (now Gawler Place) Adelaide in the late 19th century, where he operated a saddle-making business. Born on December 30, 1834 at Southwark in Surrey, England, he died on April 9, 1914 and is buried in West Terrace Cemetery. During his stay in Adelaide he placed advertisements in local papers for various items including sewing machines, and also was involved in petitioning the government for exemptions on tariffs on saddle trees and various tools around 1902.

I've looked at many different pictures of revolving chamber rifles and haven't seen a single one resembling yours. Flayderman's *Guide to Antique American Firearms* has an entire chapter dedicated to these rifles but all have exposed hammers. Alain Daubresse, renowned Belgian expert, in reply to my email said he'd never seen such a rifle. Local expert black powder gunsmith and historian Vlad Potezny was similarly baffled but kindly gave me some clues about researching early Adelaide businesses. Hahndorf Rifle Club hasn't yet replied to my request for information.

While I can't say anything definite, my strong suspicion is George, a competent tradesman himself, built (or contracted the building of) this rifle to his own design, in Adelaide at a time when percussion rifles were very popular. This makes it a unique prototype for a design which would've been rapidly rendered obsolete by the rise of cartridge rifles. Adelaide in the 19th century was home to many rifle clubs and capable gunsmiths. If any readers can shed further light on this remarkable old rifle please let us know.

Geoff Smith



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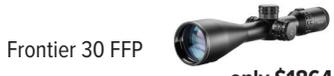
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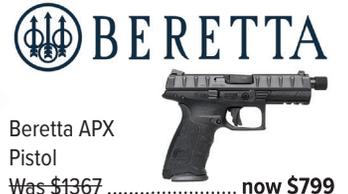
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WE LIVE AND LEARN!



As survival and firearms experience goes, Australian Shooter columnist Scott Heiman can boast more than his fair share. With 32 years military service followed by a spell as an AFP firearms instructor, his qualifications to speak on bush survival would be close to unrivalled in this country. We fired a few questions at Scott, a cancer survivor, who's answers are as entertaining as they are enlightening.



SCOTT AS A TODDLER WITH HIS DAD'S .22 RIFLE.

How did you become a shooter?

I was born into it. My dad was a hunter and on the NSW Government call-list for eradication of diseased animals back in the 1970s and '80s. My grandfather was also a hunter who served on the Rural Protection Board. They were both strong competitors with the double barrel 12-gauge shotgun at the traps, taking out back-to-back regional titles in the 1950s and '70s.

How would you describe your niche field?

Survival. I served in the Royal Australian Infantry for 32 years, spent a few more years as the lead firearms instructor for the Australian Federal Police's International Deployment Group and have completed three different military survival courses. It's these sorts of experiences which generated the 'what if' mindset I live by. That is, I always consider what could go wrong and how best to prepare for it. My motto is 'plan for the worst and hope for the best' and as the saying goes: 'Prior preparation prevents piss-poor performance'.

What challenges do you face as a survival instructor?

There are a few, for example I'm often faced with a 'she'll be right' mentality from people I meet and many overestimate their abilities. There can also be a tendency, in the absence of skills and knowledge, to rely on habits which can often be bad ones that place people at risk. Take swimming for example. We're warned to 'fence the pool, shut the gate, teach your kids to swim it's great'. Yet statistically it's not kids who face the biggest danger in the water, its middle to late-aged males who get themselves into trouble in rivers and dams.



How did you get into ‘survival’?

I was 13 and the family had gone hunting over school holidays and we’d taken my motorbike. I headed off by myself for a bowhunt and ended up stranded in a paddock when it broke down. After a half-day walk back to camp I’d learned a hard lesson, though luckily I was wearing my Army Cadet webbing with a couple of water bottles and some muesli bars. This experience and reflecting on what could’ve happened was the catalyst for the ‘what if?’ mindset that’s stayed with me and served me well in the Army and other careers.

When did you turn your hobby into a profession?

Soon after our daughter Jamie was born, my government workplace changed. From a job where I’d been the subject matter expert environmental scientist and program manager, I was suddenly a desk-jockey paying contractors to do the work I used to do (better). Leaving the job was a no-brainer and given the changes parenthood brought, it made sense for me to become ‘Daddy Daycare.’ This led to establishing Heiman Habitat, a veteran and family-owned small business with a focus on hunting and survival.

What’s your strategy to grow and engage followers?

I was approached to write for the Australian Bowhunters Association 20 years ago. The editor of their magazine was concerned many of the contributions followed the same pattern: ‘I got up, went out, shot my target species and went home’. These articles tended to be more about the writers, whereas the editor wanted content which covered

the discipline of hunting more broadly, to help inform current and next-generation bowhunters.

With a background as an Army instructor my preference has always been to educate, not lecture, somewhat akin to Aesop’s Fables, only I write about ethical hunting and survival. This approach seems to work for readers and has helped us grow from writing for one magazine, to a business that freelances for many publishers and has an active social media following. After Peter Bindon’s passing it was a pleasure to be appointed *Australian Shooter’s* Bushcraft and Survival columnist in 2022. As long as Heiman Habitat encourages readers to question what they thought they knew and consider other perspectives, I reckon they’ll stay engaged.

How much time goes into content creation?

Freelance writing isn’t the only thing Heiman Habitat does, though I dedicate a couple of days a week to writing stories and other magazine content. As a small business owner I’m always ‘on the job’ and, given my profession is also my hobby, our family’s activities are shaped around an outdoors and hunting lifestyle. We’re forever recording activities in pictures and words. While I can write a freelance article in a day, I need supporting imagery otherwise I’ve nothing. And it’s not just me involved. It’s been such a pleasure to see my wife Kath and Jamie take up archery and rifle shooting over the years. They now share their own experiences through writing.

What formula works best for you?

Before I put pen to paper I need inspiration and this generally isn’t difficult. I’m known to ‘think

SCOTT AGE 13 IN HIS ARMY CADET UNIFORM; ‘PRIVATE’ SCOTT HEIMAN (FIFTH FROM LEFT) AT AN ARMY RECRUITMENT COURSE; SCOTT IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS DEMONSTRATING THE COMBAT STANCE AND POINT SHOOTING TECHNIQUES WITH A GLOCK 17.



SCOTT CREATING A SOLAR STILL OUT OF A SURVIVAL BLANKET; CUTTING BRANCHES WITH HIS PATENTED HEIMAN HATCHET.

outside the box' and my interest is sparked by lots of things. Once I have an idea, I'll outline the key issues in dot-point then flesh them out based on knowledge and supplementary research. For social media there's only a few words available to hook the readers' attention. So here I often focus on trend-spotting in my areas of interest - incorporating my own insights, an engaging caption, clear message and active hashtags.

Did you find documenting everything challenging?

I'm an extrovert, a storyteller, husband, father, instructor, mentor and friend so I love to engage, inform and entertain. Storytelling is a powerful and timeless practice which captures human emotions, experiences and ideas, whether it occurs around a campfire, on a page or a device. Documenting what I do and writing about it is just another way to foster social interaction. Far from challenging, it's an aspect of the human experience which makes me particularly happy.

What does success look like to you?

Both Kath and I have had cancer - the sort which puts you in an oncology ward wondering if they're going to carry you out in a box. What we learned is 'you don't live to work, you work to live'. We had our daughter between respective treatments and our philosophy towards life has endured. To us success is measured by our ability to raise, train and sustain a fully-functioning, well-rounded human being in her. After all she's our legacy. So we enjoy 'the now', choose the work we do and refuse the stuff we don't want. We may not be rich in material wealth but are rich in experiences.

Are you working towards a goal?

We want to continue what we're doing as a family, capitalising on the opportunities and imperatives which exist when your daughter turns from child to teenager. While Jamie remains happy to join us, we want to travel together as much as possible, building those joint experiences that'll last in her memory and, hopefully, help shape the values and priorities she sets herself as an adult.

Do you have a go-to set up to document/content create?

I learned a while ago your mind is your best weapon. Both Kath and I are Gen X. We came of age during a period characterised by this nation's highest divorce rate, economic uncertainty and rapid technological advancements. We experienced the advent of personal computers, the rise of MTV and fall of the Berlin Wall. These events influenced our beliefs in self-reliance, adaptability and work-life balance. We can embrace tech like a Millennial but hate it with the passion of a Baby Boomer.

Firearm preference?

Now that's unfair. Firearms are a tool and there are horses for courses. Are you asking about my favourite firearm, favourite chambering or favourite make and model? My favourite firearm's a Sportco Model 62A .22 cal. It's Australian-made, 62 years old and still functions perfectly and shoots straight as a die. My grandfather gave it to my dad when he was 12, dad taught me how to shoot with it when I was 12 then I taught my daughter with the same rifle. When I'm using it it's like they're all with me.



My chambering would have to be the .22/250 because of its high-velocity, short-action and flat trajectory. Make and model is the Remington Model 788 with its rear locking lugs in three rows of three (known as the three rings of steel). My pistol choice is the Glock 17 in 9mm, shotgun the International Arms lever-action 12-gauge with open choke and survival firearm the Springfield M6 Scout U/O in .22 and .410 with open choke.

Any advice for the novice outdoors person?

When it comes to survival the principle is 'Get back to basics' which includes learning how to survive without batteries. Batteries go flat and dependence on devices makes you less aware of your surroundings and predicament. Survival's a mindset with more to it than water and shelter. A strong will to live, self-confidence in your capability and a positive focus on the task ahead are vital to retain control of a situation where you need the skills, knowledge and attitude to be pro-active. That's how you become a 'survivor' not just an 'existor'.

Do you actively talk to friends and family about shooting?

I was once referred to by a friend as a 'Greenie with a gun'. After all, environmental scientist isn't generally the professional profile you'd attribute to a hunter, army soldier/officer and member of

the Australian Federal Police. But I think they go together like peas and carrots. The combination of these skills and outlooks speaks to ethics and a care for country in a country with far too many feral animals. I sometimes feel isolated when people/media use 'weapon' as a synonym for 'firearm'. It's emotive language which delivers the wrong message. After all, a biro in trained hands is a 'weapon'.

The next issue comes when people balk at eating game meat. (Actually, I don't even like the term 'game' as it romanticises vertebrate pests. Just because they're regarded as 'game' in Europe doesn't mean they warrant the title here).

How has the shooting community changed in the past 10 years and what's its future?

To my eye there's been a growth in emotional and provocative language around the term 'firearms'. Fostered by the media and left-wing politics, there now seems to be a social assumption of criminality around their existence and this situation fosters misinformation and mistrust. We've reached the point where law-abiding firearm owners feel they need to hide the fact they're hunters or sporting shooters. My wish is that society, media and politics gets a little more centered. I hope my articles and socials do a little something towards achieving this. ●

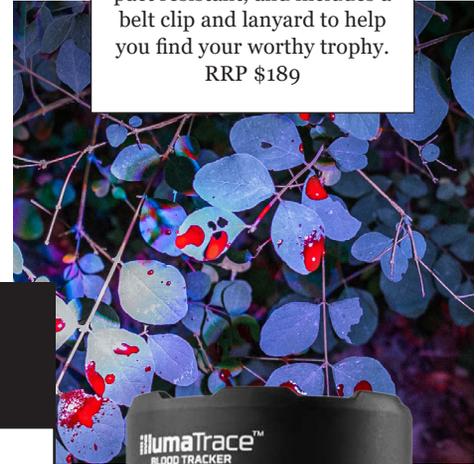
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Blaze orange gear is a must for any hunter, as we discuss on page 30. **Ridgeline** have a great selection to keep you warm and safe, like this Micro Fleece Top for \$49.99. The **SSAA Online Shop** also stock an array of blaze orange accessories.

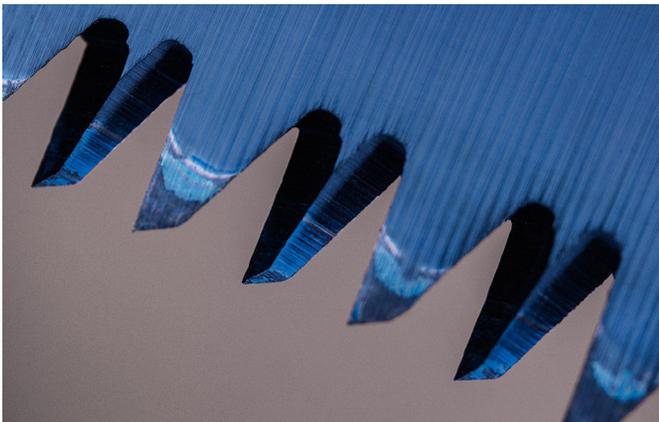
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Vale Jeremiah

1934 - 2025

WAR HERO AND FORMER EDITOR OF 'THE JOURNAL'

WORDS: GEOFF SMITH

Funerals often expose a much broader picture of the person being remembered than each attendee recalls. I first met John Downing in early 1988 when we were called on to help address the crowds at several rallies protesting about proposed changes to South Australia's gun laws. At that time John had recently retired from his service with the RAAF and was working as manager of the Air Transport Safety Bureau, investigating air crashes. The firearm rallies were organized by SA's Combined Shooters and Firearms Council and attempted to represent all SA shooting organizations. Former SSAA National President Keith Tidswell was largely responsible for pulling us all together to responsibly represent the firearms community.

The rallies successfully resulted in a Parliamentary Inquiry into gun laws, to which John and I along with numerous others presented evidence. Since we were both strongly and professionally interested in accident prevention, we discussed possible methods for introducing firearm safety training for beginners. The law changes themselves had been partially proposed because of numerous calls by the SA Coroner to introduce measures to reduce fatal shooting accidents.

From evidence presented, the-then government established several specialist groups to look into ways of achieving this. John and I attended meetings with SAPOL regularly from late 1988 until 1992, helping design the revised legislation which then went before parliament.

ONE OF A KIND: JOHN DOWNING, AKA JEREMIAH (APRIL 19, 1934-AUGUST 22, 2025).

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SCAN ME

At around the same time, John discovered he enjoyed writing about his great passion for recreational shooting. His 'nom de plume' was, of course, Jeremiah and he'd a collection of very nice firearms and was particularly fond of Colt handguns. With his wife Louise he developed a kindred passion for dressing up in clothing of the kind worn in Western Action events, which they both enjoyed, and on trips to the US they were meticulous in sourcing the best fabrics, buttons and buckles to produce outstanding costumes. He also became proficient in the manufacture of beautiful leather accoutrements.

The SSAA in the late 1980s was going through intense change. Photographs and text were increasingly becoming digital and colour printing becoming the norm. John stepped in around 1991 to the role of editor of the-then *Australian Shooters' Journal* during a brief period of uncertainty following Rod Marvell's retirement.

As a long-time writer myself, I worked closely with John and the team in the publications area. John went on to edit the first edition of my book *A Guide to Hunting and Shooting in Australia*, as well as Ian Thompson's delightful *Ballistic Allsorts*. After moving on from this role, John was editor of *Australian Pistol Shooter*, producing an outstanding magazine which unfortunately became prohibitively expensive and has since ceased.

Among many other things, John was a war hero. As Commanding Officer of No.2 Bomber Squadron based at Phan Rang in Vietnam, he was awarded the USA Distinguished Flying Cross for outstanding skill and bravery in relieving an attack on US ground troops on February 9, 1971. Shortly after this, also flying a Canberra bomber, he and his navigator found themselves forced to eject after his plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile. I recall seeing a photo of John in hospital in Vietnam being visited by then Prime Minister John Gorton, himself a former WWII aviator. Space doesn't permit going into too much detail here, but readers can go online and search Wing Commander F.J.L Downing, DFC, DFC (US) where a great deal of his remarkable military accomplishments are recorded.

My work with John included too many stories to relate here but suffice to say he was a highly skilled listener who wasn't scared to take on politicians and senior police officers on the finer points of issues being discussed. I remember on one occasion the subject arose about Indonesia's manufacture of handguns and an incident involv-



ing the-then SA Governor, Sir Donald Dunstan, who'd been presented with one such gun while serving as a General in the Australian Army. John had no hesitation in picking up the phone and ringing the Governor as he would anyone else, with the story appearing in *The Journal* shortly afterwards. Only later did I learn John had been Australia's Military Secretary to the Governor-General.

He didn't talk much about himself and was always polite even when speaking to people who could invoke frustration. At his funeral, several friends said it all when they described him simply as 'a gentleman'. We were indeed blessed to have shared his company and will miss John and his contributions to the shooting sports in Australia. Our thoughts and sympathies go to Louise and the family. ●

JOHN PICTURED IN VIETNAM AS COMMANDING OFFICER OF NO.2 SQUADRON.

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Eyes like a Hawke



MATTHEW GODSON SEES VALUE IN THE LATEST FRONTIER BINOS

In the world of optics, combining precision rangefinding with high-quality binocular viewing is the balance manufacturers are seeking to achieve. Hawke Optics, known for delivering value-driven performance, aimed for just that with their Frontier LRF 8x42 (Frontier) model. These binoculars bring together the trusted clarity of the Hawke H7 optical system with advanced laser rangefinding technology in a robust, ergonomic package. Priced below premium-tier competitors, they offer a compelling option for hunters and shooters seeking versatile and accurate tools in the field.

OPTICAL PERFORMANCE

The Frontier use Hawke's H7 optical system which features fully multi-coated lenses and dielectric-coated BaK-4 roof prisms, an optical package designed to provide excellent light transmission, edge-to-edge sharpness and true colour reproduction. When using these binoculars you'll notice high contrast, particularly in low-light conditions, making them ideal for dawn or dusk use and anywhere in between.

With 8x magnification and 42mm objective lenses, they provide an excellent 131m field of view at 1000m, this wide view helping track moving targets or scan terrain efficiently while still offering enough magnification to really pick out detail. The exit pupil of 5.3mm and eye relief of 16mm contribute to viewing comfort (partic-

ularly for glasses wearers) which is enhanced by twist-up eyecups.

The red OLED display inside the right objective barrel is sharp, unobtrusive and offers six brightness levels, making it visible across a range of lighting conditions without overpowering what you're trying to view. This is an important detail when using the binoculars in low-light situations. The internal display remains visible yet not distracting and strikes a balance between information and picture immersion.

LASER RANGEFINDING TECHNOLOGY

The Frontier has an integrated Class 1 laser rangefinder capable of measuring distances from 10 to 1800m with a precision of ± 1 metre, this figure making them more than suitable for most hunting, shooting or observational tasks.

It has multiple ranging modes, enabling users to adapt to various environmental and shooting conditions. These include Standard Distance for straight-line measurement, Rain Mode to reduce interference from light rain or fog and Hunt Mode, which ignores foreground obstacles such as grass. Near Mode prioritises the closest target while Horizontal Distance calculates this precisely which is ideal for ranged shooting. Additionally, Angle Mode displays the angle of elevation or declination, enhancing slope awareness for users in hilly or uneven terrain.

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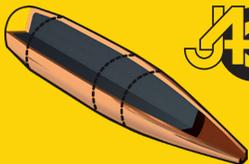
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Blending match precision with short-action reliability. The Classic Hybrid Hunter feeds smoothly and expands reliably at close-to-mid ranges. Perfect for bush stalking and rugged environments.

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This flexibility makes the Frontier adaptable for both general use and specific outdoor needs. However, it doesn't have built-in ballistic software or Bluetooth connectivity to sync with ballistic calculators which can be found in more complex and expensive devices. Those who regularly engage in long-range shooting will need a supplementary ballistic app or device to enter specific distance-to-target information generated by the LRF system.

BUILD QUALITY AND DESIGN

Hawke has constructed their Frontier models with a magnesium alloy chassis wrapped in a durable, textured rubber armour coating. The build quality feels rugged and premium in hand and, despite the integrated electronics, the unit weighs only 999g which is more than reasonable considering the added rangefinding functionality.

The Frontier is nitrogen-purged and water-proof to IPX7 standards, meaning it can withstand immersion in one meter of water for up to 30 minutes. It's also fog-proof, so transitioning from warm vehicles to cold outdoor conditions won't be an issue. These binoculars are built for real-world field use, be that in Alpine environments, wet forests or dusty open plains. The centre focus wheel is large, well-textured and smooth in operation, allowing for quick focus adjustments even when wearing gloves. There's a diopter adjustment on the right barrel, letting users tailor the focus to their personal vision.

One minor omission is the lack of a tripod adapter thread and while most users won't need to mount these binoculars, it could be a drawback for some, especially those who participate in regular stationary use during long glassing sessions. This could be overcome using a specialised clamp system attached to a tripod that grip the binoculars.

USER EXPERIENCE AND ACCESSORIES

The Frontier comes equipped with a thoughtful set of accessories designed to enhance convenience and protection. These include a padded neck strap for comfortable carrying, objective lens covers to safeguard the optics, durable carry case for secure storage and a chest harness system which provides hands-free transport and quick access in the field. The latter is particularly handy, helping distribute weight while walking and keeping the binoculars secure yet still accessible. These extras enhance field usability and provide excellent value for the money.

Life expectancy from the single CR2 3V lithium battery is unpublished, though I reckon it should be solid given the binoculars power



down after 15 seconds of non-use. There should certainly be enough battery to power the rangefinder for extended sessions across time. These batteries are easily replaceable so a spare can be carried in the case.

ALL THE INCLUDED BITS AND PIECES.

CONCLUSION

The Hawke Frontier LRF 8x42 binoculars deliver impressive performance for their price point, offering a crisp, bright optical view combined with a fast and accurate laser rangefinder, all within a rugged, field-ready design. While they don't include premium extras like ballistic software or app connectivity, they offer exactly what most users need in clarity, range and reliability. For hunters and target shooters seeking a solid rangefinding binocular around the \$1550 mark, the Frontier LRF 8x42 should fit the bill. ●

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1727 APR



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AGP
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Take it as read

DEREK NUGENT ON THE HUNTERS' BIBLES

The name Johannes Gutenberg probably doesn't immediately spring to mind when considering the greats of human history. Without doubt we've all heard of Alexander the Great, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and Martin Luther King Jnr and are aware of the great characters who've shaped our world. Yet few I'd wager have heard of this humble 15th century German craftsman who, in 1454, quietly launched a revolution, one that gifted the world something we now take for granted. Books.

Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press, leading to an information revolution which allowed for mass production of books for the first time. Predictably the first one printed was the Bible of which he produced about 160 copies which, to this day, remain among the most valuable books in the world.

Yet his true legacy was to the common folk who for the first time had access to books and the ideas they contained. It was a gift which prevails to this day and one which had a profound effect on the development and perpetuation of the human ethos across the ages. The reading of all good books, as philosopher Rene Descartes was wont to muse, is like a conversation with the finest of minds.

THE HUNTER AND READER

Books contain the accumulated wisdom of first-hand experience and therein lies their value to everyone, including hunters. I've long held that one of the best ways to improve your hunting is to invest time in understanding the craft itself and nature of the quarry being pursued. There's no better way to do this than through the experiences of others, be it campfire conversations with peers, the content of publications like those produced by SSAA or the reading of dedicated hunting books.

For as with all things there's an established theory underpinning successful actions, particularly in respect to game animals as, the more you think you know, the more you come to realise there's so much yet to learn. Hence there's a lot of benefit and pleasure to be had by reading widely in the hunting genre, learning from the experiences of others then putting those learnings into practice.

With this in mind I have, over the years, built up a respectable library of hunting titles which I regularly consult for all manner of reason. I have works by the late Nick Harvey, Arthur Bentley, Col Allison, Philip Holden and Dave Drangsholt to name but a few. For those who'd like a taste of shooting in the Territory in the 'good old days', I heartily recommend the works of Tom Cole.

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PFI-M215M	256x192	800 x 600	15mm	\$890
PFI-M419	384x288	800 x 600	19mm	\$1,390
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

THERMAL MONOCULAR (OPTICAL ZOOM OR RANGEFINDER)

≤ 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

THERMAL 30MM RIFLESCOPE

≤ 18^{NETD}
mK



WiFi

ORDER CODE	SENSOR	DISPLAY	OBJECTIVE	PRICE (SRP)
PFI-P435P	384x288	1440 x 1080	35mm	\$2,690
PFI-P450P	384x288	1440 x 1080	50mm	\$3,150
PFI-P635P	640x512	1440 x 1080	35mm	\$3,490
PFI-P650P	640x512	1440 x 1080	50mm	\$3,990

PIXFRA VOLANS

ALL DAY & NIGHT VISION RIFLESCOPE

4K
ULTRA HD VIDEO & PHOTO
RECORDING



WiFi

ORDER CODE	SENSOR	DISPLAY	OBJECTIVE	PRICE (SRP)
PFI-V850	3840x2160	4K	50mm	\$1,190
PFI-V850-LRF	3840x2160	4K	50mm	\$1,390

PIXFRA TAURUS & LRF

THERMAL CLIP ON

≤ 25^{NETD}
mK



WiFi

ORDER CODE	SENSOR	DISPLAY	OBJECTIVE	PRICE (SRP)
PFI-T435	384x288	1920 x 1080	35mm	\$2,450
PFI-T635 LRF	640x512	1920 x 1080	35mm	\$3,490



I also managed to secure the complete works of big game hunter Peter Capstick, Robert C. Ruark's classic *Horns of the Hunter* and Lt Col J.H. Patterson's *The Man Eaters of Tsavo*, a ripper tale on which the film *The Ghost and the Darkness* starring Michael Douglas and Val Kilmer is based. Through these volumes I've garnered a lot of practical information which has informed my own hunting practices, while being able to vicariously experience the thrills of big game hunting across the globe in a bygone era. My most collected category of book is that which relates to the history, biology and behaviour of the species I hunt, most notably deer. Again the insights provided by these publications have been extremely useful.

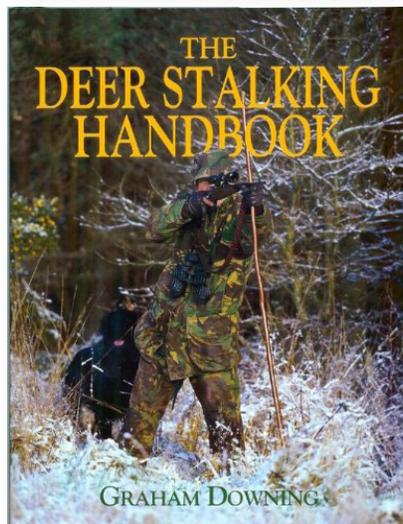
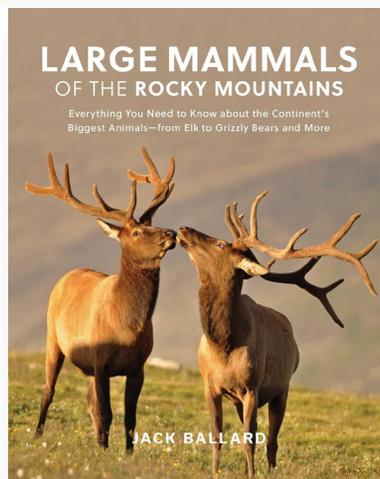
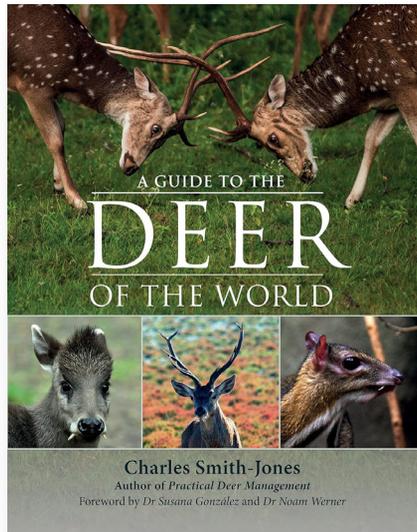
UNDERSTANDING YOUR QUARRY

Recently I was able to take possession of two additional titles, dedicated to furthering my understanding of the behaviour and biology of game animals in general and deer in particular. It's these I'd like to recommend to readers, the first being *A Guide to the Deer of the World* by Charles Smith-Jones. The author's a lifelong naturalist, countryman and hunter who's internationally acknowledged as an expert in deer and their management. His 40-plus years of experience in the field have resulted in the creation of an authoritative, attractive hardcover reference book sure to enthrall the deer enthusiast.

This one would hold a valued place in the library of any 'deerophile' whether naturalist, biologist or hunter. Lavishly illustrated in colour throughout and featuring some truly stunning images, this 316-page volume discusses the evolution, biology and behaviour of deer in general, before reviewing each of the 72 identified species and various subspecies in exquisite detail. In doing so it manages to remain highly readable, entertaining and user-friendly.

Of particular note are the 'fact box' inclusions for each species, which provide a quick reference précis of the animal concerned, covering everything from their distribution to lifespan and all imaginable in between. If you're searching for information (no matter how obscure) on any species of deer, this book will contain it.

Obviously you pay for what you get and being a pre-eminent publication it has an RRP of around the \$120 mark. And being a specialist publication it's unlikely to adorn the shelves of your local bricks and mortar bookshop, though is available



A GUIDE TO THE DEER OF THE WORLD IS A COMPREHENSIVE TOME, WHILE LARGE MAMMALS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS IS DETAILED, THOROUGH AND ENJOYABLE. THE DEER STALKING HANDBOOK IS CONCISE, FACTUAL AND VERY HELPFUL FOR BOTH NEWCOMERS AND MORE EXPERIENCED HUNTERS.

from a number of online retailers. A quick search will show a good half dozen offering the title and I bought mine from World of Books Australia. It arrived in two weeks, securely and impressively packaged postage free.

The second title is *Large Mammals of the Rocky Mountains* by Jack Ballard, an award-winning writer, photographer and naturalist from Red Lodge, Montana whose wildlife-related works have been published in a number of books, calendars and magazines. I've always had a fascination for the large vertebrate game animals of the Rockies, though more from the perspective of an admirer than hunter. Encountering some of these beasts in the flesh during a recent trip to Canada inspired me to source and buy this book. My copy was again bought online and was actually cheaper from Amazon US at about \$45 than Australian-based retailers who were asking around \$80.

It's 430 pages festooned with colour imagery and has reinvigorated my appreciation for these incredible animals and will remain a keepsake reference for years to come. It's a comprehensive and exhaustive resource and the ultimate guide to the biology, behaviour and lives of elk, bears, wolves, bison, moose, big horn sheep, pronghorns, mountain lions, white-tail and mule deer.

Leading biologists argue that what's good for wildlife - large, small, common or obscure - is ultimately best for humanity too, and pursuing this theme is one of the author's stated ambitions for the book. Hence each chapter includes a historic and insightful analysis of the interactions between humans and each species. To say I'm happy with these books is an understatement in the extreme and I can imagine them staying in our family hunting library for generations, as treasured sources of both knowledge and inspiration.

POWER OF THE WRITTEN WORD

I'm unashamedly a bibliophile who loves books, particularly those pertaining to my outdoor interests. I've an abiding fascination with and respect for wildlife in general and mammalian game animals in particular, especially deer. These books serve my purposes admirably and I count myself lucky to have such accurate and comprehensive information quite literally at my fingertips. The Roman statesman Cicero is reputed to have said "a room without books is like a body without a soul", thus I venture to suggest there's a place for a library in the heart of all hunters. ●



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Bowie knife: Icon *and* enigma



JIM DICKSON CHARTS A LEGENDARY SURVIVAL BLADE

ABOVE: DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY BLACKSMITHS MADE LARGE BOWIE KNIVES WITH KNUCKLE BOWS TO SERVE AS INFANTRY HANGERS FOR HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.

By modern accounts the Bowie knife era began on September 19, 1827 when Jim Bowie survived an unprovoked attack by four men, killing one of them. The dead man was using a sword cane but was killed by Bowie's knife and while the victim was both shot and stabbed, he held out until his friends chased off the attackers. This was the fight at Vidalia Sandbar in Mississippi, where Bowie was meant to be a noncombatant 'second' to a duel. The event caught the public's imagination and soon everyone wanted a knife like Bowie's, despite there being no pictures to guide them.

Contemporary accounts described it as a large butcher's knife which also matched the description of a Spanish dagger, as both of them resembled a straight-backed version of a modern butcher's slicing knife. Bowie was operating out of the New Orleans, Louisiana area where this was a common design. New Orleans was then a dangerous town with a volatile mix of pirates, privateers, smugglers and riff-raff, mixed with the upper class who would reportedly 'fight a duel at the drop of a hat'. The make-up was Spanish, French and English and they didn't always get along. Sword fighting schools were plentiful and everyone from privateers to aristocrats trained side-by-side there.

Sword-carrying in public was out of fashion by this time and many men carried a sword cane, housing a long and narrow thrusting blade used in the manner of a rapier, small sword or modern fencing foil. However, there was one knife fighting style which was the bane of the thrusting sword, the German 'Messer'. The word means knife in German and the large variety with a blade up to two feet long had been a common weapon there since the Middle Ages.

These were used as hangers and cutlasses all over Europe and Blackbeard the Pirate had a two-foot blade which was almost certainly a Messer. Like all German fighting arts there was a well-thought-out fighting style that's still taught today. When dealing with a longer sword, the Messer wielder knocks the blade aside and closes to grapple, grabbing the sword then stabbing or cutting his opponent.

For those who think they can just move backwards in this attack, you'll soon discover a human moves forward far quicker than backwards and, if you go backwards on anything but a gymnasium floor, you'll soon trip and fall. Messer fighting was dirty, not abiding by the rules of a gymnasium or duel but real-world brutal combat.

In the US there was an extremely high number of German settlers who brought their ideas of



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knives with them, the size shrinking to about a foot or less as the smaller length made them readily concealable. They quickly proved the superiority of the Messer fighting style over the sword cane and soon everyone was abandoning the latter and packing a Bowie knife. These had been used in America long before Bowie became a celebrity giving his name to any knife.

The classic medieval Messer long knife sported the concave false edge which became associated with the Bowie knife and, when sharpened, acted like a claw, digging in and ripping on the back stroke. There was also the straight false edge in a design unchanged since the seax was used long before the Viking age, this still sold by German cutlers and often marked 'Original Bowie knife'.

Initially the Messer style of fighting was modified to a blade-up position and many of the earliest Bowie knives reflected this as their handles curved up instead of down. The brass parry strip was sometimes added to the back as a cushion to the steel blade, to reassure the user it wouldn't break when striking an opponent's blade. Later the edge-down position would again dominate.

When a man went to a blacksmith or cutlery seller and asked for a knife similar to Bowie's, he could end up with any big all-purpose blade imaginable, as nobody knew what Bowie's knife really was. Variants of the German Messer and English copies of it soon predominated the market though any large knife, whether single or double-edged, was commonly called a Bowie back then.

Whatever the design, the Bowie became an absolute necessity for the frontiersman both as a tool and weapon against man and beast. In the days of single-shot muzzleloading rifles, a bear hunter could expect to have to tackle a wounded bear with a knife sooner or later and some were very good at that (Davy Crockett once jumped on a wounded bear and killed it with his knife).

Confederate General Wade Hampton was expert at this. In one instance after cautioning a young hunter not to fight a bear with a knife until he knew what he was doing, he saw the young fellow being charged by a wounded bear. Hampton quickly ran between the two and, when the bear reached him, the General threw himself on his back. The bear stopped fast over him and as he did, Hampton grabbed the side of the animal with one hand, causing it to turn its attention to that side as he delivered a fatal blow with his knife to the other, just one of many tricks used in those days.

As an all-purpose tool the Bowie excelled as, after all, knives of this type had been in use for 2000 years in Europe. It chopped wood, built shelters, fashioned implements and traps and functioned as an all-round survival option, perfect for skinning and butchering game. Just



consider the knives they use in slaughter houses and butchers' shops today as well as those favoured by professional chefs. These are thinner and lighter so as to be less tiring to work with than a robust all-purpose Bowie, yet the point is you need a long blade to get the job done quickly and efficiently.

The question of what Jim Bowie's personal knife looked like remains and the man himself later went to famed Arkansas knifemaker James Black with a new design. Mindful of his famous customer, Black made that one then offered his own, improved version which Bowie chose instead. All the knives Jim Bowie and his brother Rezin gave to friends look like a Spanish dagger except for the one Rezin gave to Edwin Forest, which perfectly matches the description of the James Black knife (see Robert Abel's book *Classic Bowie Knives*). The Bowie knife remains a first-class fighting implement and all-round wilderness tool this day, an American icon as the kukri is to the Gurkhas. ●

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JIM BOWIE'S BROTHER REZIN TO
MUTUAL FRIEND EDWIN FOREST;
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SCAN ME



Let's have all guns *blazing*

HUNTER DOUGLAS RIACH ON THE VALUE OF HI-VIZ GEAR

Hunting is not only a recreational activity in Australia but a vital tool for wildlife management and conservation. Whether traversing dense bushlands, open plains or rugged terrain, hunters face unique challenges which require careful preparation. Among the most crucial safety measures adopted by Australian hunters is the use of blaze orange clothing, a distinctively bright, high-visibility colour designed to enhance safety in the field.

The primary reason hunters wear clothing such as blaze orange or the new blaze pink is visibility. These colours are intentionally chosen as they stand out vividly against the natural landscape, ensuring they're easily spotted by fellow hunters even at distance. In densely vegetated areas where visibility can be limited, wearing blaze clothing significantly reduces the risk of accidental injuries caused by mistaken identity.

The blaze orange colour is associated with humans and not game, so any visible portion will signify the presence of a person in the bushes and not an animal. This is especially important during group activities when multiple hunters share the same area, or in public land outings where there could be other hunters you may or may not be aware of.

WHAT IS BLAZE ORANGE?

Originally and prior to blaze orange clothing, a US business invented paints which reflected visible daylight colours while also absorbing and transforming ultraviolet wavelengths into that colour. These intense inks and paints were known as DayGlo fluorescents and their market was originally billboards and advertisements. DayGlo fluorescents were two to four times brighter than standard colours and were also more visible in low light, such as dusk and dawn. From these paints and inks, fluorescent dyes for colouring fabrics were developed.

The US military during World War Two used DayGlo colours for signal flags, safety symbols, buoys and flight-deck uniforms for aircraft carrier crews. After the war, fluorescent greens, yellows and oranges took over the civilian safety arena, noticeably on traffic cones, road barriers and vehicle decals. They also became standard colours for safety vests worn by police, firefighters, highway workers, crossing guards and construction workers while in recreational pursuits, runners and cyclists adopted fluorescent-coloured items so motorists could spot them more easily.

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ORCHARD WORKERS AT 200M BOTH WEARING HI-VIS JACKETS. THE ORANGE STANDS OUT WHILE THE YELLOW APPEARS WHITE AT THIS RANGE.

THE RISE OF BLAZE ORANGE

The change to blaze orange was scientifically driven. The US Army tested and proved it was far more visible than the standard red-coloured hunting clothing previously worn by American hunters, while testing also confirmed it far outperformed the yellow alternative. The US military also employed optometrists and researchers to determine which colours stood out in various conditions, backgrounds, distances and light levels.

Researchers tested six bright colours with two being the standard red and yellow and four DayGlo fluorescents in blaze orange, fire orange, neon red and arc yellow (as they were then known). Blaze orange was the clear winner ahead of neon red, fire orange and arc yellow, while the standard colours performed worst.

Later studies by various US universities found people saw blaze orange in brushy or wooded backgrounds more easily than fluorescent greens or yellows, though fluorescent yellows contrast more than blaze orange in the backgrounds of construction zones, thus the frequent use of yellow safety vests in those scenarios. It should be noted that part of the findings were in forest, bushland and scrub environments at distances, yellow appeared as white. This wasn't exclusively associated with humans, so hunters could be mistaken for an animal and for these reasons yellow was never considered suitable for hunting.

ACCIDENT STATISTICS

Hunting in Australia isn't like hunting in the US, yet reviewing their history of accidents before and after the use of blaze clothing is relevant and persuasive. Wisconsin, a well-known deer hunting state, recorded 26 woundings and 24 fatal shootings its 1914 deer season and in 1958, had a record 26 hunting fatalities from 181 shootings. In 1966 the state endured a record 300-plus accidental shootings during its deer hunting season.

A number of factors influence these increasing accidental shooting statistics, including a rise in the general population and the increased number of deer hunters. In 1967, Wisconsin's non-compulsory hunter education program was introduced, with strong suggestions to wear blaze orange, though it wasn't mandatory.

The compulsory wearing of blaze orange started in 1980 and five years later the hunter education program became mandatory. As the forced wearing of blaze orange was introduced five years prior to mandatory hunter education, this indicates the significance and priority placed on blaze orange for hunter safety.

In 2015, Wisconsin had only three fatalities during the deer season and by 2022, even with the increase in hunter numbers, recorded only one fatal shooting and eight woundings during the season. It's not possible to quantify how many shooting accidents were specifically prevented by the introduction of blaze, as most US states also introduced hunter education programs around the same time, though most have seen hunt-

ing-related accidental shootings decline since the introduction of blaze orange clothing and education programs.

It must be stated that accidental shootings caused by carrying firearms with a round in chamber, climbing fences and dangerous gun handling by hunting companions now make up the majority of incidents in the US. This statistic supports the influence of blaze orange in preventing incorrect target identification, though also indicates orange does little to prevent dangerous gun handling practices.

WILL THE GAME SEE YOU?

Colour is far less important than movement and smell when hunting. Many animals including deer, goats, pigs and foxes don't see colours, including blaze orange, as humans do. Consider what the animals see is like watching an old black and white movie, no colour and everything in shades of grey. The exception is blue which research indicates is visible to deer. As a result, hunters can remain highly visible to humans while blending into the environment from the perspective of their quarry.

PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES

Beyond safety, modern day high visibility hunting clothing offers practical benefits for hunters. Modern designs are not only durable and weather-resistant, they also incorporate advanced materials which improve comfort and performance. Be it winter warm with durable water resistance or lightweight summer fabrics with moisture wicking properties and breathable designs, these materials enable hunters to move freely and stay comfortable during long hours outdoors.

Some blaze orange hunting clothing features camouflage patterns which integrate high-visibility colours, striking a balance between safety and stealth. In Australia, a variety of brands and garments are available in or with blaze orange. If you don't want to change or buy additional clothing, blaze orange caps and beanies are available, as are vests which you can wear over your regular gear.

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE HUNTING

Many state regulatory bodies in Australia and SSAA clubs encourage or mandate the use of blaze clothing, underscoring its importance in promoting a safe and cooperative hunting environment. Blaze orange is more than just a wardrobe choice for Aussie hunters as by wearing it, they contribute to their own safety while sending a message to others and the non-hunting community, that safety is a priority. In the Australian wilderness, where landscapes are as diverse as the wildlife they nurture, blaze clothing is a bright beacon of the hunting community's commitment to a safer outdoor tradition. ●

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The AS Team

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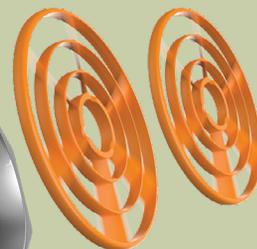
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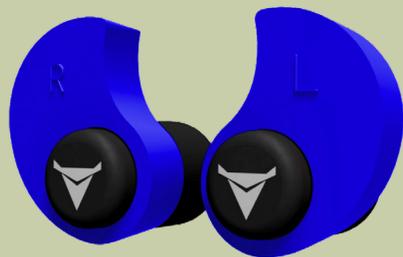
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The hills are alive!

GROUNDWORK REWARDS JOSEPH NUGENT IN THE ROAR OF '25

Every year as April comes around, the hills of the Brisbane Valley come alive with the impressive roars, grunts and groans of red stags, as they stamp their authority on the rugged ridges in competition for does. For the majority of keen deer stalkers this time of year is like Christmas, a sacred time where leave from work is booked and plans to explore the wilderness are made well in advance.

I've been lucky enough to have hunted the rut almost every year for the past decade. In doing so, I've developed a predictable and admittedly successful routine when it comes to harvesting prime venison for the year ahead, while also devoting time to the quest for trophy stags.

FILLING THE FREEZER

For me each season's deer stalking efforts begin in earnest in early March, when I head to the various properties I hunt to speak to the owners, collect trail cameras and take an appropriate animal for the freezer. This year was no different, particularly as several new property gates had opened up for me during the 2024 season, allowing access to previously off-limits areas.

I wasted no time in heading out to conduct some pre-roar reconnaissance and meat harvesting. By the end of the month I'd made several trips to these new properties, securing some quality venison in the form of a spiker and yearling doe. In doing so, I'd confirmed the existence of good numbers of deer in areas which had, in the past, been a hive of activity and continued to show promise of resident trophy stags again this year.

As overnight temperatures dropped (13 is the magic number in my area), so the stags' agitation levels grew until at last the roar was in full flight. I started planning some trips. Things were tight this year with a busy work schedule and having recently moved house, so I prioritised three days during mid-April to get serious and see what might be around.

THE HUNT'S AFOOT

The first afternoon I stayed close to camp and listened to which stags were roaring, assessing their likely location before settling on an action plan to hunt the following morning. As the sun began to set and temperatures dropped rapidly, the hills came alive with lusty bellows and I was able to identify three promising pockets of activity warranting further investigation.

Unfortunately one seemed to be over the fence and off limits, though the other two were certainly well within my hunting concessions. As dawn broke on the first morning I set off for a promising sounding area on one of the properties I'd recently gained access to. I stopped at the boundary fence and listened for a moment before continuing through the fence towards the booming roars.

As I edged closer a dark-coloured, big-bodied stag presented itself on the opposite ridge face and although sporting thick dark antlers, he looked to need another couple of years growth. This was the third time in 12 months I'd encountered this particular animal, whose striking appearance and aggressive demeanor made him easy to identify. I watched for a few seconds before he disappeared over the ridge in the direction of three other stags I could hear roaring in the distance.

Gripped by curiosity, I followed him to the neighbouring property's fenceline in a bid to lay eyes on what may have caught his attention.

ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE BY LURING A STAG INTO VIEWING RANGE; A GOOD RUB TREE IS CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE OF A STAG ABOUT; THE STAG AS HE CAME TO REST IN THICK LANTANA OF A STEEP RIDGE FACE.





As I approached the fence, the adjacent valley was echoing to the sound of stags roaring. It appeared that within 300m of me there were four of them, though all were ensconced in thick stands of vegetation.

I've always thought I could replicate a convincing roar and this was my chance to put that confidence to the test. I cupped my hands and let rip with my best efforts at mimicking the sound of a roaring red stag. In the past I've had this technique work with varying degrees of success and, given the situation, it was worth a shot in the hope I could spot the stags in front of me.

Initially it appeared to be working with at least two of the stags actively challenging me and coming closer, though they concealed their approach using heavy vegetation to their advantage. While one was particularly aggressive and came within 200m, both eventually lost interest and turned away and I'm certain the faint breeze I felt on my back just prior to their departure was the reason. Due to the thick cover I was unable to see either of them, though it was good to know they were receptive to my challenging roars, something which would come in handy later in the day.

For the rest of the morning I made a couple of similar attempts to locate stags, many of which were over fences and off limits. I later found out the property owner had been working extensively on his fences and setting a number of wild dog traps during the previous week. As is the nature of hunting on a working property, this activity probably caused the resident stags to break from their routines, become somewhat more cautious and/or move across the fence into neighbouring land.

PERSISTENCE REWARDED

Undeterred, in fact encouraged by the morning's adventures, I made use of the access I had and chose the opposite direction for an afternoon hunt. I worked my way through some thick timber and down into a large established creek system. Initially I spent my time overlooking a small creek flat and listening for what stags may vocalize as the cool of the afternoon set in.

Unfortunately, due to the volume of water running through the creek it was difficult to hear anything at all, so I decided to push further down the ridge and follow the creek from one access point to the other. It proved a good decision. I heard several stags in the distance, located a few decent rub trees and was able to identify some crisp deer tracks in the sand further along the creek. It was these tracks which eventually led to my success.

I took time to closely examine the tracks and noticed they were crisp, debris-free with obvious dew claws present, leading me to believe a stag could've used the creek recently. As I followed

FRESH TRACKS IN A SANDY CREEK
LINE INDICATE DEER NEARBY.

them from water hole to water hole, I began to notice more and more tracks in the sand. I made it to the access track out of the creek but it seemed my afternoon hunt was going to be unsuccessful.

As something of a last-ditch attempt, I let out a final roar or two before exiting the creek and as I did, immediately received a confident challenge from further along the ridge. I promptly replied and so did the stag. I made my rifle ready and before I knew it had a big-body stag aggressively barreling out of some thick lantana and down the ridge towards me. He was solid with a long dark-coloured mane under his neck.

In the fleeting moments as I brought my rifle to bear, I noticed he had two tines at the bottom of his antlers and a fork on top, indicating he probably had 10 points in total, just what I'd set my sights on. At about 80m he stopped briefly and stared at me for a moment. Instinctively I centered the crosshairs and sent a 130gr projectile from my .270 into his chest. The stag jumped and thrashed in the thick lantana before expiring, rolling a few meters and coming to rest against a log.

The ridge erupted with movement as his five hinds broke from cover and made a hasty exit from the valley. The terrain abutting the creek was very steep and heavily vegetated and as I climbed to where the stag lay, it became clear I'd have to roll him a further 20m to the relative safety of a small bench in the ridge. On close

inspection he was a 5x4 with quite thick pedicles, no world-class trophy but a true Queensland bush stag. Although it was a tough task given the terrain, I removed the head and what meat I could before making the trek out of the creek and back to camp in darkness.

AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

With ample meat in the freezer and a head for the wall, the following morning was spent listening to stags and walking the boundary with the spotting scope, checking what might be around. I didn't see any larger stags and was happy with the decision I'd made to take the one I did, particularly in such an exciting fashion. Even though the roar is by tradition 'the time' to locate and take a good stag, the hunting on my blocks remains productive right through to October, when stags shed their antlers and the whole cycle begins anew.

The insight I gained through my encounters with several stags during the roar certainly indicates there's a chance of grassing a nice trophy animal as the year progresses. Of course it'll be a more daunting task as the roar recedes but I'll give it a go and be back to do it all again next year.



JOSEPH CONTEMPLATES THE FIELD BUTCHERING OF A YEARLING DOE.



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Dual Focus Knob (Coarse/Fine).
Supplied with Stay-on Cover.
Hawke No-Fault Lifetime Warranty.
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NATURE-TREK
Fully Multi-Coated



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9-27x56 \$752

NATURE-TREK
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Supplied with Window Mount & Stay-on Neoprene Cover.
Hawke No-Fault Lifetime Warranty.
13-39x56 \$840

Punching well above its price

PAUL MILLER ENJOYS ANOTHER YILDIZ TRIUMPH

When I opened the plush green velour-type gun case and put the Yildiz Pro Black Sporter together, I was reminded of the old saying: “If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s probably a duck.” Well, this gun looks and feels almost identical to a black-actioned Perazzi MX8. I can only imagine Yildiz were ‘inspired’ by Perazzi and, rightly impressed, have designed and manufactured a gun so similar, though in this case looks deceive as it’s not *exactly* a Perazzi.

Gun actions have been copied for generations around the world, as manufacturers opened their doors and looked at what was the best action at the time (presumably where the patents had expired) and found ways of incorporating those features into their guns. Miroku in Japan is a fine example of this, having closely copied the Browning B25 guns developed many years before in Belgium. This was one of the finest actions of the time and is still hugely popular in Browning and Miroku guns sold globally in vast numbers.

The company was started in Turkey in 1974 with a small shop producing a side-by-side shotgun. They soon added a self-loader to their production then, in 1994, started making over-and-under shotguns. Remarkably, they now make around 55,000 guns a year in roughly 70 models and action types which are exported worldwide, undoubtedly like an impressive growth and success story.

ACTION

This Yildiz Pro Sport has the same low-profile, Boss-inspired action that’s pretty much identical to others on the market. It’s black with deeply carved fences, features and fine border engraving that’s highly tasteful to my eye. The single selective and second barrel recoil-actuated trigger pulls are nicely crisp at around 3lbs, the trigger well placed and comfortable to use though not adjustable for length of finger comfort. You won’t be surprised to hear the trigger group looks a lot like others on the market and the coil springs contributed greatly to those crisp pulls.

The action locks up like a bank vault and appears well made in terms of fit and finish, the top lever extremely comfortable to use. The ejectors are perfectly timed, throwing spent shells out cleanly and quite a distance. I normally don’t do this when shooting, preferring to catch them in the action, though it was interesting to see the timing so good and ejectors so powerful.

STOCK AND FORE-END

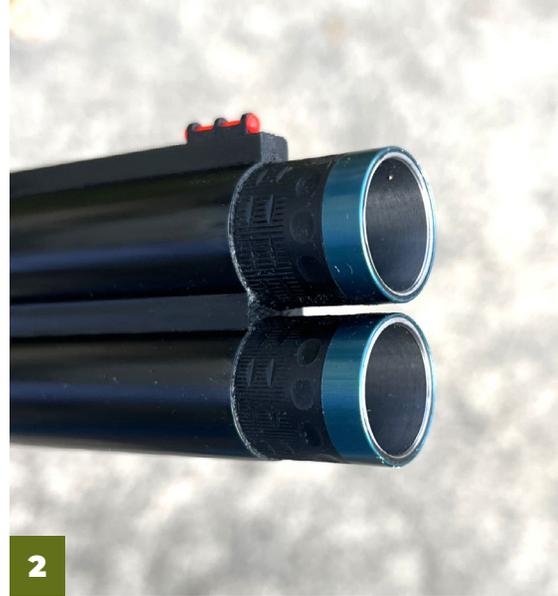
When I took the gun from its case I was amazed at the quality of the Turkish walnut in both stock and fore-end - it’s said to be Grade 4 but looked even better - certainly way better than you’d find on a comparable Perazzi without a wood upgrade. I can only assume the team at Yildiz have access to some excellent walnut at reasonable prices, so are able to offer it in their guns with relatively affordable retail prices in Australia.



PRO SPORTER WITH HARD CASE FOR SHOTGUN AND ACCESSORIES.



1



2



4



3



5

Length of pull was exactly 14.75" which would certainly suit most average-sized shooters. The stock has a comfortable degree of 'cast off' at heel and toe for right-handers and my right-handed friends who tried it found it just right. I could still shoot the gun, though the same amount of 'cast on' would've been perfect for me.

The wood-to-metal fit is excellent and laser checkering perfect. The fore-end is of that modern slim design we're seeing more of in quality sporters, as a change from the typical Schnabel fore-end. Not necessarily better but very comfortable and certainly contributes to its great feel as well as look. The stock itself has a full competition-style pistol grip with a palm swell which was equally comfortable for my right-handed mates and aligned the trigger finger well for a good straight line pull.

An easily adjustable comb is also included and, for many shooters, this gun could be patterned and tweaked for use as a Trap gun as well. I left it alone as it shot nicely for me in its lowest position flush in the stock. Recoil is well absorbed by a nicely contoured thick rubber pad which I found sat comfortably in the shoulder pocket.

BARRELS

The Pro Sporter has 32" barrels weighing 1.56kg, beautifully blued and incorporating five extended choke tubes in the usual constrictions from Skeet to Full. These effectively add another 3/4" to the barrel length though not visible when shooting. A single red tube sight at the front provides a good reference point, though I'd like to have seen a centre bead as this is very much a competition shotgun.

The barrels are bored 18.6mm (.732") and the gun is chambered in 12-gauge. These barrels are

a little heavier than the 30" ones offered in this gun, though the extra length and weight is definitely a benefit for smoothing down your swing on longer targets, yet no disadvantage on closer ones. This contributed to a precise feel (dare I say like a Perazzi) and a sensation of being in control of the targets rather than the other way round.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

You can copy something or be 'inspired' by someone else's design, yet that doesn't mean you experience that mysterious feel of a shotgun the same. Just stressing again, this gun isn't made to the standard of a Perazzi but certainly is a decent facsimile.

From the gun-down position it seems effortless to mount this quite heavy 8.5lb affair and attack the line of clay targets very quickly - and this with longer 32" barrels. As usual I had a couple of friends try it, one of whom went out and bought a 32" Pro Sporter the following week.

You'd obviously not expect a removable trigger group in a gun retailing for just less than \$5000. Yet when you look at the fit and finish and extremely beautiful Turkish walnut in the stock and fore-end, it's hard to imagine how they can make them at the price. Had I been a right-hander and not had too many shotguns already (how many is too many), I'd have been sorely tempted to buy this gun. At the price offered in the Australian market I can't recommend it too highly.

• *Thank you to the team at OSA for dispatching the Pro Sporter so quickly and for Rod Laidlaw's sound technical advice as always. More at osaaustralia.com.au*

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer:
Yildiz

Model:
Pro Black Sporter

Gauge:
12-gauge, 3" chambers.

Action:
Boxlock ejector

Trigger:
Single, selective inertia

Barrel length:
32" (1564g), 30" also available

Chokes:
Five extended Skeet to Full, described as mobile chokes

Stock and Fore-end:
Adjustable Monte Carlo, oil-finished, Grade 4+ Turkish walnut

Drop at comb and heel: 38mm and 60mm (1.5" and 2.25")

Weight:
8.5lb

Warranty:
Five-year limited

Accessories:
Stock-removal tool, Allen wrenches to adjust comb, choke tool

RRP:
About \$4998

Importer/Distributor:
Outdoor Sporting Agencies

1 AGGRESSIVE, STEEPLY CURVED PISTOL GRIP IDEAL FOR COMPETITION SHOOTING AND TRIGGER COMFORT.

2 HAND-DETACHABLE EXTENDED SCREW-IN 'MOBILE CHOKES'.

3 FAMILIAR BOSS-INSPIRED ACTION WITH DEEP FENCES AND SHALLOW PROFILE SIMILAR TO A PERAZZI MX8.

4 THE STOCK HAS SUPERBLY FIGURED OIL-FINISHED WALNUT WITH EASILY ADJUSTABLE COMB AND ALLEN WRENCHES SUPPLIED.

5 FIVE EXTENDED CHOKES ARE INCLUDED ALONG WITH STOCK WRENCH AND OIL.

► THE YILDIZ PRO SPORTER HANDLED SUPERBLY WITH ITS 32" BARRELS AND PERFECT BALANCE OVER THE HINGE PIN.



Straight to the top



NEW MAUSER M25 ABOUT TO BE HUGE, SAYS CON KAPRALOS

For the Mauser marque, the straight-pull rifle design is nothing new. There've been many models during the past 75 years which have embraced the straight-pull action, most of them seldom seen in Australia and those that have made it being collector's pieces priced accordingly.

Mauser's affiliation with Blaser and Sauer is one firearm-manufacturing juggernaut which keeps on redefining modern design and production, with models to suit all applications and budgets. Their new M25 straight-pull rifle hasn't been designed to take on Blaser's highly successful and top-tier R8. Instead it's pitched squarely at a price point which makes it an attractive option for the hunter looking to embrace the straight-pull action, synonymous with its slick bolt travel and ultra-fast cycling, without breaking the bank.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Mauser importer and distributor, sent *Australian Shooter* one of the first M25s in the country, purely for demonstration purposes. As this review was being written, OSA was still taking orders with the first rifles expected late this year or in early 2026. The review model is the Extreme, a synthetic stocked rifle in .308 Winchester which came fitted with a proprietary optic mounting base designed for the M25 and a lovely Minox RS-4 rifle-scope in 2.5-10x50.

AT A GLANCE

This is a synthetic stocked rifle in dark grey/black which complements the matt black barrelled action. Its linear, straight-pull design with 51cm barrel gives a total overall length of 995cm and bare weight (with scope-mounting rail) of 3.16kg. Magazine configuration is a detachable box with a three-round capacity and five-round option also available.

UP CLOSE

The M25 barrelled action has been designed from scratch. This design first and foremost is unique, the barrel profile morphing from 17mm diameter to 24mm, at which point it enters a circular 34mm diameter extension. This extension is affixed to the rectangular chassis by screws with the chassis itself bedded deep into the stock.

The rear arrangement forms the locking abutments into which the bolt head enters when the bolt carrier is pushed forward, the bolt itself having a push-feed face with single claw extractor and twin-sprung ejector pins. A pair of locking lugs, one above and below, open vertically into the locking abutments, Mauser claiming these offer 66 sq.mm of surface contact (encompassing 250 degrees of the bolt circumference) between bolt and breech. Being 10 per cent more than the stalwart M98 action, its strength and safety when



chambering and firing a round shouldn't be a problem with modern cartridges.

The bolt itself has steel rails which protrude forward and overlap the edges of the steel receiver block. Removing and inserting the bolt carrier assembly is easy and cleaning the bolt and its intricate systems straightforward by following the manufacturer's guidelines. There's also a hammer recessed within the base of the receiver block which serves to activate the striker mechanism in the bolt carrier. This is cocked as the bolt carrier slides back and forth over it.

The bolt handle's superbly designed for ease of operation and, more importantly, is in the precise location for the user's thumb to engage the bolt shank/knob to draw the carrier rearward. The shank extends down 60mm with a round knob at the end measuring 22mm in diameter. The handle rotates slightly upon its axis to unlock the action, the movement of the entire bolt carrier super-slick for an effortless reload. I won't mention speed of operation as this is entirely up to the operator but the bolt carrier's like an ice dancer doing their stuff.

A two-position safety catch is fitted into the action tang, simply move it forward for 'Fire' (with the bolt locked fully-forward) and rearward for 'Safe'. A small button within the safety serves to unlock the bolt for safe unloading, however this isn't a de-cocking fea-

ture which is popular on many other straight-pull designs. The trigger is a joy to use, being of a single-stage design with an 8mm wide blade. It broke like a glass rod at 900g and is fully adjustable from 700-1700g. Must be one of the best triggers on any rifle on the market, though with Mauser you wouldn't expect anything less.

A three-round polymer magazine (with steel spring naturally) is supplied as standard and while perfectly serviceable, would've been better as a five-round unit (available as an option). I'm sure Mauser would be fielding requests for a larger capacity magazine in the order of 8-10 rounds, especially useful for European driven boar and deer hunting, where rattling off half a dozen shots in quick succession isn't uncommon. Nevertheless, the three-round magazine performed without any issues and was easy to load and clip into place.

Mounting a suitable optic would entail a specific base which is designed for use on the barrel extension. The review rifle came with a Picatinny rail which affixes to the barrel extension, though positions the centre of the scope-mounting area over the receiver block and magazine well. This ensures any scope can be mounted with proper eye relief taken into account. The supplied Minox was set up perfectly by OSA and, when shouldering the rifle, gave an excellent view through the optic with generous eye-relief.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model:
Mauser M25 Extreme straight-pull rifle

Manufacturer:
Mauser, Germany

Calibres:
Calibre: .308 Win (tested), contact OSA dealer network for more availability

Barrel length:
510mm (20")

Overall length:
995cm

Weight:
3.16kg (with scope base)

Magazine capacity:
Three rounds (five also available)

Availability:
Late 2025 or early 2026

CLOSE-UP OF THE MAUSER M25 BOLT-CARRIER ASSEMBLY AND BOLT-HEAD ARRANGEMENT.



THE RECEIVER AND BARREL RELATIONSHIP IS CLEARLY SEEN HERE; THE BOLT CARRIER IS A COMPLEX MESHING OF PARTS BUT MAUSER ARE PIONEERS IN STRAIGHT-PULL DESIGN; THE CLEAN AMERICAN-PROFILED BUTTSTOCK SUITS THE M25 PERFECTLY; WELL EXECUTED GRIP PANELS ADORN THE PISTOL GRIP AND FORE-END.

The barrel is one area where Mauser, along with Sauer and Blaser, are highly regarded. The M25 barrel is cold-hammer forged from a special proprietary steel, finished with a new durable and rust resistant Mauser plasma-oxidised surface coating, which matches the finish on all the other metal parts in the receiver and bolt assembly.

The external layout is as befits a hunting rifle made for serious use, a clean American stock style with straight comb, well-proportioned pistol grip and adequate panels on both grip and fore-end. The butt-stock comb has panels impressed into either side with the Mauser logo. It looks like an adjustable comb arrangement but on the Extreme model is purely aesthetic. Sling swivel attachment points are supplied being integral to the stock design, though this is negative point for me, as simple QD sling swivel studs would be preferred to moulded-in loops.

When the M25 was released globally the .308 Winchester chambering was the only option, yet once the model gained interest and traction, other calibres followed suit, so it'll be interesting to see what'll be offered to Australian consumers in due course.

AT THE RANGE

I knew the M25 Extreme would be a 'shooter' and wasn't disappointed. Several brands of ammunition in .308 Winchester were supplied, supplemented by a few loads of my own preference. The rifle off the bench was a delight to use and shooting three-shot groups at 100m was the standard method of evaluation. There was a temptation to rattle off shots in quick succession but why force things when there's no need?

Chambering rounds from the magazine was effortless and operation of the bolt carrier, moving it forward into battery and rearward to eject fired cases, was excellent. The cold-hammer forger barrel with its free-floating set-up resulted in a ri-



LEFT SIDE OF THE ACTION.

fle which shot all loads on the day without fuss or hassle. All groups were less than 1.5 MOA, most around the 1MOA and some premium factory loads produced cloverleaves.

Makes no bones about it this is a hunting rifle pure and simple, not designed to shoot game or targets out past yonder in the extreme long-range category. I'd be happy to shoot out to 300-350m all day long with the M25 Extreme, especially taking into account that with the supplied Minox RS-4 scope it weighed 3.89kg, spot-on for a stalking rifle. It's no flyweight but won't give you 'fallen arches' if carrying it afield.

IN SUMMARY

Mauser and OSA are on to a winner with the M25 and it'll be interesting to see the reaction once they hit the shelves in Australia. I hear pre-orders have been strong, which augurs well when supplies reach our dealers. It's a cracking firearm for the new hunter or seasoned outdoors person after a straight-pull rifle with the Mauser pedigree behind it. The only slight downside is the standard three-shot magazine, though a couple of five-shot mags in the kit should serve your needs. Pricing hadn't been released at time of writing though the OSA dealer network should be able to advise soon. ●

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RANGE



When one is all you need

THOMAS TABOR APPLAUDS THE RUGER NO.1 SINGLE-SHOT

I must've been around 10 or 11 years of age when my brother, older by eight years, gave me his well-used old single-shot Remington .22 rifle, his lack of interest in it based on two things. The first of those was the fact he'd recently discovered the fairer sex in his late teens and had seemingly lost interest in everything else!

But secondly and possibly even more importantly, was the fact most of his friends were now shooting various types of repeater-style rifles and a single-shot was something to be embarrassed about. So as a young joey I proudly accepted that rifle and loved it until, years later, I too began to covet the time when I could replace it with one which didn't take so long to send off that second shot.

As I grew into adulthood my love of shooting and hunting continued to develop, as did my firearms collection. And for many years virtually all those rifles shared a commonality in they all possessed some form of magazine which held multiple cartridges. But that began to gradually change a few years after Sturm, Ruger & Co. introduced a new single-shot centrefire rifle they called the Ruger No.1.

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

The year was 1967 when Ruger introduced shooters to their new No.1 single-shot rifle. Like many other gun owners at the time, I pondered the logic behind offering a single-shot centrefire rifle carrying a price tag at least as much as many bolt-action, self-loading, lever-action or pump-action style firearms.

Yet while it took me a few years before I began to fully appreciate the concept behind the Ruger

No.1, my attention always seemed to be drawn back to its smooth lines and overall attractiveness. And that attraction eventually led me to contact a friend and local firearms dealer to place an order for my first No.1, a model 1B chambered in .300 Win Mag. Almost instantly I fell in love with that rifle, which became my mainstay companion on decades of successful hunts that frequently spanned the globe.

My love for the gun resulted in many more No.1s to follow, though that .300 Win Mag always seemed to hold a special place in my shooting heart. Even now after literally thousands of bullets have been sent hurtling down the bore, it's still capable of three-shot 100m groups which can be covered by a 50c piece.

RUGER NO.1 DESIGN

This is a modern version of an under-lever concept based on the 1872 English Farquharson falling-block design. It possesses essentially the same internal hammer mechanism and falling-block action of the Farquharson, though overall the rifle comes with a more modern appearance. Ruger commissioned custom firearms designer Lenard M. Brownell to develop its stock, which comes with a common length of pull of 34cm and a somewhat hard, unventilated red rubber recoil pad. The checkering, while basic in design, is deep cut and professional in appearance, while all wood to metal inletting is precise and accurate with no major gaps.

A nice feature about the No.1 is the fact it's completely ambidextrous in design, including its tang-mounted safety. Its massive cartridge ejector spring is located in the forearm which is



THE RUGER NO.1
HAS A SEMI-CLASSIC
APPEARANCE
INCORPORATING
MODERN INNOVATIONS.

automatically activated whether the cartridge has been fired or not, as the action lever is pushed downward to open the action.

To me the flat, plain-looking sides of the receiver are crying out for some sort of deep-cut masterful engraving, though as far as I'm aware of none of them ever left the factory with even a squiggle of engraving, which is a real shame. Yet Ruger seems to have been known largely for high-quality firearms without a lot of fluff or fabricated beauty and that plainness carries over to the wood used on No.1 stocks today.

All Ruger No.1 models come with either iron sights or scope bases and rings with barrel lengths varying from 51-71cm depending on their sub-model. Blued rifles all feature professionally done semi-gloss bluing, while stainless versions come with a soft matt glass bead blasted finish.

MANY SUB-MODELS

Soon after the first Ruger No.1 hit the market, the design gave birth to a variety of sub-models carrying names like 1A, 1AB, 1H, 1S, 1V, RSI and K (referencing a stainless construction and having laminated stocks). Yet possibly the most popular has always been the Model 1B which comes sightless but with a scope base and rings. Cartridge choices began to grow exponentially to eventually encompass virtually all types of hunting.

For a time that included the little .218 Bee for smaller critters all the way up to and including the .458 Win Mag, typically used for dangerous game. Sadly those choices have dwindled on the new market and a look at the company's website today only lists the somewhat puzzling options of .257 Weatherby, .275 Rigby and 6.5 Creedmoor. But



THIS AFRICAN KUDU FELL TO TOM'S RUGER 1B SINGLE-SHOT IN .300 WIN MAG.



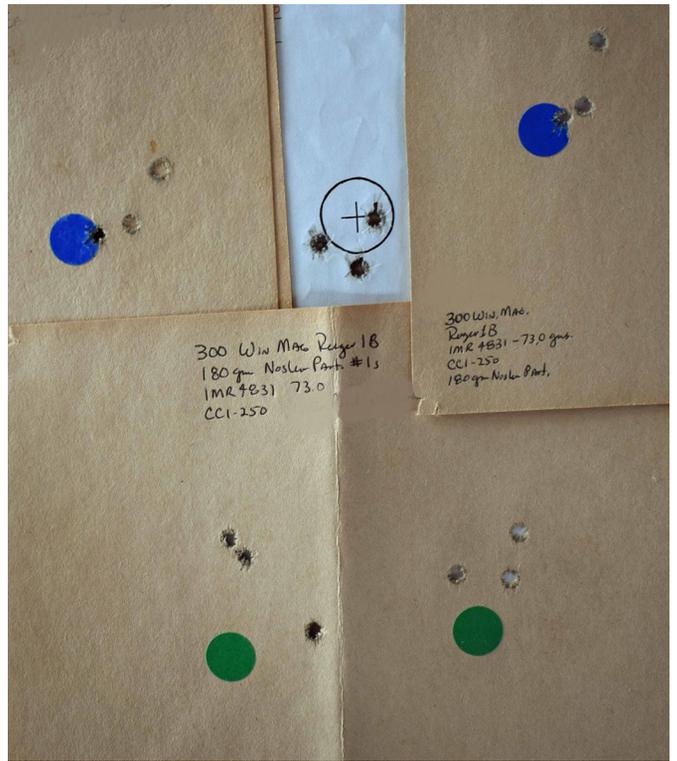
AFTER FIRING, THE ACTION IS OPENED AND SPENT CARTRIDGE CASE AUTOMATICALLY EXTRACTED.

there's always the used market which offers prospective buyers a far wider variety of chamberings.

SINGLE-SHOTS BENEFITS

The No.1's falling block action makes cleaning easy and trouble-free. Simply open the breech by squeezing the lever latch which locks the action closed. Then rotate that lever in a downward, forward fashion which drops the breechblock to give an unrestricted view of the chamber and bore. At that point a thorough bore cleaning can be easily accomplished and should always be done by running the cleaning rod from the chamber to the muzzle, to avoid any potential damage to the crown of the barrel.

No matter how experienced a hunter is, occasionally a follow-up shot is necessary and, if you prepare for that eventuality, a second shot can be made almost as quickly as with a bolt-action rifle. By carrying extra cartridges on your belt or buttstock-mounted shell-holder, the time



THE SAFETY IS LOCATED ON THE REAR TANG MAKING IT CONVENIENT FOR EITHER LEFT OR RIGHT-HANDED SHOOTERS.

CHECKERING, WHILE SIMPLE IN DESIGN, IS PROFESSIONALLY DONE.

THE FACTORY RECOIL PAD DOES LITTLE TO REDUCE FELT RECOIL; THE PISTOL GRIP CAP IS MACHINED FROM REAL STEEL.

▲ MOST OF TOM'S 100M GROUPS FROM HIS FIRST RUGER NO.1B IN .300 WIN. MAG COULD BE COVERED BY A 50C PIECE.



TO OPEN THE ACTION SIMPLY SQUEEZE THE LEVER LATCH AND MOVE IT FULLY FORWARD.

difference in reloading speed usually becomes non-consequential.

But possibly the best argument for the use of any single-shot firearm is a cerebral one. Even though the time needed to send a second round on its way shouldn't be a major concern, when a shooter knows there's only a single round in the rifle, that subconsciously has a tendency to make most wait a micro-second longer before squeezing off the shot. And in a strange roundabout way I believe that has led even me to be an overall better and more accurate shooter.

THE WAY I SEE IT

After buying that very first single-shot No.1, I quickly developed a love affair with its simple design and concept behind single-shot rifles in general. I'm certainly not encouraging the use of a single-shot firearm when it comes to wing shooting, simply because hunting birds often calls for multiple shots in quick precession. But

when it comes to hunting virtually all forms of mammals, I now hold a starkly different opinion on the use of single-shots.

I'm often puzzled by some of the actions taken by firearms companies and Ruger is no exception. I wonder in this case why they didn't place even a moderate amount of deeply-cut engraving on the side of the No.1's actions and use wood for their stocks with at least a smidgen of nice figure in the grain.

But I suppose Ruger did built its reputation around 'plain but high quality' and even today, decades later, they've clung to that root objective on virtually all their firearms. But I also wonder why they chose to so drastically limit their cartridge choices for the No.1 in recent years. And even more puzzling is why they settled on those seemingly strange cartridges rather than ones in more demand, though I suppose if I asked them they'd probably remind me I'm not the one who has to make payroll for their factory. ●

Lever pitch!



DICK EUSSEN SALUTES THE ENDURING MARLIN

I'm a huge fan of the .30-30 Winchester centrefire cartridge, which goes back decades to when I fired my first Winchester Model 94 and killed a marauding pig and, ever since, there've been few spells where I haven't owned a .30-30 of sorts. I had one built on a Siamese Mauser action, a Stevens single-shot, double barrel and several lever-actioned rifles, yet my favourite remains the Marlin Model 336 lever-action.

I love scopes for hunting and the Marlin is made for that with its side-ejection port, unlike the Winchester which has top ejection, making it unsuitable for scope mounting except for a long eye-relief model on the barrel or a red dot optic. The .30-30 WCF (originally the .30 Winchester Smokeless) was first chambered in the Winchester 1894 model, the first sporting cartridge available loaded with the new smokeless powder in 1895. It was a match made in heaven and enjoyed unparalleled and enthusiastic support from hunters and shooters.

Marlin, Savage and Stevens launched new rifles for it while in Europe, German three and two-barrelled drillings were chambered for the

7.62x51-R (as the rimmed .30-30 WCF is known there). Hunters love it and it's said more deer have been taken with it than any other cartridges. That may well be true even though it's not a popular reloading cartridge, yet for once-a-year and casual hunters there's no equal.

While deemed not an overly-powerful round, it matches the .303 or even .308 on game in the hands of a capable shot. Rated a 150-metre cartridge, a good shot can extend that to 200m and beyond with a suitable optic. Recoil is mild but modern muzzle brakes can help those who are recoil-shy, though avoid short-barrel carbines if you're that way inclined.

It's not by mistake the combination of the .30-30 matched to a lever-actioned rifle is the all-time leader in the US for sporting rifle purchases with an estimated 7.5 million sales. Even though

DICK AND A GOOD BOAR HE SHOT WITH HIS 'THURTY-THURTY' MARLIN MOUNTED WITH A 1.5X5 WEATHERBY SCOPE.





A GOOD RANGE OF PURPOSE LEVER-ACTION BULLETS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE .30-30 WCF; THE MARLIN LEVER-ACTION IS SIMPLE TO DISASSEMBLE FOR MAINTENANCE.

Marlin didn't enter the market with the release of the Model 336 until 1948, it became a popular choice for reloaders and hunters who wanted a stronger action than the Winchester and a scope on their rifle. However the adjustable original iron sights, while limiting range, remain popular as they're fail-proof, fast and, importantly, robust for those after a rugged no-nonsense working rifle for farm use, horseback and quad use.

While iron sights limit your range to less than 150m and the fact our eyes can't identify the vitals of game under poor light and long-range conditions, iron sights are preferred by some. This is true even though we can mount scopes which magnify the target or fast, reactive red dot reflex sights, both which extend the range of the .30-30 to 200m. Others prefer optional aperture sights by Skinner, purpose made for the combo and best suited to hunting game at short to medium ranges in scrub and forest country where shots are restricted to 100m or less.

RELOADING

It's not the rifle which limits the range, rather the .30-30 bullets that fail it. When used in lever-actioned rifles the round is limited to blunt-nosed bullets, as loading it with the spitzer-style creates a dangerous condition when used in tube magazines as a spitzer might detonate the bullet in front of it during recoil.

A good range of .30 calibre lead and round-nose projectiles ranging from 100 to 170-grain is available. I mostly load Speer 130gr FNSPs as I prefer lighter bullets up to 140-grain for hunting, as heavier bullets will fully penetrate both shoulders of a large boar, some of which keep running without showing any signs of being hit.

And be aware 100gr bullets can give feeding problems in tube magazines. I had a Remington Model 788, a magazine bolt-action rifle which shot MOA groups at 100m with spitzer-style bullets. Also note loadings for the .30-30 are generally kept under 38,000 CUP to cater to the weakness of old rifles and the Winchester Model 94. The Marlin Model 336 is much stronger with most manuals listing different loads for it and bolt-action rifles, though be aware the case has thin walls and its best to stick to safe pressures (game won't know the difference).

A heavy crimp is needed to retain the bullet under recoil in a tube magazine or it'll be pushed into the shell (it's generally the last round in the magazine that's under the greatest pressure which may do that). I've found the purpose Lee crimping die does a very reliable crimp. All-purpose .30-30 projectiles have cannelures designed for a sturdy crimp, though never over-crimp as the case will bulge and won't chamber and make sure all cases are trimmed to the correct length when crimping.

The Marlin lever-action is ideal for mounting a scope or red dot sight, due to it being a side-ejection rifle

SPECIFICATIONS

Model:
Marlin Model 336 Classic

Barrel:
20.25"

Overall length:
38.63"

Weight:
7.5lbs (empty)

Stock:
American walnut

Front sight:
Brass bead, hood protected

Rear sight:
Semi-buckhorn

Action:
Lever

Finish:
Satin blue

Capacity:
6+1

Price:
Various series range from \$1200 to \$2200

The introduction of Hornady Lever ammunition for lever-action rifles includes the .30-30 which easily extends the range by 50-80m compared to low velocity round-nose bullets. The Hornady round has a soft 'flex-tip' spitzer point that's compressed against the round in front of it in a tube magazine and won't detonate its primer during recoil. Due to its memory the flex-tip expands to normal when chambered and fired, with up to an extra 250fps and 40 per cent more energy attained compared to traditional blunt-nose bullets. Flex-tip and mono-flex bullets are available for the .30-30 and a host of lever-action calibres and handgun rounds. I'm highly impressed by their performance on large boars, though they shoot higher than traditional blunt-nosed bullets so I need to re-sight my scope to bring them on target.

Flex-tips are available for reloading, though it's hard to achieve the same velocity as Hornady factory rounds as they're loaded with St Mark's LeverEvolution powder, a special blend not available to reloaders, though impressive velocities can still be achieved with normal recommended powder loadings from ADI.

NEW BEGINNING

Marlin went broke a few years ago and Remington Arms took over Marlin 336 production, though there were problems which sullied the Remington/Marlin reputation. Remington also went down the gurgler (it's back now), resulting in Ruger assuming production of the Marlin 336 Series. They tooled up with new machinery and introduced it in .45/70 Gov, followed by old-time favourite the .30-30 WCF.

Results are impressive and to all appearances the Ruger/Marlin Classics are true hybrids of the original Marlins. They're well finished with the only 'improvement' being a 1-in-12" twist barrel

which replaces the original Marlin Micro-groove rifled barrel, while the action has tight tolerances and stock work is immaculate.

It's available in several 336 series (Marlin doesn't have models but series) which includes the Dark, SBL and of course the all-time favourite Classis series. Some rifles bear little resemblance to the original, having black walnut and laminated/polymer stocks, QD swivels, stainless steel, Picatinny rails, large hand levers, carbine-style profiles and other accessories to bring the lever-action rifle into the modern era. And while I've no plans to trade in my original Marlin, anyone looking for a reliable and no-nonsense hunting rifle won't regret buying a new Ruger/Marlin Model 336.

And if you want a lighter carbine check out the latest Marlin Model 1894 lever rifle from the Ruger stable, chambered in .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum. Other models include the Marlin Dark Series, which have nylon re-enforced polymer stocks with M-Lok and QD cup attachments, handy for mounting accessories, a tritium/fibre optic sight and optic rail and the 16.7" barrel has a muzzle brake. Model 1895 Dark Series rifles are available in .30-30 and .45-70, the latest addition being the Trapper 336 with stainless steel and grey stock combo and 16.7" barrel. ●

OPPOSITE PAGE: NEALE ELLIS AIMS A MARLIN .30-30 FITTED WITH OPTIC SIGHT, IDEAL FOR SHORT-RANGE SCRUB HUNTING.



Magnificent century!



DANIEL WITH THE SAKO
100 IN THE FIELD.

DANIEL O'DEA REVELS IN SAKO'S NEW 100 FLAGSHIP RIFLE

My love affair with Sako rifles began with the 75 series. When it first appeared it was quite different with its three-lugged bolt head providing a shorter throw, super-slick action, great trigger, detachable magazine and superb accuracy. It was easy choice when I decided to stretch the budget on a dedicated quality deer rifle. Calibre? 30/06 of course. Innovative at the time it also offered a choice of stainless and synthetic finishes, perhaps not a completely new concept but in this case a quality stock with traditional lines, palm swell in the pistol grip and rubberized grip panels. This was all at a time when stainless synthetic otherwise meant suffering a hard plastic boat paddle like the old Rugers (not bad rifles actually).

I took my first real trophy, a stunning 17-point red stag with that rifle in New Zealand then, a few years later when I went back there after tahr and chamois, thinking I might need to stretch the legs range-wise I took my newly-acquired Sako 75, a blued Hunter this time chambered in .300 Weatherby Magnum. A rare chambering for a Sako which I understand was a cancelled special order I discovered in Beretta Australia's inventory at the time.

At peak Sako I owned six 75s in .223, .243, .308, .30/06, .300WBM and .338 Win Mag in all variants of stock, barrel profile and finish. Over the years this has thinned down to three 75s, both my NZ guns and a Stainless Hunter in .223 Remington. If push comes to shove these



THE SAKO 100 EXPLORER WOOD CARRIES A BEAUTIFUL, WELL-FIGURED PIECE OF HIGH-GRADE WALNUT. NOTE ADJUSTABLE COMB.

three rifles would be the last I'd ever part with.

I passed on the Sako 85, wasn't a fan of the new anti-drop magazine catch feature, wasn't persuaded by the attempt at controlled round feed and, of course, had a safe full of 75s I was happy with. The Sako 90 introduced more innovation and improvements on the design, though here we're taking a look at what perhaps represents a great leap for the company in their new premium flagship, the long-awaited Sako 100 series, a rifle featuring switch-barrel capacity along with many more new design features.

First mooted a couple of years ago, Sako held off the release of the new 100 series for reasons unknown, so when offered the rifle for review by Beretta Australia and as a big Sako fan, of course I was intrigued at the prospect of laying my hands on one.

The rifle comes housed in an Italian-made Negrini hard case, custom-made for the Sako 100. The designation for the rifle received was a Sako 100 Explorer Wood (the rifle also comes in a version stocked in carbon). The test rifle was chambered in .308 Winchester and features a 20" cold hammer forged stainless steel barrel with 1:10 twist and finished in Cerakote Blackout, all metal parts sharing this same high-lustre Cerakote finish. The muzzle is threaded M15x1 and capped neatly with a knurled thread protector.

The timber is something else, a beautifully well-figured, high-grade walnut with both grip cap and Schnabel-styled fore-end tip finished in contrasting rosewood. Both grip and fore-end feature cut checkering with a little palm swell to the right side of the grip panel, which I love. The Monte Carlo-type comb incorporates an adjustable cheek piece which presents as black, leather-grained

rubber and for a while had me trying to work out whether it was real leather or not, though I'll go with the former. The cheek piece is spring loaded and controlled from a polymer button recessed into the right of the stock and appears to have 12 or so individual positions of adjustment.

A firm rubber recoil pad, chestnut coloured, is separated from the timber by a black spacer, the thickness of which can control length of pull as I understand. On the underside of the butt stock lies another panel finished much like the cheek-piece, which opens to reveal a tool compartment containing both an L-shaped Torx T25 and 2mm hex key. Not sure what the latter's for but the T25 will basically do about everything on the rifle from removing the stock to adjusting the trigger to switching the barrel, tightening mount screws etc. The manual refers to this item as for field use only, probably reflecting the fact the case includes a T25 torque driver (wrench) set for 7 NM, this the designated torque setting for the barrel action screws and most all other operations.

For sling fitment the rifle is fitted with flush-mounted QD cups at both the heel of the stock and just behind the fore-end tip. For those who prefer, I noticed a spare set of QD studs to replace the cups included in the gun case along with sling swivels for both types. Lastly for the stock, a bronze-coloured Sako medallion is precision inletted into the end of the grip cap for another high-quality touch.

As a switch-barrel, the action is magnum length to accommodate the different available chamberings and cartridge lengths from .243 to .375 H&H. I noted the same with the detachable magazine, which in .308 is blocked at the rear to fill the left-over space. This of course is a



EXPLORING THE TOOL KIT INLETTED INTO THE BASE OF THE STOCK.



THE SAKO 100 BREAKS DOWN EASILY FOR BARREL CHANGE, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT.

necessary compromise in switch-barrel rifles and departs from the action length being perfectly scaled to the calibre as it was for my many Sako 75s (there were five action lengths). Likewise with the 100 the bolt is long and draws further than needed when in use with short-action calibres.

Staying with the bolt we have the short lift three-lugged Sako bolt head which carries over the improved twin ejectors as seen on the Sako 90.



THE TRIGGER IS ADJUSTED THROUGH A HOLE IN THE TRIGGER GUARD AND THE SETTING IS NUMBERED JUST BEHIND THE ADJUSTMENT SCREW (NOTE THE '3').

The bolt handle has a teardrop shape with a small cap which appears to be removable, so future bolt handle/knob options may be available. It's at the bolt shroud departure from previous Sako models becomes apparent, as the new bolt now incorporates a decocking feature, replacing the traditional side-mounted three-position safety catch.

This seems to be a popular trend in Europe and is present on straight-pull rifles such as the Blaser R8 and Beretta BRX-1. Basically, you depress and toggle up a piece at the end of the bolt shroud which then moves rearward, decocking the bolt. This means there's no longer any spring tension on the firing pin and so the rifle's unable to fire. On the Sako 100 it also locks the bolt, with a separate catch on the side of the shroud allowing the bolt to be opened and cycled in the decocked position for unloading etc.

There's no doubt this, theoretically at least, is safer than a traditional cocked bolt safety system. I guess it's akin to carrying a 1911 pistol, hammer back, cocked and locked, as opposed to hammer down on a decocking double-action pistol such as a Beretta 92. I say 'theoretically' safer only because if all other safety protocols are followed both are equally fine. I'm not a fan and didn't like it on the Blaser R8 or Beretta BRX-1 either. Not for what it does as the idea is excellent, rather I find it unnecessarily complex to operate and hard on the thumb. This is only a personal opinion and I'm sure when automatic transmissions first appeared some didn't like those either.

One thing I do love though is the Sako 100's trigger which is super-crisp and easily fully adjustable through a small hole in the trigger guard. Six-step adjustability allows pull weight to be set progressively from 750g to 1750g, about 1½-4lb

SPECIFICATIONS

Model:
Sako 100 Explorer Wood

Action:
Bolt

Calibre:
.308 Winchester
(tested)

Capacity:
Four rounds

Barrel:
508mm (20")

Twist rate:
1:10

Sights:
Mount base of optic

Length:
1056mm

Trigger:
Six-stage adjustable

Finish:
Cerakote Blackout

Furniture:
Timber (walnut)

Bedding:
Aluminium

Weight:
3.8kg

RRP:
Around \$7399



ACCURACY AVERAGED
1 MOA OR BETTER WITH
MOST BRANDS OF AMMO.

in old money. Steps one through six are numbered and visible just behind the adjustment screw and, as mentioned, these are made using the Torx T25 tool. The trigger blade can also be adjusted fore and aft to favour personal preference.

Great triggers are conducive to great accuracy, something Sako rifles have always been renowned for and the 100 proved no exception. Of course, equally important to accuracy is bedding. In the 100 series an alloy V-block system is used to provide full-length contact with the receiver to ensure stability and secure repeatable fit, essential with a switch-barrel rifle. Likewise, the proprietary Sako mounting base which comes with the rifle secures directly to the barrel, so both barrel and optic are retained in-situ when removed to maintain zero. The mounting base uses Sako's excellent Optilock scope rings which must be bought separately for scope tube diameter and desired scope height, at time of purchase.

To remove or switch the barrel is a simple affair. Firstly, remove the bolt then loosen two action screws using the T25 driver which frees the barrel for storage, transport or replacement. To pop a barrel back in, simply reverse the procedure only installing and closing the bolt in the action prior to fully tightening the screws to 7 NM as dictated by the torque driver. That's it and literally takes less than a minute.

The rifle comes supplied with a Steiner Ranger 10 in 1-10x24, a neat and compact scope with all the magnification you could use in a hunting rifle of this calibre and lens quality and features expected in a premium European optic. On the range the Sako 100 had no problem achieving or exceeding the manufacturer's 1 MOA accuracy guarantee with most all factory ammunition variants and bullet weights tried. I would warrant half-minute groups readily achievable with a bit of load development.

IN SUMMARY

The Sako 100 is a premium quality hunting rifle with a hell of a lot to offer and, being a switch-barrel, lifts it into a new league price-wise. The Explorer Wood retails at \$7399 (you can buy two Sako 90s and get change from that), while the Carbon version adds another \$1600. That said, on the test rifle the timber, finish and quality of build is outstanding, as are many of the other features. Likewise the price is comparable to other similar European switch-barrel rifles and it's a firearm I feel would give great pride and pleasure in owning and using. If budget isn't an issue and you're after a switch-barrel rifle, with the Sako 100 I don't think you'd go wrong. ●

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LE180668 LEUPOLD MARK 3HD 4-12x40 30mm P5 ill firedot TMR scope..... \$1195

LE180674 LEUPOLD MARK 3HD 8-24x50 30mm P5 SF TMR scope..... \$1195



LE183823 LEUPOLD MARK 4HD 6-24x52 34mm SF FFP PR2 mil scope..... \$2950

LE183841 LEUPOLD VX-6HD GEN 2 4-24x52 34mm CDS SZL2 SF ill firedot
duplex scope..... \$5095

LE183971 LEUPOLD MARK 4 HD 8-32x56 34mm M5C3 SF FFP PR3 mil scope..... \$3095

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duplex scope..... \$4495

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A rain deer worth the effort

MARK VAN DEN BOOGAART DID IT TOUGH IN THIS YEAR'S ROAR

Early afternoon, April 2025 and I'm loading the truck under a darkening sky as water-laden clouds sink ever lower. Cut to the following morning, before dawn and the tyre hiss accompanies the double-time beat of the wipers as they struggle to clear the rain. Leaning forward I peer through a persistently fogging windscreen, at the same time squinting in response to the bright reflection of the headlight-illuminated highway signs.

Why do I make such a journey? Red deer of course. I'm heading to the Brisbane Valley in pursuit of rutting reds on what has become an all-too-familiar boat-like drive north. Big rain has been the marker of my red deer adventures for the past four years. When I started hunting along the Stanley River 17 years ago, I don't remember it being so wet.

As Dorothea Mackellar once wrote, it truly is a land of drought and flooding rain and the rhythm of boom and bust has rung true during my comparatively short time on this chunk of space rock. Furthermore my hunting, like the weather, has mirrored the cycle of boom and bust. My first year hunting The Roar on the new block was full of trumpeting stags, close encounters and eventually a deer on the ground.

It was so good I held fire, returning a week later to close the deal and I carried the memory and confidence of that year into 2023. Mike Tyson was quoted as saying everyone has a plan until they're punched in the face and in that second year I took one right on the chin. The deer stayed high and I didn't see a stag until May, up high and more than a kilometre away on a neighbouring block.

In 2024 I had access to an adjoining block and in early April the reds were roaring and the rain torrential. "Prudence is the necessary ingredient in all the virtues, without which they degenerate into folly and excess," espoused Jeremy Collier. Heeding those wise words, I dropped the hammer on a Brisbane Valley roughie and got the hell out of there.

This year I prepared for rain and maybe deer, maybe not, either way my intention was boots on the ground. On arrival, the truck sloshed into the house block and turning off the headlights the darkness was complete, no stars, moon or other heavenly body visible under low cloud and rain. There's a knack to readying yourself in the dark and the more time spent sorting in the comfort and illumination of home, the less likely you are to forget something when it matters most.

Good news was the rain had begun to ease as I passed Kilcoy and with first light 30 minutes away, I convinced myself things were looking up. A little later I crossed the first paddock. It's completely open and yes, I have in the past unintentionally bumped deer in the opening minutes of a hunt. Standing there in very low light I heard a distant roar way up high on another block, possibly even in the forestry. With the wind in my favour I headed for the tree line and sound of the stag.

Reaching the beginning of what I call the bush block, the stag continued to vocalise and was duly answered by a challenger. The first sounded more mature, the respondent younger. It's not an easy thing to describe but there's a difference, not so much a lesser roar, just not as commanding. Sitting down about three-quarters the way on an







SEQUENCE: ANOTHER STAG ON THE WALLOW FROM A TRAIL CAMERA IMAGE; THE 2025 STAG MOMENTS AFTER THE SHOT; THE HIND CAUGHT BY TRAIL CAMERA.



opposing face, I listened as a third joined the conversation. While the first two were on the wrong side of the wire, number three sounded closer so time to get moving.

To avoid creating a silhouette I used the contours to gain elevation. It was a slow process and along the way I heard another two stags. In total all but one sounded out of reach and I started to wonder if it was 2023 all over again. Finally breaching the top of the gully I crossed the dog-legged fence line separating the two blocks. That much-repaired collection of bush-cut posts and wire marks a fundamental change in ownership, geography and my approach. Keeping with the prevailing wind I'd so far moved through, up and over a major gully system and would now begin crossing a series of them.

The upside was I was moving into good deer country, the downside being if the first gully held deer, they'd effectively shut down my ability to move further east. After taking a breather I decided to head towards a highly productive wallow, one which at times could be an amphitheatre of roaring stags, bored hinds and skulking spikers. If it was holding deer, great, but if it was holding a young stag and I could hear or even see a better one further on, I'd have to decide if it was worth the risk of looping around and having my scent drift back.

Even if it did hold a stag worth taking, the deer around the wallow would form a series of defensive rings. There would stand my target surrounded by hinds, lesser stags and young spikers all positioned in a wide, sliding arc. Now a roaring stag doesn't seem too perturbed by movement but if you're not right with the wind you're done.

The hinds will wind you and, when they get up and move, the whole circus hits the road.

It was a quandary yet, just like rabbits, hunting two deer often ends in none, so I moved towards the wallow while the still-roaring stags remained beyond my reach. Finally laying eyes on the wallow I stopped under some cover and made myself comfortable. It turned out to be a smart move as soon after I heard a roar, much closer this time. It was answered by another equally close then a distant third. All the while the high stags continued with their performance, bringing the chorus line to possibly seven.

It was difficult to gauge, yet the loudest seemed only a couple of hundred metres away on the opposite side of the gully. The wind was good, my cover was



WHAT EVERY DEER HUNTER WANTS TO FIND.

good, I was up high and had a reasonably unobstructed view. Things were coming together.

There was then a very close roar followed my movement. I caught a glimpse of brown fur and assumed it was the stag until, straining through the binoculars, I realised it was a hind. I watched her move in and around the wallow and even look up at the sound of a jet crossing our shared sky. There was another roar, the hind turned towards the sound and the stag came into view.

There's a running joke about the quality of deer on my blocks. No *Maximus Giganticus* stags around here, just Jeff and his mates, yet this specimen was a little better than your average Brisbane Valley roughie. I continued to watch both deer, at times dropping below my eyeline into the wallow then reappearing among the wooden growth of lantana. Even though my view was at times partially obscured, there was certainly a shot in it somewhere on a good stag.

For the second year running I'd a set of shooting sticks in my pack, a bipod which extends almost to standing height. I quietly made myself ready and bum-scooted with rifle and bipod towards some good cover about 120m off the water. Eventually the stag shifted a little and clearly exposed its vitals through the overgrowth and branches, the hind remaining nearby and occasionally causing the stag to perk up. A rhythm of sorts became apparent as the hind would garner attention, the stag would look back then settle again.

I cycled the action on my deer rifle, the trusty Tikka .30-06, the load a well-constructed 180-grain Norma Oryx. I regarded this load a little too stout for red deer, but I had sambar in my future plans so had set the rifle up in February to take all-comers. The stag heard the metallic click, momentarily lifts his head then resumed a more relaxed position. The shot rang out with the target hit low in the chest as I saw him spin and try to head uphill, while the hind broke in the opposite direction.





SHOT INBOUND! THE 2025 STAG ON THE GROUND.



It's been my experience that a shot red will try to escape uphill and this one was no exception as he cut up and behind a lantana patch. As with almost all deer I've ever taken, I experienced a momentary sense of doubt but my more rational mind told me he was still behind that bush. I watched, ready for a follow-up but nothing much happened so I decided to move forward. Reaching the cover, I circled around and found the stag on his side with the rack slightly lifting his head.

The impact point was visible with the 180-grainer doing its job, just like last time. The antlers showed signs of damage, the bey tine broken though still long enough to be visible through the binoculars. It's a trait on almost all antlered deer I've taken off the block, they sure do scrap a lot. My phone told me a storm was inbound and, to punctuate the point, I heard a rumble and felt the air become decidedly thicker.

I set up a bolthole for my gear and went to working breaking the stag down for transportation. After some heavy work I had backstraps, quarters and antlers ready to go, the load then secured to my meat-hauler pack. With everything on board except antlers (I'd have to come back for them) I set the pack on the slope, sat myself down below it, secured the straps, rolled a little to the side and hauled myself upright.

The rain started to fall as I began slugging it out towards the farmhouse, my chosen route direct and flatter though I'd have to navigate a locked gate. I passed my rifle through, did my best to keep it out the mud and decided to keep the pack on while I climbed the heavily constructed obstacle. It held my combined weight but, as I

kicked my leg over, the pack shifted so I hung on tight then very slowly brought my other leg over.

With feet back on the ground I collected my rifle and kept moving. In sight of the boundary I stopped for a breather, sitting again with the pack slightly above me. Getting up a second time almost proved my undoing but I held my balance. The entry gate to the block was a rain-induced mudhole and I'd visions of falling over and thrashing around like an upended turtle, though apart from the squelching of my boots I passed through the final gate without incident.

I didn't know at the time but the rain would set in and fall uninterrupted for another 24 hours. Good news was I able to set my tent up in a semi-open tractor shed, the roof providing ample shelter while the open sides allowed a breeze to flow through and partially dry my gear. I placed the meat on ice to cool before moving it to the car fridge. It's amazing just how much heat a fresh kill contains, so cooling it down helps the fridge operate more efficiently over a few days' hunting.

With the meat away, I slugged it back to retrieve the skull and by the time I got there was thoroughly soaked so set about skinning it. With that done I changed and headed to a nearby town for a feed, though not before threading the now cleaned skull through the rails of a metal fence. A couple of hours later I returned to the sounds of a growl and loud, metallic clunking - the farm dog was trying its best to run off with the antlered skull.

It really needed to be out in the open so I hit on the idea of storing it high up in the exposed frame of the shed roof. In the early hours of the morning the dog returned to alternately whimper and bark at the skull. I'd soon had enough and, giving back my own growl, all went quiet and with it my 2025 red deer Roar. ●

CWM Life Membership honour for Chris

WORDS:
MATTHEW GODSON

Life Membership represents the highest recognition within the Conservation and Wildlife Management (CWM) South Australia branch, bestowed only on members who've provided exceptional and sustained service following a rigorous nomination process, endorsement by Council and final approval by members at an Annual General Meeting.

In late September, Chris Carroll was awarded Life Membership in recognition of his outstanding contribution and dedication to CWM (SA). Chris has been a member since 2011 and has held several key leadership positions including secretary, vice-president and multiple terms as president. In each of these roles he demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing the objectives of CWM, consistently identifying opportunities for improvement and ensuring the organisation remains focused on its mission.

In addition to his Council service, Chris has been an enthusiastic activity coordinator and team leader, encouraging participation and supporting the development of new members. He's dedicated significant time to running the Spotlight Accreditation program at Monarto, enabling members to gain important skills and qualifications.

His strong professional networks across government and non-government organisations,



CHRIS CARROLL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AND DEDICATION.

particularly his relationships with senior staff in the Department for Environment and Water, have been invaluable to CWM. Chris is widely respected for his knowledge, integrity and sound judgement.

One of his most notable achievements was his instrumental role in establishing CWM's involvement in the South-East deer program. His persistence secured twice-yearly access to the program, which has since become one of our most significant and well-attended activities. This initiative alone has resulted in the removal of more than 1000 deer and provided members with opportunities which wouldn't have been available otherwise.

Chris also coordinates activities at Brookfield Conservation Park, which provide members with the chance to develop practical field skills such as map-reading and GPS use, while contributing to the control of goats, foxes and feral cats. This program has been particularly important in offering new members accessible opportunities to participate and contribute.

The award of Life Membership reflects Chris' exceptional service, leadership and dedication to CWM (SA) over many years. On behalf of the all those who know and have worked with Chris, we extend our sincere congratulations and gratitude to him for this well-deserved honour.

Australia's ultimate deer hunting cartridge?

BILLY ALLEN PUTS THE CASE FOR THE .270 WINCHESTER

The roar of a red stag echoes through the Queensland bush and there he stands, the trophy of a lifetime with his massive antlers crowned in the dawn light and a prize every hunter dreams of. In that heart-pounding moment you need a rifle and cartridge you can trust, gear that's reliable and efficient when it matters most.

My Sauer 100 in .270 Winchester delivers in that moment, dropping the deer cleanly and proving what my father, my mates, and I have known for years: the .270 Winchester is Australia's ultimate deer hunting cartridge. Its flat trajectory, deep penetration and century-old legacy, backed by Jack O'Connor's wisdom and stories of Aussie deer hunters, make it the go-to for that once-in-a-lifetime shot.

In Australia where hog, red, fallow, chital, sambar and rusa thrive across vast habitats, the .270 Winchester excels, its versatility, reliability and mild recoil making it ideal for new and seasoned hunters alike. I've chased deer with it in Queensland as have my family and friends, the rifles they've selected in the cartridge spanning the market from Ruger to Sako and telling a story of trust in one which never fails.

A CARTRIDGE BUILT FOR DEER
Introduced in 1925, Winchester necked down the .30-06 Springfield to a .277" bullet to create the .270 Winchester, a round which balances power and precision. Jack O'Connor, the legendary *Outdoor Life* writer, made it a house-

hold name and in a 1943 *Life* magazine article, called it "the finest medium-game cartridge extant", praising its flat trajectory, accuracy and manageable recoil. O'Connor hunted sheep, elk, and deer across North America with the .270 Winchester at his side, proving its lethality on game larger than our sambar.

Its ballistics are stellar. A 130-grain bullet leaves a 22" barrel at 2950-3100fps, delivering about 2700 ft-lbs of energy and retaining 1500 ft-lbs at 300 yards, meaning the .270 Winchester has plenty of hitting power for any Australian deer. Its slender profile and high ballistic coefficient (BC) give the it the same penetration abilities as larger calibres using heavier bullets. A 130-grain .270 Win rivals a 165-grain .30-calibre or 140-grain 7mm, while a 150-grain .270 Win equals a 180-grain .30-calibre or 160-grain 7mm. This sectional density ensures deep penetration, rivalling magnums without their punishing recoil, meaning for Australia's deer it's an ever-reliable option.

VOICES OF .270 HUNTERS

My father Brad has carried his Ruger M77 stainless synthetic for 30 years. "When I was a kid the .270 Winchester was a big deer rifle calibre, with most people carrying a .243 Winchester," he said. He added the positives of hunting deer with a .270 Winchester were "mild recoil, cheap ammo and deer not running far if you hit them right".

Brad has used everything from hand-me-down factory loads to premium rounds and all have proven deadly on hog to sambar. "If you put



RECOVERED FACTORY 130-GRAIN
BARNES TTSX .270 WIN PROJECTILE
WHICH PENETRATED A FALLOW DOE
STANDING BROADSIDE AT 120 YARDS
AND HIT THE TREE BEHIND HER.



BILLY MOMENTS BEFORE TAKING THE SHOT OF A LIFETIME ON A RED STAG WITH HIS SAUER 100 IN .270 WIN.

a good .270 Winchester bullet into the boiler room it's over." He recalls a mate's sambar hunt in Victoria's Highlands, where a 150-grain .270 Win dropped a stag at 250 yards with no chase needed. The calibre is Brad's deer-hunting soulmate. He's owned and hunted with his Ruger M77 in .270 Win for three decades now and I feel qualified to report he's sentimental about both a rifle and cartridge which has seen him through the majority of his hunts in this country.

Greg, a deer-hunting mate, uses a Sako Finnlight and believes the .270 Win's flat trajectory trumps his old .308 Winchester, saying it kills beyond proportion to what you'd expect. He chose it after hearing fellow hunters praise its performance. Greg once took a chital stag at 300 yards in hilly, open country with the bullet punching through both lungs. "You don't need a magnum when a .270 will do that," he said. "The .270 has this way of making long shots feel easy. For an old deer hunter like me, it demonstrates a propensity to be an overall accurate cartridge."

Dan, a mate with a new Tikka T3x in .270 Winchester, picked it because it mirrors his other T3x in .243 Win's stainless-synthetic setup. "My dad's hunted with a .270 Winchester since I was a kid," he says. "Everyone I talked to about a true deer-hunting rifle said it's the best for that purpose." Dan's taking it to Africa for a plains-game hunt with his guide encouraging him to bring the .270 Winchester, telling him it's more than up for the job and advising him to run 150-grain bullets on the trip.

Well-travelled hunter Geoff favours a 1983 Sako AV restocked with custom timber and I've taken fallow, chital, sambar and 25 African antelope species up to the size of a kudu with it. On a recent hunt in the Brisbane Valley he took a red stag at 311 yards, the bullet travelling ridge top to ridge top and executing a high heart-lung shot. "It's not just a beautiful firearm it's a practical hunting rifle made to fit me," he said.

When carrying a .270 you don't need to prove anything. It's a deer hunting calibre and cultural icon being reliable, proven and widely available. There's no need for trendy new calibres when we already have a cartridge that can do it all.

BALLISTIC ADVANTAGES FOR AUSTRALIA

The .270 Win's attributes are tailor-made for our diverse landscapes. Its point-blank range reaches 400 yards on a six-inch target with plus-or-minus three-inch deviation, as O'Connor noted when zeroing his rifles. This suits shots from 100 yards in dense bush to 300 across open paddocks. With a 22" barrel standard on my Sauer 100 it balances velocity and portability, ideal for stalking through scrub or hills. Recoil is modest at about 17 ft-lbs in a 7.5lb rifle, making it comfortable for new hunters or long days afield.

Ammunition is a strength with factory loads from Winchester, Remington, Hornady, Barnes, Norma and others both affordable and plentiful.

Ethically it's a winner with its slender bullets moving at speed to destroy vital organs through deep penetration, with the bonus of secondary hydrostatic shock wound cavities created by fast velocities on impact. Death is instantaneous.

It's a win-win through its ability to create tissue damage via primary and secondary wound channels. I've seen deer drop instantly with well-placed shots, while Geoff's African harvests show it can handle bigger game animals too. For Australian hunters the .270 Winchester is more than enough gun to take deer, from our smallest species to our largest.

PRACTICALITY AND TRADITION

Aussie hunters tend to select proven calibres and rifle makes, with most major manufacturers offering the .270 Winchester in their lineups from budget-friendly to high-end makers. My Sauer 100 fits me well, Dan loves his Tikka's familiarity, while Geoff cherishes his Sako's custom stock. Brad's old workhorse Ruger is all he's carried for three decades of deer hunting with a .270 Winchester.

Dan followed his father's legacy, choosing to make the .270 Win his deer hunting rifle. I personally picked it for its shorter action and barrel, lower recoil and impressive ballistic penetration abilities. After a century of service, the cartridge has continued to prove its worth as a valuable deer hunting option.

ETHICS AND O'CONNOR'S LEGACY

Hunting is about respect for the animal, the land and the craft and the .270 Winchester delivers clean, quick kills to minimizing suffering. My deer harvests have fed my family and eased grazing pressure, aligning with conservation goals. O'Connor wrote: "It kills way out of proportion to its size," a truth I've seen with every deer taken. I grew up hearing how the .270 Winchester outperformed heavier rounds, its mild recoil and accuracy making it forgiving for new hunters, while its lethality satisfies veterans. Whether you're stalking fallow or calling in reds, the .270 Win bridges generations.

WHY CHOOSE THIS ONE?

If you're new to deer hunting and shopping for a rifle or considering a change, the .270 Winchester is your answer as its flat trajectory, deep penetration and low recoil make it versatile and approachable. From Brad's Ruger to Geoff's custom Sako, it shines across setups and my mates' stories confirm its dominance. Jack O'Connor knew it, my family and friends know it and any Aussie hunter who's dropped a deer knows it too. The .270 Winchester isn't just a cartridge, it's a legacy which belongs in your deer-hunting kit. ●



ALL RIFLES WERE IN .270 WIN DURING A BRISBANE VALLEY DEER HUNTING CAMP THIS YEAR. BILLY'S SAUER 100, BRAD'S CERAKOTE-COATED RUGER M77 AND GREG'S SAKO FINNLIGHT.

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Free venison on the menu

JOE NORRIS MADE THE MOST OF A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

A young bloke I worked with was a keen hunter and we hit it off from the start as we were always comparing stories after our days off. Eventually I invited him to my farm where he managed to take a nice stag just on dark in one of my hay paddocks. The stag was in the late stage of velvet so was mud fat and, as we were able to recover the whole animal, Daryl took the venison home in his portable freezer.

For the next few weeks he raved about the eating quality of the meat and kept asking if he could harvest some more. Unfortunately my farm has some highly toxic native plants growing on it, so the deer which do migrate up there either don't stay long or simply die from heart leaf or iron wood poisoning. Being browsers they tend to eat a lot of leaves on shrubs and trees, so are prone to being poisoned by these plants.

This means deer or feral goats can't be reliably found on my place though we do see them occasionally. I explained the situation to Daryl and suggested the best course of action, if he wanted to harvest venison, would be to contact some

of the properties further south than mine with decent deer populations and ask for permission to take some cull animals.

A month or so later he told me he'd found a place where we could try for venison if I was keen, so we made plans to hunt the property as soon as possible. I travelled from my farm and Daryl from Blackwater to meet in Charters Towers, Queensland before heading on to the property. We planned on camping by one of the rivers and harvesting some deer during the next few days. I hadn't been in contact with the property owner so didn't know the rules as far as what we could or couldn't take, yet was hopeful of a trophy stag so I could practice the taxidermy I was teaching myself.

When we arrived at the homestead and spoke to the manager he told us we could take as many does as we want but not a stag, as the owner was charging hunters a trophy fee for those. This was fair enough as we were just grateful for the chance to take some prime venison. He showed us where we could camp and also the cold room, where we'd be able to hang the carcasses prior



A HANDSOME STAG BUT
OFF-LIMITS THIS TIME.

to breaking them down for freezing. This was a pleasant surprise as we'd planned to hang them in a tree overnight to let the meat set, though we'd now be able to process the deer properly and avoid unnecessary wastage.

There were literally hundreds of deer on the place and it wasn't uncommon to see herds of 50 or more at a time. We started hunting next morning and it didn't take us long before we had the first couple of does on the ground. Daryl was using his 300 Blackout as he didn't want to make any more noise than necessary, while I had a noisy 7mm Rem Mag so didn't shoot unless targets were out of Daryl's range.

We checked out a creek system north of the house and found deer camping in the belah scrub along the channels. I managed a shot at a mature doe which didn't seem to have a fawn at foot and, after collecting the carcasses and gutting them, put them in the cold room to set overnight. I cut the fillets out of the first one for our use while we were there, then boned the front end out for the manager's dogs and left them to hang overnight.

After the first day Daryl decided the extra range



LINING UP ON DEER BETWEEN THE TREES; SHE COULDN'T SEE OR SMELL US BUT STILL KNEW SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT.



JOE WITH HIS TIKKA
7MM MAGNUM.

of his 22-250 was better suited to the area, so the next couple of deer were taken cleanly using that rifle. Chital does aren't overly big and the light projectiles had no problem taking them with one shot behind the shoulder.

We left the carcasses with skin on and sheets of cardboard on the floor to minimise the mess in the cold room, as I find it's actually easier to skin a cold carcass than a warm one. The room was running slightly above freezing point so the meat was setting very well overnight. We only put a few deer in each day so we could take yesterday's out and cut them up, which made the job far easier.

Once we'd enough meat in the cold room each day, I took my camera for a walk to see if I could stalk up and take some decent photographs of deer as they went about their business in the timbered river country (I was also keeping an eye out for any shed antlers). I managed some nice photos of unsuspecting deer so was happy with that, though if I knew a bit more about photography and the workings of my camera I could've had some truly remarkable images. I'm hopeless when it comes to light settings, so a lot of the early morning or late afternoon photos were either over or under-exposed, or shaky from trying to hold steady while the long shutter time required kicked in.

At one point I was well within bow-hunting range of a doe as she was feeding around in the timber. The wind was right and she hadn't seen me but still sensed something wasn't right, as she kept going on full alert looking for something

amiss. The only thing I can put it down to is the fact I was watching her intently and trying to take decent photos.

I've been told by people both here and overseas you shouldn't stare intently at an animal you're stalking as they can sense it, and I believe that was the case with this doe. Once I started to look away and relax it was remarkable how quickly she did likewise, so I'm convinced she could feel me there even though she couldn't see or smell me.

When we'd had enough of stalking deer with the cameras each day, we'd retire to camp on the creek and cook up a feed of venison or take a dip in the clear running water to cool off. Each evening we'd take a wander, looking for feral pigs as we could shoot as many of them as we wanted. Even though we were there to collect venison we couldn't resist hunting pigs as well and managed a couple. We didn't see too many big ones but Daryl did take a solid boar right on dark as we made our way back to camp.

We'd just passed the dump where we'd been told to drop the scraps and guts from our butchering when the boar charged from a bush right in front of the vehicle. As I was driving and Daryl in the passenger seat, he was able to grab my .243 rifle and place a bullet behind the shoulder of the boar. After a couple of days we'd collected plenty of meat so packed up and, after thanking both the land owner and manager for allowing us to harvest this excellent venison, headed back to our respective homes, both loaded with prime meat and memories. ●

Bargain hunt

SECONDHAND NEEDN'T MEAN SECOND BEST, FOUND MICHAEL NEWMAN

In this day and age it seems the only limiting factor when it comes to buying firearms and accessories is our budget (and ever-present government regulations). Technology is rapidly evolving, particularly in thermal optics, and what was the latest and greatest a few years ago has been surpassed by TNBT (The Next Big Thing).

My interest in firearms was rekindled in 2023, coinciding with a rural property purchase on the edge of the Great Southern Region in Western Australia. With tall timber, water and plenty of feed and cover, it's an ideal habitat for the usual feral suspects. Foxes are never in short supply and with rabbits and feral cats on offer, there's enough to keep a property owner occupied during a nocturnal paddock stalk. Throw in occasional visits from pigs and fallow deer and the need for flexibility in managing these pests soon becomes apparent.

To buy new on everything required to manage this situation was simply beyond my available budget, so how do you deal with ferals without taking on a second mortgage? Two calibres were decided on very early in the piece and, despite the extra cost, I decided on 22WMR for my rimfire requirements and 243W as my centrefire calibre. The former gives me extra range and a good spread of projectile weights, while the latter's a mild-recoiling (albeit rather loud) option for managing those larger invaders.

My preferred method of locating ferals is at night on foot using a thermal monocular, a secondhand Pulsar Axion unit found online being my current go-to feral finder. It gives me enough range without getting too close and sufficient



HEAD-SHOT RABBIT TAKEN WITH A 30GR VMAX IN 22WMR.

definition to positively identify my target prior to engagement. Buying a thermal scope was out of the question, so two night vision devices (one Picatinny rail-mounted and one clip-on) were acquired for this purpose.

So the calibres and tech are all well and good but what do I bolt the tech on to? I almost acquired a CZ 515 in 22WMR, until an LA101 virtually dropped in my lap during a visit to my local gun shop. With a round count of less than 50, it came ready to go with a Vortex Diamondback 3-9x44 scope at a fraction of new cost. After resolving initial issues with the factory magazine, the Lithgow product has become Public Enemy No.1 among the ferals in my neck of the woods.

I originally planned to go All-Australian with an LA102 until a Mauser M18 presented itself and I went with the German option which currently



wears a Burris Fullfield IV 4-16x50 scope, also acquired for a fraction of new cost. Another low-round count purchase, I put a packet of ADI 87-grainers through the Mauser and discovered one of its less-endearing characteristics - it's loud!

With the changes in WA regulations, I needed an insurance policy in case the Mauser could no longer be retained and again, a chance visit to my local resulted in a low-cost solution to this potential problem. Enter the Marlin 336 XLR in 30-30 complete with Leupold scope and exactly 14 shots fired. It's a fun gun to shoot, though the ferals at my place would disagree if they could.

But has it worked in the field? For my purposes it certainly has. A subsequent night out saw me bag a pair of rabbits and end the night-time reign of terror in the chook yard by a pair of feral cats. It also saw me dispatch a healthy dog fox, who was too intent on enjoying his dinner of kangaroo to notice me creeping in to spoil his meal.

Yet the benefits go beyond financial. My farming neighbours appreciate my efforts in helping keep the feral population under control and, if it

AND THE SECOND (MORE THAN 3.5KG) LESS THAN TWO HOURS LATER; DOG FOX WHO HAD HIS KANGAROO DINNER INTERRUPTED BY THE LITHGOW; ONE OF A PAIR OF FEMALE FERAL CATS TAKEN WITH THE LITHGOW.

helps give Australian native species a chance to recover, I'm more than happy to carry on. So how much did I save on new price? I can't answer that exactly, though I did make substantial savings which could be used elsewhere (I reckon it's somewhere north of \$4000). The Marlin set-up was acquired for less than half its new replacement value and the Lithgow slightly more.

Of course a couple of things had to be new purchases. I'd hoped to pick up a secondhand tripod but they just weren't available, so with the money saved elsewhere I was able to buy new. It's light enough to carry about my place on foot and provides a stable platform for dispatching uninvited guests.

Throughout this experience I realised you need to do your homework and be persistent, knowing what your end goal is and working back from there. Be it perforating paper or popping pigs, know your budget and work your plan accordingly. I knocked up a basic Excel spreadsheet to track my purchases and figure out what was realistic and what wasn't. A little personal discipline is essential when all you want to do is buy the shiny new toy at your local.

So where do you look? Aside from your trusted local dealer, the SSAA Gun Sales website has been productive and a certain section of a well-known social media platform has also turned up a few bargains. There are others out there and, with a little homework and effort, you too can prove you don't always have to buy new to be successful. ●

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DEAR SHOOTER



SHAVING GRACE

I've just read Derek Nugent's article on Widder knives (*Shooter*, September 2025). Believe it or not I used to buy and use Widder and similar German-made hollow-ground knives for shaving when I went bush! I was brought up in an era when most men used cut-throat razors which weren't much good in the great outdoors.

Enclosed is a photo of a couple of hollow-ground knives I made cold out of 100-year-old (large) industrial pommy circular sawmill blade steel they used to quench in whale oil. I still have some old Widder knives in my collection, dating back from when I was a boy more than 70 years ago.

Carl Drysdale, WA

LEFTY SPECIAL GOT IT RIGHT

Thanks for the July left-handed special edition of *Australian Shooter*, it's nice to see we do have a place in this right-handed world. Reading articles about teachers trying to change your writing hand, I had the same problem but whacked one teacher on the hand with a ruler after a couple of attempts to change me. I was five and can still remember it (they never tried again).

I've been shooting for 60 years, mostly rimfire and air rifle, and back then left-handed .22s were very hard to find and expensive. So it's nice to see at long last more manufactures are offering

left-handed rimfire rifles. Back in the early '80s I went to a Sako presentation and hit them up about making a left-handed .22, which they said they were looking into as they'd done a survey and found 20 per cent of shooters were lefties. They must've done a lot of looking then passed the matter to Tikka.

In 1996 I went to the Silhouette Nationals in the US, hoping to find a top-quality sporting rifle. I spoke to all the lefties and only one had an 'okay' left-handed rifle with all the rest using right-handed ones. I came home bitterly disappointed. There was a custom rifle manufacture there as a sponsor, though even he wouldn't come to the party and build a lefty, even after an offer of money.

About 20 years ago at a club day shooting paper targets, there were 24 shooters and eight of us were lefties, the most I've ever shot with. I live in New Zealand but have been a SSAA member for 35 years as I come across to shoot silhouettes. I now have a few lefties in my safe and the good thing is there are more of us around now. Keep up the good work on the magazine, it's one of the best.

Geoff Brewer, via email

LOVE THE NEW LOOK

Just received my July copy of *Australian Shooter* magazine and the new layout looks amazing! Well done to the publications team and thanks for a great read. Keep up the good work and straight shooting.

Trent Seale, NSW

SCOPE FOR PRAISE

I'd like to share a recent positive experience. Not so long ago my very expensive Pulsar Thermion DUO DXP50 riflescope stopped working. I was quite concerned, especially when I realised that after all my pre-purchase research I'd only glanced at the warranty's terms and conditions. My concerns deepened when I called the distributor who'd answered many of my pre-purchase questions, only to find they were no longer the Pulsar distributor.

However, the lovely lady I spoke to directed me to the new one, TSA Outdoors, where I was put in touch with their thermal expert Tim, who quickly determined the unit needed to be assessed by their technician and arranged postage. A few days later Tim called to say the scope wasn't repairable and asked if I'd accept a later, upgraded version in lieu. Hardly two weeks after the breakdown the new scope was installed and zeroed so thanks very much to Tim and TSA Outdoors.

Guy Moore, via email

THAT'S DEDICATION!

Ken and Marj Silk have been devoted members of SSAA Spring Bay Pistol Club for 40 years. Ken has held numerous positions including club president, captain, safety officer and coach to name but a few, while Marj has also been highly active as scorer, secretary, coordinator, cleaner and painter.

They came to Tasmania from Canada with a background in hunting. Ken joined the Tasmanian Police Force and has many stories to tell from those days, including failing a recruit in the firearms course for scratching his head with the foresight of a loaded pistol!

Their devotion to the club has been exceptional and, by way of recognition, they've been granted lifetime membership of the club.

David Brough, vice-president, SSAA SBPC

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.

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.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

April 3-6, 2026
 SSAA Majura Range, ACT
 Program: April 3: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 40 shots Rimfire Hunting Rifle followed by 40 shots Centerfire Hunting Rifle. April 4: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots centerfire. April 5: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots rimfire. April 6: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots Air Rifle. Prizes: Medals all grades including juniors, two-gun medals and team trophies. Facilities: Camping on range with water and showers, canteen all weekend. Contact: David True 0423 043 663 or dtrue222@gmail.com.

ACT

Gallery Rifle State Championships

January 14-15, 2026
 SSAA ACT, Top Range
 Program: Wednesday 14: T&P1 30-shot GRFC or Classic, 1500 150-shot GRFC or Classic, 50m Precision 30-shot GRFC or Classic, Multi-target 24-shot GRFC or Classic. Thursday: T&P1 30-shot GRFC or Classic, 1500 150-shot GRFC or Classic, 50m Precision 30-shot GRFC or Classic. Facilities: Camping available. Contact: Mark Lovell gallery.rifle@ssaaact.org.au

Early Australia Day Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championship

January 16-18, 2026
 SSAA Majura Range, ACT
 Program: Friday 16: 8.30am practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots air rifle. Saturday: 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots rimfire. Sunday: 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots centrefire. Prizes sponsored by RDT Products for all grades including juniors. Facilities: Camping on range with water, power and showers, \$10 per person per night, juniors free. Canteen all weekend. Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or mnl1@live.com.au or David True 0423 043 663 or dtrue222@gmail.com.

Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette State Championships

January 19, 2026
 SSAA Majura Range, ACT
 Program: Dawn to 8am practice and weigh-in for Black Powder Smallbore Cartridge Rifle match, 8.30 Black Powder Cartridge Rifle match. 1pm practice and weigh-in, 2pm 40 shots Black Powder Cartridge Rifle. Facilities: Camping on range with water, power and showers, \$10 per person per night, juniors free. Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or mnl1@live.com.au or David True 0423 043 663 or dtrue222@gmail.com.

NSW

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

Tasmania

Tasmania 5-Stand State Championships

November 7-9, 2025
 T42 Riddell Range, Runnymede, Tas
 Program: Friday: Supplementary events, sub-gauge and side-by-side Championships (50 targets each). Saturday: 5-Stand State Championships, state team selection shoot one of two, 100 targets on two layouts. Sunday: 5-Stand day two, 100 targets on two layouts. Facilities: Camping and canteen available but limited, please be self-sufficient. Contact: Dale Foggo 0408 361 638 or dalepest@msn.com (email preferred).

WA

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.

SSAA Inc Event Cancellation /Postponement Policy

An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA Inc, SSAA State Office or club directive.

SSAA Inc will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA Inc championship event for any reason. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Don't let your National or State championship be overlooked. Give it maximum coverage by promoting it in online and in print in *Australian Shooter*, the SSAA's National flagship publication. Visit ssaa.org.au and go to 'Disciplines: Upload Event Notices', fill in the form and we'll do the rest.



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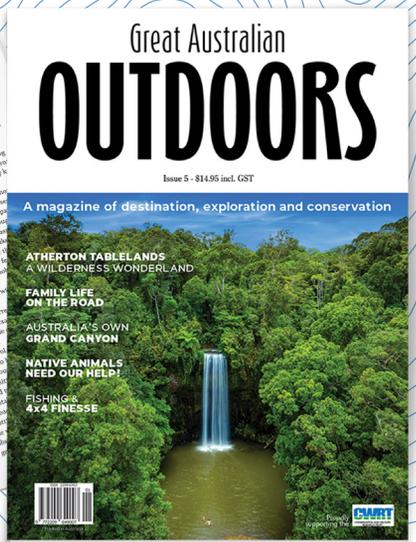
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HUNTING: IT'S ABOUT CONNECTIONS

WORDS:
MARK VAN DEN
BOOGAART



It's early o'clock and I'm quietly moving around, gathering my gear while the rest of the household sleeps. The process is almost automatic, a muscle memory built over years of preparing to head outdoors. Since my early teens I've stuffed various items into various bags and while, over time, the gear and bags have improved significantly, the process has remained the same.

What's changed has been the amount of equipment. It's a counterintuitive equation, an increase in gear against my slowly decreasing capacity to carry it. Thankfully, the day when this becomes more than a mild inconvenience has yet to arrive. Today's early start is a mere precursor for tomorrow when I'll hit the road around 3:30am for a long drive to Sydney. It's a 12-hour haul but I'll be travelling with Ian, which makes the journey more enjoyable.

We've been invited by the Hellenic Hunters to speak at their monthly club event, followed by an invitation to travel further south towards the border to hunt sambar. Now even those with only a passing interest in anthroponymy will quickly realise van den Boogaart has no business in the Mediterranean. Yet that's the beauty of Australia, our names are place markers of our individual pasts, not our shared future.

Actually the invitation and forthcoming trip are more than just a quirk of multiculturalism, they're a true reflection of the culture and cultural significance of hunting. Too often culture is presented as something divisible: Cue the culture wars. Be it race, faith, political persuasion or some other difference, there exists a destructive silo mentality when it comes to culture.

Knowing full well the surest way to erode a culture is to forcibly limit its application, there are those who seem hell-bent on doing just that. Over time they push those cultural pursuits they deem unnecessary, unimportant or irrelevant into the realm of folklore and eventually obscurity.

But here's the rub. Hunting seems to transcend boundaries perhaps because, at its core, it's about the game rather than just the individuals involved. From tundra to savannah or, in this case, from gouda to feta, the pursuit of game has shaped and continues to shape culture and traditions, even when those traditions are newly adopted.

Across continents hunting has long served to educate people about the natural world. In many Indigenous and rural societies it remains a vital practice, deeply embedded in cultural identity, tradition and

spirituality. While not so easily recognised, so too does modern recreational hunting. Even though our detractors would argue otherwise, we know recreational hunting's a multifaceted pursuit which exalts the idea and ideals of hunting as their own reward.

This has led to comparisons between hunting and sport. I never much liked the term sports hunting until someone explained that sport simply implies rules. Fair chase, seasons, bag limits, geographical boundaries, calibre and mechanism requirements and so on, these are the just some of the rules of sports hunting. For many, me included, the identity and spirituality of hunting is an expression of a connection with nature in an increasingly urbanised and digital world. The solitude of the bush, the rhythm of tracking and immersion into the natural landscape provides a form of mindfulness and mental clarity that's difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Beyond its individual rewards, recreational hunting fosters strong social bonds between people from diverse backgrounds, connected by shared values of stewardship, tradition and respect for wildlife, which brings us full circle to the point of all this. I have no network, social, work, familiar or otherwise that stretches so far and wide as hunting. With a single communication, air ticket and visa I can hunt and spend time with like-minded people across the globe. Closer to home, without my hunting connections there'd be no invitation to travel to Sydney and beyond to hunt sambar.

Ultimately, hunting reflects our shared human experience. A hunting camp is so much more than just another fireplace, it's a focal point of storytelling, mentorship and sharing of knowledge. Within these gatherings, connections are created which rise above the boundaries that so often divide us. Whether practiced for survival, recreation or tradition, hunting's a powerful expression of our interconnectedness and reminds us not only of our ancestral past but also our responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world for future generations.



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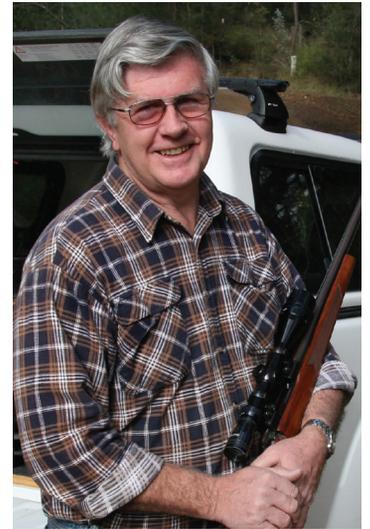




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