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November 2019

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November 2019

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Our November cover

Sam Talbot tries his hand at muzzleloading.

NEXT ISSUE



John Dunn has reviewed the new CZ 457 Premium rimfire, a striking rifle with classic European looks and several design features which set it apart from previous lines of CZ rimfires.

Styrka riflescopes are new to the Australian market and Con Kapralos laid his hands on three models which he says represent tremendous value - and they carry an attractive warranty and free annual tune-up service.

Jagemann are one of the largest rifle and pistol brass case manufacturers in the US and Daniel O'Dea reckons Australian reloaders could do a lot worse than give them a go.

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PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Email: mem@ssaa.org.au

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Phone: 08 8272 7100

Fax: 08 8272 2945

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EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR..... Allan Blane
ASSOCIATE EDITOR..... Thomas Cook
ASSISTANT EDITOR Dave Rose
CHIEF OF STAFF Jennifer Martens
ART DIRECTOR Mike Barr
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
& GRAPHIC DESIGN Judy Ward
GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Natalie Kuhlmann
MEDIA & POLITICAL LIAISON OFFICER Nadia Isa
WEBMASTER Mark Fieldhouse
ADVERTISING REP..... Karoline Wasiak
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER Sam Talbot
ADMINISTRATION Debbie Wing
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... John Dunn
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... Rod Pascoe

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Russell Mark, Matt Amos, Henri Lach, Douglas Riach, Daniel O'Dea, Dave Pearce, Luke Higgins, John Maxwell, David Hughes, Dick Eussen, Con Kapralos, James Hoffman, John McDougall, Chris Redlich, Geoff Smith.

STATE CONTACT INFORMATION

For SSAA inquiries please contact your state SSAA office:

NSW 02 8889 0400	WA 08 9497 7919
Qld 07 3281 3447	SA 0419 849 452
Vic 03 8892 2777	ACT 0423 043 663
Tas 0418 734 008	NT 0402 013 918

NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

SSAA National Chief Executive Officer

and Chief Editor **Tim Bannister**

Wildlife Programs **Matthew Godson**

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

Phone: 08 8272 7100

SSAA National Accounts Office

PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Phone: 02 8805 3900

Email: accounts@ssaa.org.au

SSAA General Insurance Brokers

Unit 1, 212 Glen Osmond Rd,

Fullarton, SA 5063

Phone: 08 8332 0281

Freecall: 1800 808 608

Fax: 08 8332 0303

Email: insurance@ssains.com.au

Please mail all correspondence for the

SSAA National Executive to SSAA,

PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Email: ssaa@ssaa.org.au



Now it's official: Recreational shooting is good for you

Australia's recreational shooters and hunters are happier, healthier and fitter than non-shooters, deliver a \$2.5 billion boost to the economy each year and create tens of thousands of jobs. The Economic and Social Impacts of Recreational Hunting and Shooting report commissioned by former Federal Sports Minister Bridget McKenzie, now Minister for Agriculture, and successfully lobbied for by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has highlighted the benefits of the recreation to our nation.

The Report found "hunting and shooting provides opportunities for physical activity as well as pathways for greater wellbeing" through connections with the great Australian outdoors. It also established that shooters had greater confidence, enjoyed social networks, undertook more physical activity and had better nutrition than the average Australian.

The economic benefit is more than five times that delivered by the Melbourne Cup each year and helps fight the monetary cost to Australia of \$3.7 billion in poor health and inactivity. Now that winter has well and truly passed, the football is over, 'Bathurst' has been run and the cricket hasn't really started, what a great opportunity to head outdoors as a recreational shooter and venture into the countryside, bush or to your local SSAA range. I encourage all shooters to continue to play their part in this great sport which is now officially recognised as what all Australians could and should aspire to.

On a more sombre note, the severe drought in eastern Australia and early heat-wave has created a worse than usual fire situation that's already claiming victims in terms of both lives and property. It's often misunderstood or ignored that our shooting clubs and ranges are just as vulnerable as any other property simply because of their geographic locations.

The fire risk is ongoing as there have been shooting ranges, some with no insurance, burnt out and destroyed in the past

couple of months but our research exposes the greater risk to clubs. In recent years there have been a significant number of shooting clubs destroyed or severely damaged by cyclones, windstorms (tornadoes), fire and flood and the concern we should all have is under-appreciating the value and vulnerability of our facilities.

The fact that assets have been built up over a period of years often with volunteer labour, donated materials or grant funding doesn't always reflect the replacement value of the property or clean-up cost after a disaster. The dismissive suggestion that steel doesn't burn, blow down or wash away is just plain wrong.

We have real collective value in our property and a responsibility to see that such assets are properly insured. This doesn't mean some arbitrary figure plucked from a Saturday afternoon chat but involves a genuine value assessment, proper risk evaluation and consultation with a trustworthy insurance agent. I strongly recommend your branch or club has a conversation with SSAA General Insurance Brokers to ensure your material goods are properly covered.

That's why SSAA General Insurance Brokers exists - to assist our branches and members in acquiring the right and best protection possible.

On a lighter note, we'll have a full report on the successful 2019 Melbourne SSAA SHOT Expo in next month's *Australian Shooter* as well as a feature on the launch of Parliamentary Friends of Shooting in Canberra for the new Federal Parliament. In the meantime enjoy your health, happiness and prosperity as an Australian shooter.

Geoff Jones
SSAA National President



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Back issues now digital

IN RESPONSE TO requests from members, back issues of *Australian Shooter* are now available to view digitally. We have gone back to February of this year and uploaded each edition and will continue to add the current issue as it becomes available. Simply log on to ssaa.org.au, choose 'Publications > Australian Shooter' and follow the brief prompt to view your favourite shooting magazine online.

Is honesty the best policy?

I'M CONCERNED AT what I consider a blatant potential risk of inappropriate people finding my address as a registered firearms owner. On my wife's behalf I contacted the government's My Aged Care service but before any assistance we had to be 'assessed', which is understandable.

This was hand-balled by the Federal Government to our local City of Moreland council. What's not understandable, nor acceptable, is the assessor before visiting wanted to know "whether there were any firearms in the house?" I was horrified but we needed assistance so I answered 'yes', objecting to the question on security grounds.

The assessor said it was a 'work safe' requirement so I've no doubt the information was recorded, leaving me vulnerable as a target for robbery should it ever, inadvertently or otherwise, be leaked. Every other aspect of the assessment and subsequent assistance was excellent, leaving me concerned only from a security aspect.

I called Victorian Firearms Registry who were aware of and complacent with the procedure, which they too explained was for the "safety of assessors under work safe requirements".

The general public has obviously been conditioned by the police and media, without mentioning the Greens, animal-libbers etc to ostracise, fear and suspect licensed gun owners. No doubt illegal gun owners will answer 'no', leaving assessors feeling safer but more vulnerable than with a licensed firearms owner.

Name and address supplied

Compensating in reverse

I READ WITH great interest Brad Allen's article on bullet trajectory in June's *Australian Shooter* as I, like 'Nigel', was also taught in basic training that trajectory of 5.56mm rounds from the Austeyr did increase their trajectory by 100mm at

100m, back down to 20mm at 200m and flat at 300m, similar to his third diagram on P89.

This theory cost me dearly when a friend took a call from a mate on a property which had mung beans ready to come off and pigs were helping themselves. We got there just on dark and came across a good mob coming out of the leucaena in the neighbouring paddock to feed.

The three of us crept to the fence-line and chose our targets, mine a big fat sow, and fired. There were two solid 'whacks' but my target took off straight back into the shrubs. Confused at how I could have missed I figured the bullet must have passed over the pig, even though at the range we were at I'd dropped my sight to counter the rising bullet.

I now realise, like Brad's son Morgan, I actually put the round below the pig by compensating the wrong way. Sometimes simple explanations are best, so thanks Brad.

Adam Burling, via email



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: communications@ssaa.org.au

Q Is my firearm covered when being transported and what can I do to cover myself when it comes to transporting firearms in general?

Chris, via email

A SSAA Members Firearms Insurance does extend to cover your firearm while in transit but it must be accompanied by you, the insured. The insurance does not extend to cover the firearm if being transported from

dealer to dealer, so my advice to you is threefold.

1. Discuss what insurance options the dealer has in place to cover the goods they're shipping around Australia.
2. Arrange insurance through Australia Post (I also suggest you contact the firearms registries in your state for further information).
3. Contact SSAA General Insurance Brokers as we can take all your details and forward them to the various underwrit-

ers for their terms and conditions, including premium.

It's important to note that with transit insurance the policy must be in place and paid for before transportation begins. For any other insurance enquiries or for a free quote, call us on 08 8332 0281 or visit ssaaib.com.au



Isn't that Tom cruise?

MY WIFE AND I went on a 14-day ocean cruise to Alaska and had an experience I thought you might like to share. I was up on the pool deck not long after shoving off when my wife told me there was someone who wanted to talk to me.

A lady had approached her asking if my name was Tom. She was puzzled but answered "yes". The lady's name was Gail, her husband was Barry and they were from Brisbane. Barry had told his wife he reckoned I was a writer with *Australian Shooter* and had recognised me from my photos in the magazine.

We were all a bit surprised by the whole situation and talked for quite a while, later meeting several times to discuss shooting and our common interests. They were a lovely couple and we enjoyed spending some time with them.

There were 3900 passengers on the ship but we ran into them several times during the seven days they were on board. I was just happy to discover someone actually reads my articles - this really is a small world!

Thomas Tabor (North American correspondent)

Muzzle brake did the trick

AFTER READING ADRIAN Hancock's question in Top Shots (August 2019) about his daughter's pending rifle purchase, I'd

like to share my experience. I bought a Weatherby 308 with sports barrel, took it to the range to sight-in and try my handloads - 130gr with 48gr of AR2208. After some 60 rounds in a five-hour session my shoulder was tender.

The following week, with a beautiful butt bruise and sore shoulder, I was shooting my .17 HMR and on the first shot I flinched. After weighing up my options I decided my new Weatherby was worthless to trade in so bought a muzzle brake, had it fitted and now the gun's a pleasure to shoot. My next rifle purchase, a 6.5 Creedmoor Ruger American, has a factory brake and is also a smooth shooter.

So my suggestion for Adrian is to find someone who has a rifle with a brake fitted in the chosen calibre and have his daughter try it. I'm not a small bloke but my shoulders are spent and a muzzle brake has stopped me flinching, bruise and pain-free, even though I doubt 60 rounds in the field will happen in a week, let alone five hours.

Glen Thornton, via email

Brits didn't horse around

IN THE 'LETTERS' pages of your July issue, Michael Cook's rebuttal to Geoff Smith's answer on military rifle 'woodwork' (furniture) is off the mark. The Boer 7mm Mauser Model 1893/95 hand-guard was primarily for hand grip in bayonet fighting, which wasn't a feature of Boer tactics anyway.

Where is there a record in the Anglo-Boer War of troops 'fleeing on horseback with rifles slung over the back of the horse' or 'British attempting to copy these tactics . . . exposed barrels of the Lee-Enfields burnt the horses, causing them to bolt and throw their rider'?

Most British forces were not mounted, the Hussars or Cavalry had Magazine Lee-Metford and Magazine Lee-Enfield carbines with full-length hand-guards to the muzzle. Mounted Infantry and Imperial Yeomanry used rifles though these were not 'slung over the back of horses' but carried in leather buckets. Most renowned units of the Mounted Infantry were colonials from Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Shortcomings of the MLM and MLE compared to the Boer Mauser related mostly to charger clip loading, sights and overall length. A standard-length rifle was adopted for mounted troops and infantry in 1903, the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield. Full-length hand-guards through two world wars and Korea until adoption of the 7.62mm L1A1 had nothing to do with 'exposed barrels burning horses'.

Ian Skennerton, QLD



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Wild dogs putting the bite on koalas

A media release from the National Wild Dog Action Plan highlights the plight koalas find themselves in from dog attacks. Wild dogs are killing so many koalas that experts are warning they may be pushing vulnerable populations to the brink of extinction and without intervention it's feared populations in Queensland, NSW and ACT could be wiped out by dingoes and their hybrids.

A four-year study by a group of koala experts has identified that wild dogs are by far the most significant threat to koalas in the areas of their research projects. This study confirmed that in Queensland's Moreton Bay region, 63 per cent of koala deaths were from predation by wild dogs, carpet pythons and domestic dogs.

It was found that of deaths caused by dogs, dingoes and hybrids accounted for 82 per cent and domestic dogs only two per cent. Prior to this study most people accepted that vehicle collisions and disease accounted for many koalas but the wild dog threat had not been adequately recognised as a major one.

Australia's National Wild Dog Management Coordinator Greg Mifsud viewed the results of the study as a wake-up call to the community. He said although dingoes and wild dogs are killing koalas and posing a direct threat to their survival there are ethical, targeted

strategies which can effectively control them. But one certainty is that action needs to be taken sooner rather than later or struggling koala populations look doomed.

The media release also highlights a recent project that worked out a way to identify individual dogs which are attacking and killing koalas. The way to do this is by sampling genetic material such as traces of saliva on prey in which you can isolate DNA then, with genotyping, pinpoint the predator. The way this could help koalas is that wild dog management programs can specifically target and remove problem individuals.

The project found most koalas were being killed by single dogs and some individual dogs were responsible for multiple koala deaths. If you were to run a control program where you knew which dog was responsible for most koala deaths, you could potentially run the program until that dog has been taken care of.

Koalas are an iconic species in Australia and no one wants them to vanish from the landscape. With the rise in habitat loss due to housing development in south-east Queensland, SSAA Queensland is doing its bit to improve koala habitat at their Stewartdale range in the Ripley area which has large sections of land dedicated to conservation. It's known as the Stewartdale Nature Reserve.

The Reserve is the largest privately-owned state-funded koala habitat restoration project ever undertaken in Queensland, involving the planting of 113,000 trees across 210 hectares of the approximately 1000-hectare property that was cleared long ago when previous owners used it for cattle grazing. Since being in the SSAA's care, the wider area outside the active ranges has been left mainly untouched apart from minor improvements and activities to reduce fire danger and the conservation value of this property grows every year as the revegetated areas mature.

The planted trees have been in the ground for five years and the survival rate of the plantings has been extraordinary. The trees are now at a stage where koalas can feed from them but they'll need larger trees scattered across the area to climb for protection. Over time this area will be important koala habitat and luckily for any koala who calls this place home, the SSAA will be there to provide protection from future urban development and feral predators.



Send questions to:
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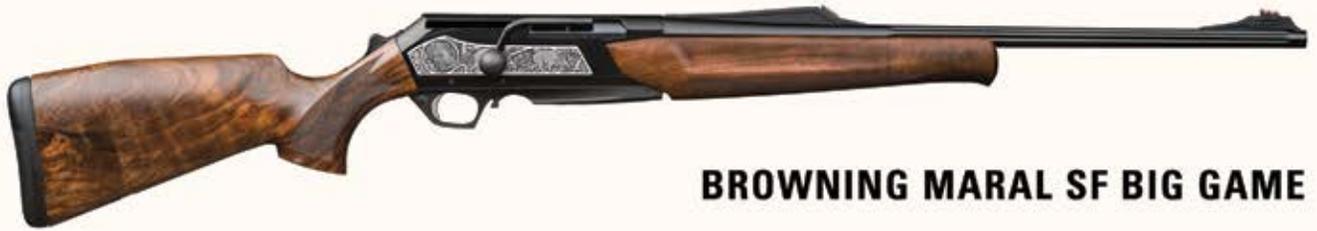
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Clay Target Q&A

WITH RUSSELL MARK

Q I lost a lot of weight on my doctor's advice and eventually shed more than 50kg. I have a Browning Sporter that used to fit me pretty well I thought but it's about 18 months since I fired the gun and now I can't hit anything and all of a sudden the shotgun recoils more and kicks me in the face like crazy. Have you any suggestions on how to fix this? It's a standard out-of-the-box shotgun without an adjustable stock.

Ben Carney, NSW

A I'm assuming the last time you shot the firearm was 18 months ago when you were more than 50kg heavier. That's a lot of weight to lose and no doubt your body shape has changed significantly. One of the first places you'll notice a change in body shape is your face - less fat on your face generally means less 'cast' needed on your stock to align your eye down the centre of the barrel.

If I also make the assumption you're right-handed then the cast on your stock will be known as cast 'off' and the fatter your face the more cast off you need. If you're gaining weight you just keep adding cast to keep your eye centred. If you don't have an adjustable comb on the stock of your shotgun you can add cast by either thinning the comb (taking wood off the side of your stock) or actually having the stock bent, which is commonly done with the aid of heat and weights and has varying degrees of long-term success.

Bigger people absorb more recoil and the less you weigh the more recoil you'll feel though the 'actual' recoil of the firearm will not have changed.

Because you've lost weight, adding cast won't apply to you and I'd assume you need less cast as the fat you once had on your cheeks has now gone. Filing off the wood on the side of your comb is obviously not an option. You could try having the stock bent but the best solution is to have an adjustable comb put into the stock.

You say the shotgun has suddenly starting kicking you more but this is a myth providing you're not using faster ammunition or shells with more shot in them. The gun's 'perceived' recoil though would no doubt be more. Bigger people absorb more recoil and the less you weigh the more recoil you'll feel though the 'actual' recoil of the firearm will not have changed.

If you're feeling recoil in the face, the adjustable comb I advise you to get may go a long way to solving the problem. Less cast will mean you can put your face firmer down on the stock, which will help. If you select

an adjustable comb that can also adjust the amount of 'drop' in the comb (the angle the comb falls from front to back) this will also help alleviate some of the 'cheek slap' you describe. Sporting shotguns generally have about 20mm of slope difference between the front and back of the comb so try adjusting this to 15 or even 10mm and you should start to feel the difference.

Finally the 'pitch' of the shotgun may also need adjusting. If you were a big guy then you probably needed lots of pitch (the angle the recoil pad sits on your shoulder). If you've lost a lot of mass in your shoulder/breast bone area then too much pitch will cause the shotgun to recoil downwards, making it difficult to keep your face and therefore your eye aligned down the centre of the barrel.

Well done on being proactive, losing the weight and no doubt extending your life. These adjustments in cast and drop will be easy to apply once you have your adjustable stock. The great part is if you put that weight back on you can simply move the comb back to your 'fat' position though sadly you may not live long enough to enjoy it. It's a no-brainer Ben - keep the weight off and enjoy many more years of shooting with your Browning Sporter.



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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS ?

• John Dunn • Paul Miller • Greg Riemer • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

email: edit@ssa.org.au

Q Can you please explain the procedure for measuring water buffalo horns to score for the SCI system.

Peter Curr, Qld

A The SCI scoring system is designed to wring the maximum number of points or inches out of every trophy, unlike the Douglas System which is based on symmetry. While I'm not a scorer, I understand the SCI system requires that four measurements be taken for buffalo horns, one around the rim or base of each horn (not the girth) and one around the front or fighting edge of each horn with the base of the horn set up square against a flat surface. The photos show how each measurement is made.



Measuring the length of a buffalo horn.



Measuring around the base.

Once the measurements have been recorded, they're added together to provide a final score. A set of horns that scores 100 points or more is generally considered to be trophy class. Bulls provide the heaviest horns but I have a set of buffalo cow horns that stretch 176cm from tip to tip and they never fail to impress.

Scores allow trophies to be compared with others and while that's important to some hunters, my personal view is that the hunt itself, how the animal was taken and the memories they provide are far more important than a numerical score.

John Dunn

Q I'd be grateful for your advice on buying a muzzle brake from overseas before I risk potentially breaking the law to save a few dollars.

Muzzle brakes can be legally purchased in Australia, including via mail from various websites, but are also available from international websites such as eBay which are much cheaper. Is it illegal to buy a firearm accessory such as this from overseas and would it be categorised as an import requiring a special licence or permit?

Mark Burnard, via email

A While state legislation doesn't stop people from buying muzzle brakes, federal Customs legislation could make it difficult. For example, when you look at firearm parts, they specifically mention barrels and there's a general paragraph at the end saying "something other than a complete firearm that includes one or more of the above items". Because of this I think you should contact your local firearms authority and seek an opinion as to whether a B709 import permit may be required.

A dealer friend told me: "If it makes it into Australia, the importer will need a B709 from their state police. This shouldn't be difficult though it's better to obtain it before importing. However, to legally export the muzzle brake from the US (I'm guessing this is the most likely country a person will import one from), they need to be listed on an export licence which costs US\$250. The likes of Amazon and eBay won't ship items that require an export licence.

"Without an export licence items can be stopped at the border before making it out of the US and will then be forfeited. So the buyer would either need the seller to com-

plete the export paperwork - unlikely for a low cost item - or have it done by a third party such as a federal firearms licensed exporter. There is export fee exemption for items less than US\$100 but the export paperwork must still be done."

Geoff Smith

• Since receiving Mark's initial request, he reports that he went ahead and bought the muzzle brake on eBay and it "sailed through Aussie customs the same day it arrived, no questions asked".

Q Could one of your Top Shots please explain what the ballistic coefficient of a bullet is and how it is relevant to reloading?

Gavan, Qld

A The ballistic coefficient (BC) of a bullet is the measure of its ability to overcome air resistance in flight. For a technical explanation and history of ballistics, Google 'ballistic coefficient' and you'll find a wealth of information. For the purpose of this answer a bullet's BC is a given number you can use with bullet weight and speed to determine trajectory in the cartridge of your choice. The higher the BC number, the more aerodynamic the projectile.

If you're a reloader or contemplating reloading, you need a manual like those published by Nosler or Hornady. If you pick a cartridge like the .223 or .308 you can see all the projectiles the manufacturer makes and compare the different BCs of those projectiles for any given weight, then put those details into a ballistic program to see the expected trajectory each projectile will follow according to its weight, speed and, most importantly, its ballistic coefficient.

Generally, target projectiles have higher BCs than hunting bullets although with the advent of plastic-tipped projectiles like Nosler ballistic tips or Hornady V-Max, we see some very slippery customers in these projectiles which are designed for hunting and often give target-grade accuracy. Sharply pointed projectiles have much

higher ballistic coefficients than round-nose projectiles designed for smashing through brush and deep penetration on big game.

Ballistics is a huge and fascinating science, but for your purposes try to pick the bullet weight and construction that fits the job you want it to do whether it be target or hunting. Load the ballistic data into an online ballistic program (I use the one on the Hornady website) including the range at which you want the bullet zeroed. You'll have an extremely accurate assessment of what that bullet should do in your rifle. You'll need to test the rifle with your reloads at the ranges you expect to shoot so you can check the exact trajectory as it will not be identical.

Paul Miller

• Thanks for the question Gavan. We're sending you a copy of *Ballistic Allsorts*, Ian Thompson's definitive written work on the subject - Ed.

Q Some time ago I came across this rifle in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. The farmer said he used it for shooting rats. It's a 9mm .22 cal over-and-under and on the breech it has 'Manufacture Francaise d'Armes et Cycles de Saint Etienne'. Below it has 'Carabine' (Buffalo) on the barrel, cal. 9mm (Burhka) cal. .22 Court St Etienne.

Your help to identify this rifle would be much appreciated as I'd like to have it restored. And have you ever heard of a 9mm rimfire?

Chris Jaeger, SA

A The Buffalo carbine was produced by Manufacture d'Armes et Cycles de Saint Etienne from around 1900 to the 1920s. It was available in .22/6mm and .22/9mm. Your example has a rifled .22 bore and a smooth 9mm bore drilled into one piece of metal, forming the barrel.

The cartridges are fired by a rectangular firing pin that strikes both cartridges at the same time, so to fire a single shot only one cartridge is loaded. Both chambers also share the same extractor. A three-shot



model - the Buffalo Mitrailie (many shots) - was also available and a bolt-action single-shot pistol was also produced under the Buffalo name.

The company later traded as ManuFrance making shotguns under their name as well as Bentley and Sterling. As far as I know, 9mm rimfire shot cartridges are still being manufactured by Fiocchi as there are many small varmint (rats and mice) guns still used throughout Europe.

9mm rimfire ball ammunition was once available for the Buffalo but I don't have an example to show you. These days the shot cartridges are made of brass unlike the older versions pictured. Thanks to firearms historian Dennis Cooke for his input.

Rod Pascoe

Q I do a lot of medium to long-range rabbit and fox hunting with my Remington .22-250 rifle. I have a 6x-18x power scope mounted on the rifle and would like to buy something to estimate what distance the target animals are at so I can more accurately place my shots. What do you suggest?

Ray, via email

A Basically you have three choices Ray - you can buy a laser rangefinder, a pair of binoculars with built-in rangefinder or a telescopic sight with built-in rangefinder. I have used all these devices and found the range readings of all three to be very accurate. Probably the most practical to use is the scope with built-in rangefinder as this is one unit which does both range finding and trajectory calculations.

The rangefinder and binocular-rangefinder have similar functions so I'd probably opt for the straight rangefinder, just because they're a lot cheaper. So it really boils down to personal choice and how much you want to spend as all of them will estimate the distance accurately.

Barry Wilmot



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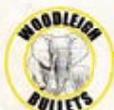
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Collaborative approach to chital research SSAA provides vital funding

Matt Amos

Keith Staines supports a sedated chital hind while Matt Amos fills out a data sheet. (Photo J. Hampton)

The early morning midwinter sun is a welcome warmth on my back as the chopper disappears from view below the not-too-distant treeline, the regular 'wokka-wokka' replaced by the roar of the engine on full revs. Attention straining on every detail coming from the direction of helicopter, the crackle of the UHF radio nearly makes me jump. "Dart in, dart in," says pilot Dave over the radio, as cool as a server reading back your order in a McDonalds drive-through. Not the tone you expect from someone chasing a chital hind flat-out across a patchily-treed plain at low altitude with only seconds to get into position for a dart to be fired.

SSAA volunteer Keith Staines and project leader Tony Pople discuss the likely whereabouts of the darted deer, trying to work out

what track or fenceline we could use to get as close as possible. Wildlife veterinarian Jordan Hampton and I triple-check the kit in our backpacks to make sure we have everything ready to process the deer once sedated.

Meanwhile Mike Brennan is talking to the pilot on the radio and has already started the vehicle, ready to leave as soon as we pile in. "Animal slowing up," comes the latest update as we head off. So begins another day of operations on the Queensland Northern Chital project (to be continued . . .)

We were working together north of Charters Towers on a collaborative research project trying to fit satellite GPS tracking collars to chital deer hinds. The project started in 2017 with the aim of increasing our knowledge of the ecology, spread and

management of chital deer in the Burdekin Dry Tropics and fitting tracking collars was an important step in monitoring their use of habitat, reproduction and population dynamics.

Tracking collar deployment started in August, 2018 with a trial of helicopter darting of chital to fit collars. The trial was a steep learning curve for all involved as, while our New Zealand cousins have conducted lots of helicopter darting and net-gun capture of deer, there's no documented methodology for aerial darting deer in Australia. That August trip resulted in 15 deer being successfully collared.

From the literature, anecdotal evidence and my limited experience in ground-darting chital, red and rusa deer, chital appears the toughest of the four deer



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Collaborative approach to chital research

species in Queensland on which to do this type of work. They're easily stressed and prone to hyperthermia (abnormally high body temperature) and suffer myopathy, a disease associated with capture of wild animals which causes muscle damage - linked to extreme exertion or stress - often resulting in death. To add to this complexity we were darting from a helicopter which adds another stress level.

The trip this winter (June, 2019) saw us implement strategies and protocols learned the previous year. We monitored body temperature and applied water externally if needed to cool sedated deer. Helicopter

chase time was limited to less than 10 minutes and, if a dart bounced, the deer was not pursued further to avoid the possibility of a double dose of darting drugs. Jordan the vet was on hand to help keep sedated animals alive, provide expert advice on drug doses and combinations and had some additional equipment - a pulse oximeter and some medical-grade oxygen. With his help we switched to a new darting drug combination this year with great results.

The 2019 trip was hugely successful, fitting 19 collars, and with the 15 from the previous year a total of 34 chital deer are being tracked, providing us with one-hourly



Keith Staines supports a sedated chital hind as oxygen is administered via a nasal tube. (Photo T. Pople)



Keith Staines monitors the hind with a pulse oximeter.

GPS fixes. These deer have been monitored by the project's PhD student Catherine Kelly to track when they fawned and if the young survived. This work can be trying as the deer are flighty and difficult to monitor at close proximity, hard to see in long grass and even harder to assign young to mother when in a group. However, the satellite GPS collars have been a crucial part of the project during this time, recording a GPS location hourly and supplying information on home range and habitat use.

Biosecurity Queensland (part of Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - DAF) sends its sincere thanks to all our project partners including the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, James Cook University (JCU), New South



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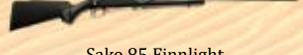
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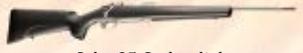
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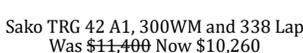


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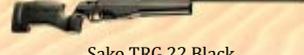
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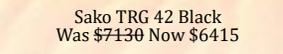
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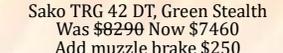
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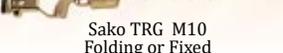
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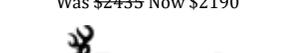
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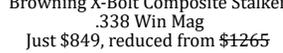
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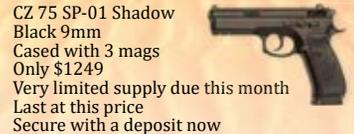
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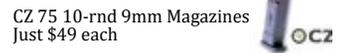
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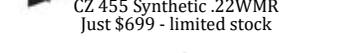
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Collaborative approach to chital research

Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and Ecotone Wildlife Veterinary Services (EWVS).

Special thanks go to SSAA President Geoff Jones for his support in getting this project off the ground and to SSAA National who bought some of the satellite GPS tracking collars, helicopter hours and supported Catherine with an academic bursary in 2018.

Mention also goes to Keith Staines (SSAA volunteer and deer hunting/darting expert), Jordan Hampton (EWVS), Ben Hirsch (JCU), Dave Forsyth (NSW DPI), Sean Reed and Chrissy Zirbel (DAF) and a special nod to pilot Dave Fox and aerial marksman Jamie Molyneaux of Fox Helicopters, Richmond. The skill, teamwork and dedication of this pair must be seen to be believed, working at very low altitudes chasing such small, fast-moving animals.

This chital deer research collaboration will continue for at least another 12 months and the crucial information gathered will inform our greater understanding of the basic ecology of chital outside their native range, population growth and spread, habitat use and factors that will help with management and control into the future.

Research findings will be published in Catherine Kelly's PhD thesis, peer-reviewed scientific journal articles and presented at the Australasian Wildlife Management Society Conference and the Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference. For further information email Matt.Amos@daf.qld.gov.au

Continued . . . *The vehicle slows to a halt on direction from the chopper, we grab our kit and walk straight towards the helicopter about 300m from the track. Directions from above steer us to the deer, impossible to see*



from even 15m in the thick grass and scattered shrubs, and on making visual contact the chopper pulls back to allow the deer a couple of minutes to settle.

Backpacks are stashed to free up our movements. Keith and I, crouching, make a slow and low approach through the grass which ends in a co-ordinated tackle on the hind, just in case. Experience has taught us that a seemingly dopey deer can still make a remarkably quick getaway, especially from a tentative approach and just one pair of hands.

Thankfully this hind is well sedated and Keith quickly puts a blindfold in place while supporting her head and rolling her on to her chest. I grab the collar and kit from the bag while Jordan cuts the dart out with a scalpel and cleans the wound with Betadine then we fit the collar and take some body measurements.

Meanwhile Jordan is checking her pulse, breathing and blood oxygen saturation with a pulse oximeter. Oxygen levels are a bit low so he administers some via a nasal tube. Rectal

temperature is slowly rising meaning it's time to douse her with water to keep that in check. Time from darting less than 30 minutes, time from approach less than 10 minutes.

We settle back to take stock and double check all the processing has been done and recorded properly - still another 10-15 minutes to administer reversal. The time drags as we've been busy and running on adrenalin but eventually the reversal drug is given and we move all the kit back and away from the deer in case she kicks and flounders. After 20 minutes of periods of struggle to regain control interspersed with rest intervals, the hind (that we named Skye) finally stays on her feet and wanders off with the occasional stagger.

We exchange high fives and report to the rest of the team that all's well with the final collared deer. We've tagged out and successfully fitted all the collars we had available - what a great way to finish the week. ●

• Dr Matt Amos is a scientist with Biosecurity Queensland.





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Dave Pearce



A 10-shot group showing a more average spread of shots and incorporating the best and worst of the three-shot groups.

We've recently seen a rise in popularity of the Long Range Precision discipline with shooters hitting small steel plates out to more than a kilometre and YouTube videos showing milk cartons being exploded a mile away - it's enticing! With advances in scope and rifle quality, such precision is within reach of the average person, so why not jump on board?

I admit I've been swept along trying to learn all I can about marksmanship, making the perfect handloads and striving for a ½ Minute of Angle (MOA) precision rifle (Minute of Angle is 1.14" or 28.9mm at

100m). There's no greater satisfaction than launching a projectile hundreds of metres through the air to strike exactly where it was intended. Yet my journey towards precision has endured many twists and turns - and a recent epiphany.

In the beginning

With my factory rifle and ammo I'd hit a cardboard box a couple of times at 25m, set my scope to the last shot and declare myself 'zeroed'. I was in this happy place for many years until a friend told me about 'grouping' and how his rifle was guaranteed to fire three shots into under MOA. Now I was a

sucker for anything that claimed to improve accuracy: glass bedding, re-crowning, more expensive rifles, chassis systems, new mounts, barrels and triggers, custom actions, European scopes - I bought them all.

After several new rifles, lots of range trips and load development my bullets started regularly clustering into less than an inch at 100m and occasionally less than half an inch. Yet despite my success I still had occasional unsettling results that niggled me, 'flyers' that landed wide for no apparent reason. I blamed myself and my gear but the bottom line was I craved more precision.



An 11mm or sub MOA 10-shot group at 50m with Dave's Anschutz 1416 and Vortex Viper PST 3-15x44 - the red is the remainder of a 1cm round sticker.

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CAL. .25	9	290cc	250 BAR	3.2 KG	76 CM
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CAL. .22	10	290cc	250 BAR	3 KG	103 CM
CAL. .25	9	290cc	250 BAR	3 KG	103 CM
CAL. .30	7	290cc	250 BAR	3 KG	113 CM

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The pursuit of ultimate precision

The reality check

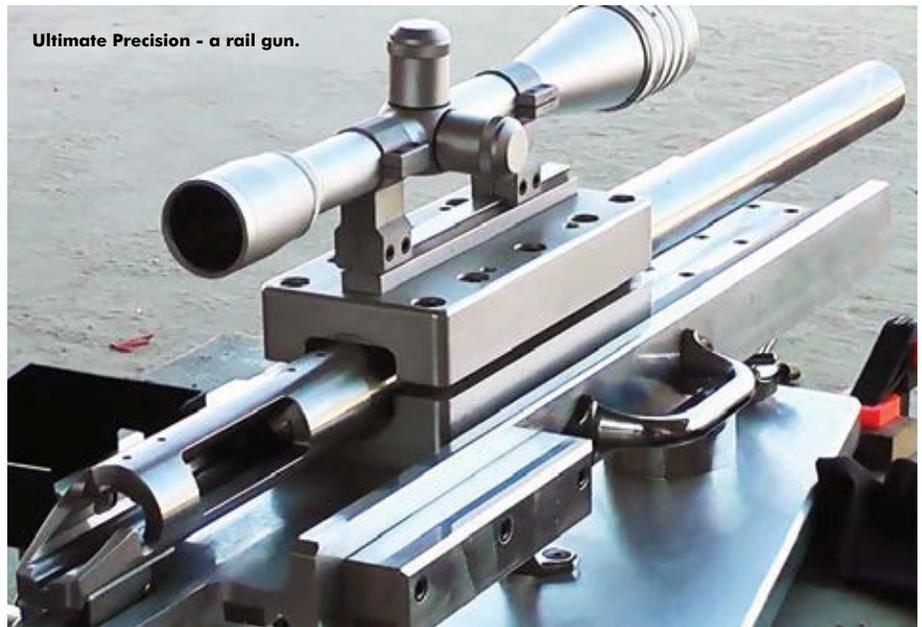
My rifle upgrades were only buying incremental improvements in precision so what next? A rail gun, a bench-mounted rifle with truck-axle barrel? But wait, the reason I have rifles is for practical competition and putting meat on the table - it's hard to take a rail gun hunting bunnies.

Bryan Litz writes in his book *Accuracy and Precision for Long Range Shooting*: "It's common knowledge that small groups are good (this is precision) and a good zero and trajectory prediction are important (accuracy)". So if you're a target shooter and hunter like me, accuracy is clearly more important than precision alone. Accuracy comes from knowing how to build a steady position in the field and understanding the trajectory of your bullet, both things that must be practised away from the bench.

In *The Art of the Rifle*, Jeff Cooper states: "Far too many shooters believe that what they can do from a bench is what they can do in the field and this, of course, is a fallacy . . . the competent marksman will seek his field zero from a field position." Now I realise I've spent too much time working on precision and too little time honing my accuracy skills.

The seductive three-shot group

When searching the internet you must be careful what you ask for. If you search for 'precision rifles' you find stories of precision, but if you try 'problems with' or 'the truth about' you uncover dirty secrets behind those illusive one-hole groups. It's well known that three-shot groups are notoriously misleading and indicate nothing reliable and if you shoot enough small groups some of them will look fantastic. But the average group size will actually be two or three times the size of a three-shot group and it's not until you fire 10 or more shots



you start to see a reliable representation of that rifle's precision.

So I grabbed my Anschütz 22LR to test the theory, shooting several three-shot groups and taking a photo of the best and worst. Then I shot a couple of 10-shot groups which showed a more average spread of shots and pretty much incorporated the best and worst of the three-shot groups.

Rick Jamison, author of the Precision Reloading column in a UK shooting magazine, uses a machine rest for testing. He fires 10-shot groups and explains that even under these controlled circumstances 'flyers' happen "a single bullet that for no explained reason flies out of what might have been a tight cluster . . . as more shots are fired to complete a 10-shot string, other bullets fill in the space between the main group and the flier to make a reasonably

rounded group. Ten shots are a more reliable indicator when it comes to predicting what a load is likely to do in the future".

Natural bias

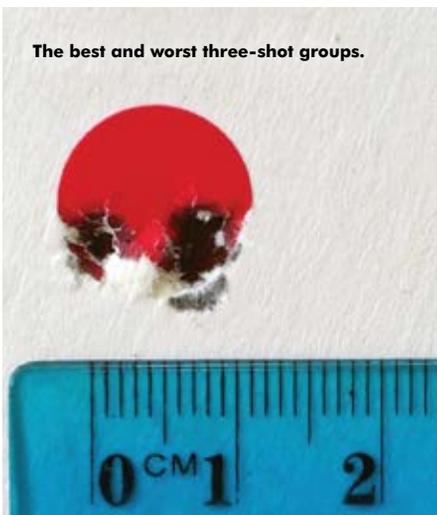
While hand-picking our most precise groups is misguided it is not deliberately misleading, rather a typical human trait we see in all walks of life. Psychologists call it 'selection bias' - we select events that matter to us: women notice when the toilet seat is up, men notice when they make the effort to put it down. The neat sub-MOA groups on my pin-up board show my selection bias - I'm looking for precision. To shatter my precision illusions I took a rifle that had produced a few pin-up worthy (nearly half-MOA) groups and fired a 10-shot group.

Get real

Jeff Cooper wrote: "The master rifleman is a man (or woman) who can shoot up to his rifle. That means he can eliminate human error and place his bullets within the mechanical limitations of his weapon. The man whose groups, fired from field positions unsupported, match those he fires off the bench may be called a master marksman. We do not encounter him too often."

Now I realise trying to fluke a tight three, four or even five-shot group is really not helping me. The value of bench shooting is to establish exactly what my rifle and ammo combinations are capable of and what the average or 'mechanical' precision is (using 10-shot groups). Once I've established my average group size I can determine the size of targets I could realistically expect to hit

The best and worst three-shot groups.



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The pursuit of ultimate precision

at various ranges (my accuracy). If I plan to shoot a rabbit at 200m a 1 MOA rifle will be needed, while for a goat at that distance a 3 MOA rifle is acceptable.

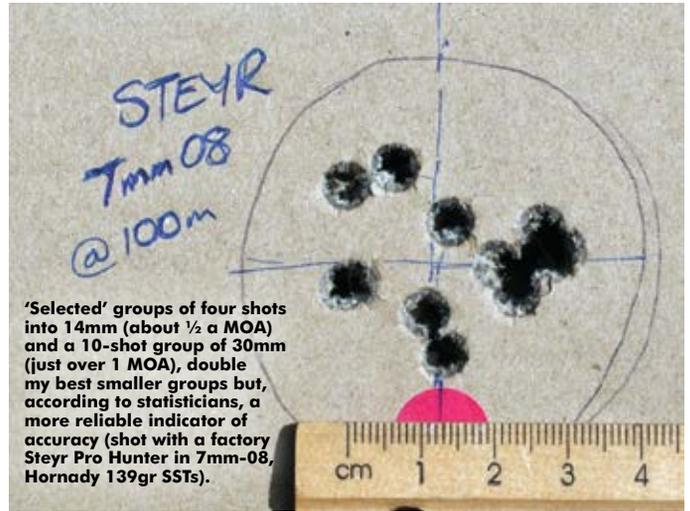
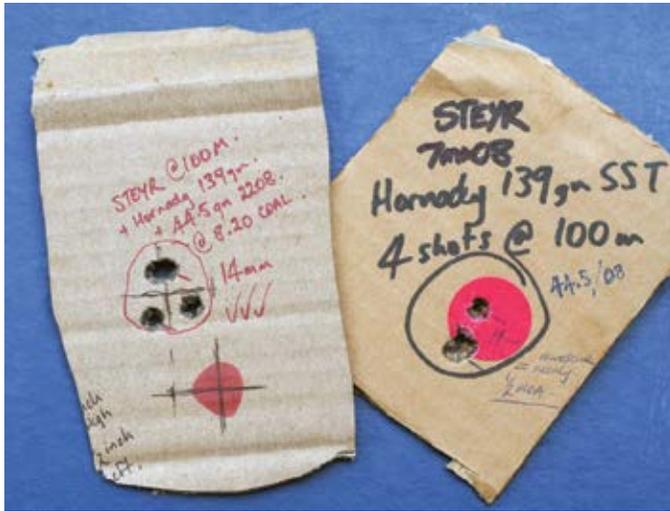
So my plan going forward is to establish my rifle's precision making best use of the equipment I have, find my rifle's average mechanical precision and live with it and take Jeff Cooper's challenge to develop my field accuracy. I must learn the trajectory of bullets for all distances I shoot and

know how to adjust for this with my scope, practise field positions and steadiness and assess my capabilities and limitations.

While accuracy is not critical when practising or competing for fun, it's essential when hunting as I don't want to injure an animal. This is when it's crucial to put all this theory into practice and know exactly what you and your rifle are capable of at any set distance.

I was recently asked to cull animals for

a neighbouring landholder who wanted to watch over my shoulder as I shot, so I used my rangefinder for a range I knew the rifle was precise enough at, took a prone position so I could be accurate enough and sent the bullet where it needed to go. Gotta love when a plan comes together. ●



'Selected' groups of four shots into 14mm (about ½ a MOA) and a 10-shot group of 30mm (just over 1 MOA), double my best smaller groups but, according to statisticians, a more reliable indicator of accuracy (shot with a factory Steyr Pro Hunter in 7mm-08, Hornady 139gr SSTs).

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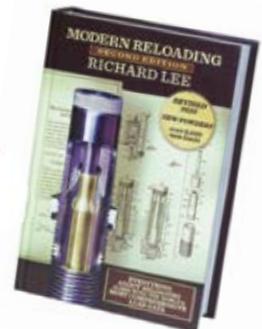
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Talbot on target! Muzzleloading

Communications Officer Sam Talbot steps back in time for the latest challenge as he continues his quest to shoot the SSAA disciplines.



If I've learned one thing from shooting the SSAA disciplines it's that so much of the sport is steeped in history. For centuries firearms were loaded from the muzzle end so it's fitting the SSAA has the Muzzleloading discipline to celebrate this unique practice and the many firearms which use this method. So like countless shooters before me, this month I too loaded a firearm from the unconventional end and learned about the many ingenious ignition systems that were dreamt up along the way.

How does it work?

Muzzleloading caters to the original and replica rifles, muskets, handguns and shotguns used during Australia's colonial days, the firearm categories very detailed with each having its own classes and subsections. Rifle events are shot from the offhand, cross-sticks/prone, benchrest and sometimes kneeling/sitting positions, while shotguns are shot around stations placed various distances from the thrower. In addition to range shooting, Muzzleloading shooters are often enthusiastic followers of historical events and re-enactments.

Lots of different firearms can be used in Muzzleloading including rifles, muskets, shotguns, revolvers and pistols. In fact, anyone looking to compete in all available Muzzleloading events in all categories would have to shoot more than 30 and need several different firearms.

National discipline chairman Kim Atkinson told me it's the firearms which set Muzzleloading apart from other disciplines. "You're using genuine or replica firearms from the 1800s as well as black powder single-shot cartridge rifles from the 1890s," he said.

"These firearms are as accurate as any centrefire rifle and Muzzleloading is perfect >

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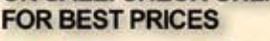
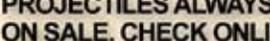
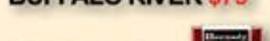
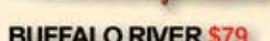
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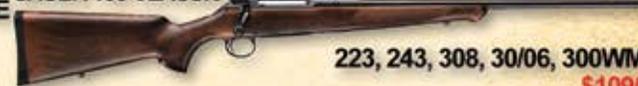
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Talbot on target!

for using these types of rifles safely and effectively in competition. The best way to learn Muzzleloading is to read the rules on the SSAA website, find a range that shoots the discipline and pay them a visit.”

So that’s what I did. My local SSAA Para range shoots rifle and shotgun Muzzleloading and I organised to meet section captain Frank Verdini for a shotgun shoot. Like many clubs there isn’t much focus on re-enactments at Para outside of special events, but competitors more than make up for it with interest in the firearms themselves.

At the range Frank explained some muzzleloading history and that, despite being cumbersome and needing lots of speciality equipment, firearms became more popular than bows and arrows for one main reason. “While it would take about 10 years to train someone to be proficient with a bow, the same person could become proficient with a firearm in just three months,” he said. This raised the question of how proficient I’d become in three hours. The answer is not very but I learned lots of theory.

Loading by the muzzle

Usually one of the easier parts of shooting is loading, but not muzzleloading, lots of measuring and pushing needed before going near the line of fire. But when you think about it, muzzleloading shotguns actually reload pretty similarly to modern shotgun cartridges, except instead of using a press you do it inside the barrel. It’s fairly simple once you get the hang of it.

Firstly, it’s good practice to block off the barrel you aren’t using. Then you add



black powder by pouring it down the barrel (Frank already had the portions measured out). Next, a piece of round cardboard is pushed down followed by an oily wad then another piece of cardboard. Now’s a good time to make sure everything is tight - so it’s all pushed down with a stick. Next the shot is added (we used 1oz) using a small measurer, before finishing off with another thin piece of cardboard and pushing everything down with the stick again. The firearm is now effectively loaded.

Ignition systems

Firearms are pretty simple. Take a tube, put in some black powder and a projectile then ignite it somehow. This was how firearms worked for a very long time but eventually we got better at the ignition part and this is one of the main differences in muzzle-loading firearms.

Percussion, flintlock, matchlock and

wheel-locks are the four types of ignition used to fire a muzzleloading firearm. Historically this takes us from the earliest practical hand-held firearms up to when smokeless powders replaced black powder. Each ignition system represents a jump in technology and ingenuity and all up they cover from the mid-12th century to 1886 when the French introduced the Lebel rifle using an 8mm bottleneck cartridge loaded with smokeless powder.

There are also different classes including Military, Traditional, Open, Firelocks and Shotguns. We were shooting Shotguns which are broken into two classes - percussion and flintlock ignition systems.

Finally - time to shoot

First up was a double-barrel Pedersoli percussion shotgun from the 1840s, quite modern by Muzzleloading standards. Percussion caps were introduced in the





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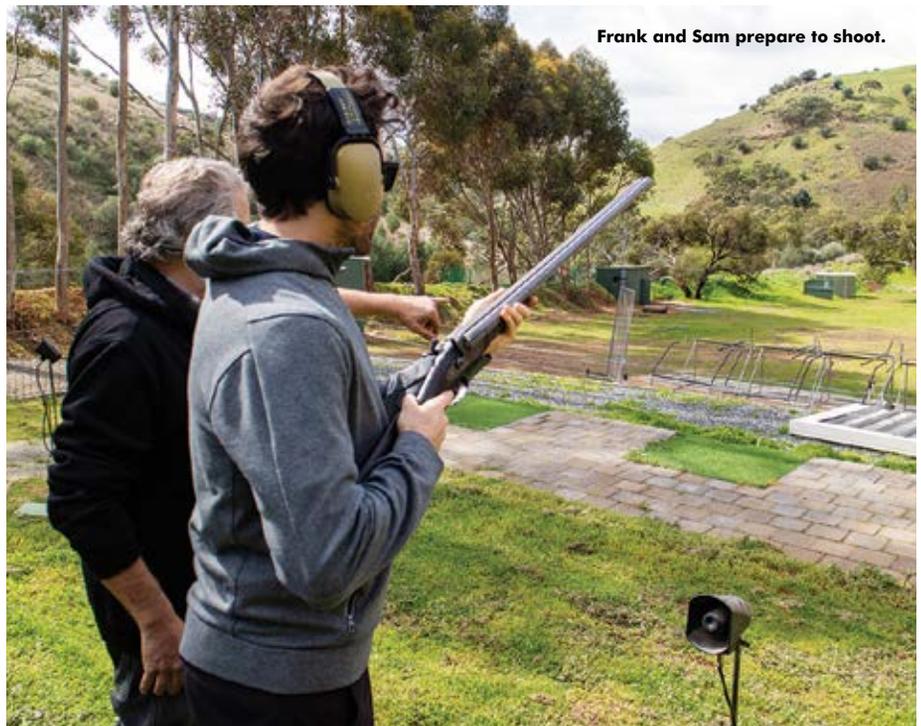
Talbot on target!

early 1800s superseding older types of ignition, the percussion cap a small cylinder of brass or copper with one end closed and a small shock-sensitive explosive inside. When the trigger is pulled the hammer on the firearm strikes the percussion cap, igniting it and sending a spark down the nipple and into the powder inside the barrel. "The percussion cap was an advancement in technology at the time," said Frank.

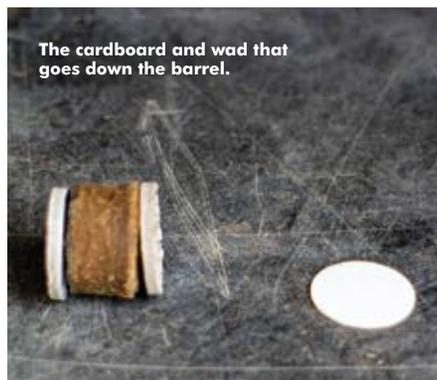
With the Pedersoli loaded, percussion cap attached and hammer back, it was finally time to take a shot. I was a little nervous to take my first shot with a muzzleloader, the pressure required to push everything down and loaded into the muzzle matched only by the pressure of taking the shot. So much time and effort spent loading the firearm meant missing the clay would be a pretty big disappointment. All of which meant I completely missed the target, the impressive blast from the black powder no match for the clay as it floated off into the distance.

With target missed I returned to the reloading bench and started the procedure all over again. This process of missing and reloading in shame went on a further three times, giving me plenty of time to continue over-thinking the target - a target I'm sure I'd hit any other day with a modern shotgun. Eventually I did break the clay and began feeling better about black powder.

Taking the shot is similar to a normal shotgun and while I'd forgotten my shotgun jacket, all the reloading time meant my shoulder wasn't under much pressure. I did feel some heat on my left wrist and had to slightly adjust where my hand was on the stock.



Frank and Sam prepare to shoot.



The cardboard and wad that goes down the barrel.

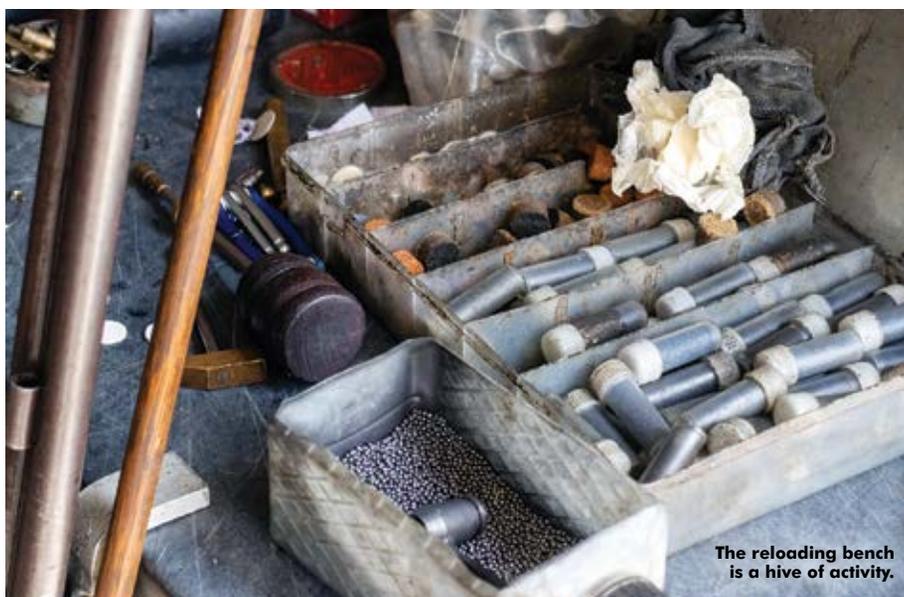
Flintlock

It was time to step further back into history with a flintlock shotgun. Instead of percussion caps the powder would now be ignited using a flint and frizzen (steel). After loading the flintlock the same way I had the percussion, I headed for the line of fire again but instead of a percussion cap in my hand I now had a powder flask.

At the line of fire I poured a small amount of powder from the flask on to a pan right next to where the flint causes a spark. This pan connects to the powder inside the barrel and when the trigger is pulled the flint strikes and sparks, setting off a chain reaction to the power. My first shot felt strange as when I pulled the trigger I could feel the flint being struck then the gun firing a fraction of a second later, although the delay was probably amplified in my head.

A few shots later I was feeling pretty comfortable with the flintlock and was soon loading through the muzzle, dispensing powder and operating hammers like a marksman from the 17th century - at least that's how it felt.

Frank collected the flint I was using from the Nullarbor and a skilled craftsman shaped it by hand. A flint can last anywhere from 30 to 50 shots but is also the main cause of misfires as it becomes dull and prone to not sparking. As for things going wrong with the firearm, Frank said most problems stem from barrel damage after not being cleaned properly. There are lots



The reloading bench is a hive of activity.



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Australian Shooter 35

Talbot on target!

more fluids and powders thrown around in muzzleloading than in more modern shotguns so cleaning is essential.

Old limitations

I recently wrote on the importance of chokes in shotgun shooting but when it comes to muzzleloading you can forget that as these shotguns have open chokes. Basically, technology didn't allow for machining of the barrels and even now chokes are not permitted in competition.

And speaking of technological limitations, about an hour into our shoot it started raining. Usually this is an inconvenience and not a problem for clay target shooting but in Muzzleloading it can really complicate the ignition systems. Wind is another factor as it can whisk the powder right off the pan before you have a chance to shoot.

As for muzzleloading rifles, as far as I understand they function similar to shotguns. I think I'll give them a go and I'm particularly interested in using round ball projectiles as well as even older ignition methods. Matchlock and wheel-lock ignition systems are even more primitive than flintlock but also ingenious and were revolutionary in their day. And I'm amazed



Aim, percussion cap, fire!

Muzzleloading competitions can take place out to 1000 yards - and that's without a scope.

Conclusion

Muzzleloading gave me an appreciation of just how simple firearms can be with almost endless designs and history to explore and

research. The discipline caters to lots of different shooting styles and I'm keen to give more muzzleloading a try and would encourage anyone reading this to do likewise. It might just be the best way to see, feel and appreciate centuries of shooting evolution. ●

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Back to school for sambar hunting

David Hughes

As a young bloke I spent a lot of time with mates fruitlessly wandering Victoria's mountain forests near Eildon, Kinglake and Mansfield chasing sambar deer. We learned a few things by traipsing up and down valley systems finding hoofprints, rub trees, bedding spots and droppings, but in spite of all the effort there was an underlying, nagging realisation there was no real strategy based on proper understanding of deer behavior.

Eventually I did deck a spiker in a fair dinkum encounter - I saw him before he saw me. He was feeding in the first light of day on a patch of grass in a deep, bushy gully and I stalked close and took him at less than 100m. I also ventured to Wonnangatta where I learned a bit more about planning stalks and trying to think like a sambar and even succeeded in shooting a nice young stag, albeit a bit small to be trophy class. But that was a chance encounter rather than a planned stalk, hence I remained doubtful of my strategy and feel for what the deer would be doing and when.

After more than 10 years as a Brisbane resident life took me back to Melbourne to contemplate semi-retirement. I told myself it was time I took some guidance from truly experienced sambar hunters and connected with a couple of good men from Morwell who had been hunting sambar most of their adult lives. They generously offered to take me hunting and share their wisdom. >

Systematic glassing from a lookout point enabled a wide expanse to be scouted efficiently.

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Back to school for sambar hunting

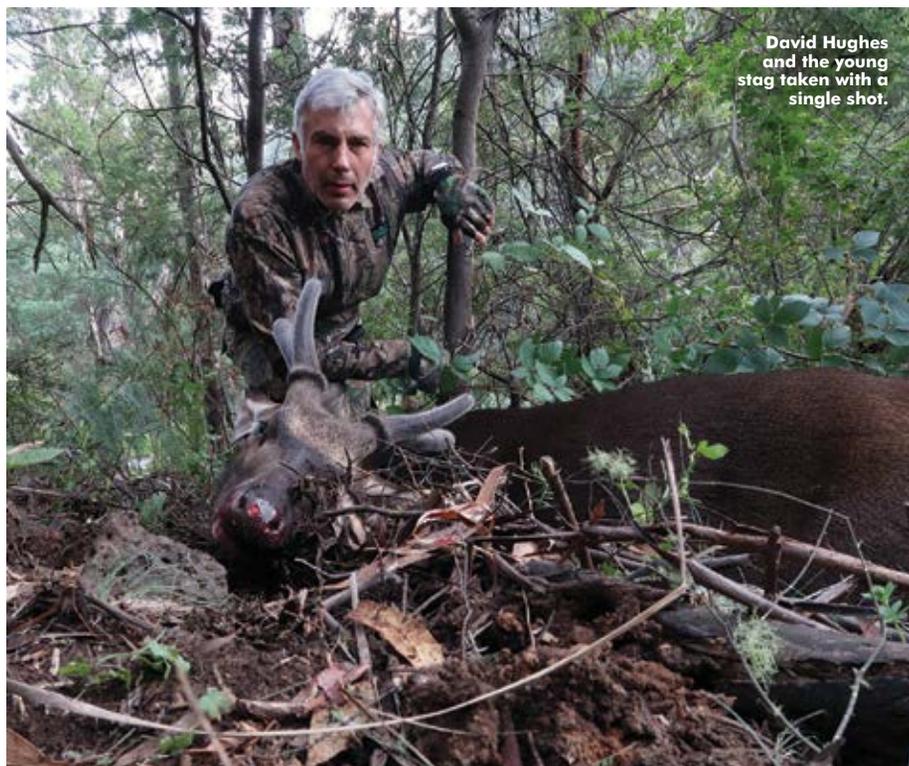
Our three-night foray took us deep into the mountains north of the picturesque village of Benambra, our accommodation an annex to a farm shed made available by a local property owner. We'd gambled on the weather as it was mid-summer and not a typical scenario for alpine hunting.

After dumping our kit we had time for an evening hunt a short drive away. Hot and humid conditions made for an onerous passage through thick forest to the lip of a gorge overlooking a creek way below. My mates had scouted this valley system over many years and even cut trails to the cliff edge to afford easier and quieter paths. They didn't waste energy blundering about in the undergrowth, instead they'd glass extensively across the gorge waiting for movement on the other side. If there was no action they'd move a few hundred metres along the escarpment to another vantage point.

In this fashion a broad expanse of territory could be scrutinised without making any noise or leaving scent trails that could betray our presence. To increase the odds in their favour in poor light, they'd invested in a thermal imaging monocular scope which would demonstrate its capability on several occasions, detecting animals when there was nothing visible to the eye.

Based on our first outing the hunting prospects looked good, we had fleeting contact with a deer on our side of the ravine as we walked to a viewing ledge. All I saw was the waving tops of the underbrush and associated noise of a large animal smashing through it and later from the escarpment, John spied another hind on the opposite side of the valley about 250m off.

The animal, rather inconveniently, moved out of sight downhill into really



David Hughes and the young stag taken with a single shot.

thick brush, heat the main factor as it drove the animals into the cool, wet pockets on the valley floor and with no further action before sunset we returned to camp.

I was rudely awakened at 4.30am with sunrise still two hours away but the boys wanted to be in position before light. A steady drizzle accompanied our second foray to the edge of the ravine, the river below and valley walls rising on the other side just shades of grey interspersed with mist. I couldn't see a thing in the pre-dawn light but John's thermal scope found a deer lurking in the gloom on our side, steeply downhill and only 150m away.

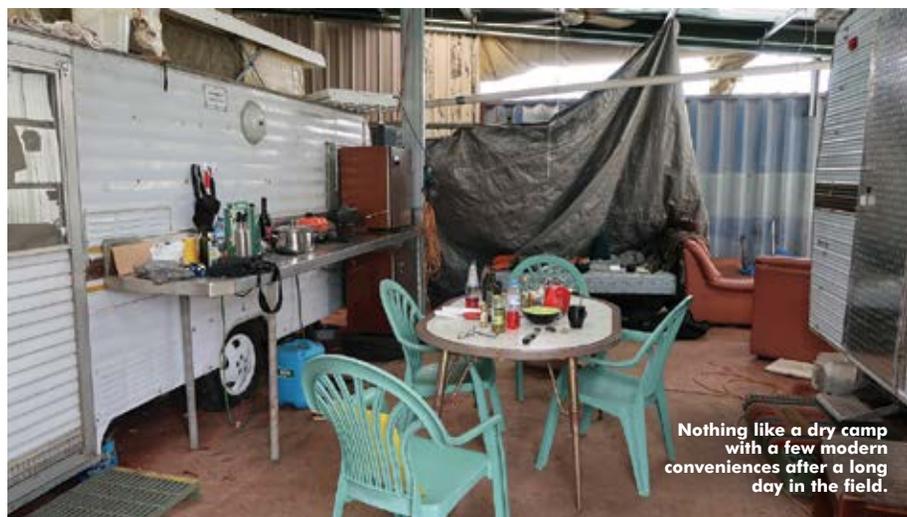


Note the amount of fat on the carcass - the backstraps promised succulent eating.

Eventually the growing light revealed a small deer standing behind a tree. It presented only a neck shot which was a bit dicey but feeling confident with a decent rest from John's spotting bipod I squeezed off a shot. The deer instantly disappeared from view. I thought it was a hit but after descending to the spot could find no sign other than a bullet furrow in the turf.

Back at the top we met up again with Jeff and from his vantage point he'd seen three deer stirred into motion by the sound of my shot. It was now 9am, the sun was up and time to move to another valley system. En route to a rocky pulpit overlooking the river we disturbed another animal whose crashing exit was marked by swaying scrub less than 100m to my left.

Next morning found John and I perched once again on the edge of the escarpment awaiting first light, Jeff on another



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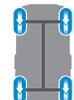
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SEATS 2

Back to school for sambar hunting

lookout point not far away. As a warm orange glow suffused the tops of the trees on the opposite face, John gave me an urgent signal. I picked out the dark shape of a deer straight across the valley behind some screening wattles, a handsome young stag in velvet, standing broadside and mooching slowly to my right, his deep brown coat shining sleekly in the morning light.

In a flash I had my Winchester Model 70 atop the tripod with a Nosler E-tip 150gr .30-06 pill in the spout. Everything felt right as my aim settled on his shoulder. With the shot came careering downhill, veering to my right before disappearing with a crash into a thicket about 30m from point of impact.

It seemed to take forever to work my way down to the creek from our rocky balcony, thick brush making the route both laborious and circuitous. A lucky arrangement of rocks and sedges enabled me to hop across the bubbling creek where I was confronted by a rising bank covered in low blackberries. Picking my way through the snagging vines I rued my forgotten lesson from the Wonnangatta - take secateurs!

All the while my mind was beset by nagging doubts from my missed shot the day before. What a spirit-raiser to see the bright trail of arterial blood which liberally splashed a game trail contouring the slope halfway up. There was my stag piled-up around the slender trunk of a wattle - one leg either side had arrested his death run. The trickle from his shoulder indicated my



shot was right on target for a satisfying one-shot kill.

The stag's death dive had positioned it ideally for retrieval of the backstraps which were impressively large, lean and

free of sinew or blemish, John reckoning their flavour would be 'as good as it gets' as far as sambar venison goes. The young animal was not advanced enough in antler development to be rutting, during which time the meat can be rank, and would have been browsing on sweet blackberries and other selected greenery along the verdant creek edges, avoiding any taint.

The haul uphill with the weighty backpack drew heavily on my reserves, the sun already warm and the valley air still and humid so I was thankful for my gym work in the weeks leading up to the hunt. Soon after John decided to call it a day, given the heat would have the deer already holed-up in their favourite cool spots.

So that brought to a close my summer 'sambar school' adventure. It had been well worth the effort, I'd seen deer in the flesh every day and even managed to bag a lovely meat animal. Despite the weather being far too hot we'd seen or spooked a total of 10 deer between us during our two-and-a-half hunting days, representing as many as I'd seen in all my previous outings. After a few more 'sambar school' classes I should be ready to move out of kindergarten and into higher grades. ●



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Nikko Stirling riflescopes no frills and no worries

Con Kapralos



The latest models offered by Outdoor Sporting Agencies - Nikon Prostaff P5 (top) and Nikko Stirling Meteor.

The Nikko Stirling and Nikon Sport Optics brands are synonymous with quality at a range to suit all applications and budgets. Be it hunting or tactical/long-range riflescopes and items such as binoculars and rangefinders, the Australian shooter and hunter won't go wrong with an optic from the extensive Nikko Stirling or Nikon Sport Optic ranges.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Australian distributor of Nikko Stirling sent *Australian Shooter* two items for review from the Nikko Stirling Meteor and Nikon Prostaff P5 ranges. The Nikko Stirling Meteor comprises three models in the 1-4x24, 2.5-10x50 and the 3-12x56, the latter sent for review. The Nikon Prostaff P5 range encompasses eight models from the 2.5-10x42 right up to a 6-24x50 with a choice of reticles and some models with the Side-Focus (SF) parallax adjustment feature. For review, the well-appointed 4-16x50 SF model with the BDC reticle in matte finish was supplied.

Nikko Stirling Meteor riflescopes

The Meteor range of three models neatly covers all hunting eventualities from

close-up shooting with the 1-4x24, a general-purpose scope in the 2.5-10x50 and one to cover medium to longer distances, varminting and night-shooting in the 3-12x56. All three share the following features which make them an ideal scope for the budget-minded hunter:

- Excellent resolution - edge-to-edge clarity across all models
- 30mm main tube for superior strength and light transmission
- Four-dot illuminated glass-etched reticle in second focal plane
- ¼in/MOA click (7mm at 100m) for both elevation and windage
- Fully multi-coated lenses
- Fine-tuned, stepped illumination rheostat
- Low-profile hunting turrets

Meteor 3-12x56

A medium to long-range hunting rifle scope with its four-times magnification range from 3x up to 12x with a 56mm objective lens on 30mm main tube, the scope is 340mm long and weighs 652g. With a main tube crafted from aircraft-grade aluminium, it's finished in matte black with the maker's name, model and magnification on the

ocular housing. The Nikko Stirling emblem furnishes the illumination rheostat cover and looks neat and precise. The centre of the rifle scope tube body contains a housing which accommodates the low-profile capped windage and elevation turrets and five-step, dual colour illumination rheostat.

Unscrewing the low-profile aluminium caps exposes the dials with one click equalling ¼ MOA, adjustments easy to feel with the fingers and quite audible. Being hunting-style turrets they're not resettable to a zero mark nor do they contain any sort of zero-stop feature, something appreciated by hunters looking for an uncomplicated reticle adjustment system. Adjacent to the turrets is a stepped illumination rheostat which controls the illumination of four-dot reticle, giving the choice of a red or green dot with five intensity levels.

To the rear is the well-profiled ocular housing with knurled aluminium magnification selector ring, ocular lenses and adjustable diopter eyepiece with rubber-lined edge. The magnification selector is excellent, moving smoothly from low to high with a positive and faultless grip. I've had other riflescopes with



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CALIBRES: 6.5MM CREEDMOOR / .308WIN

WEIGHT: 4.9 kg

OVERALL LENGTH: 1150mm

BARREL: Heavy Woomera Profile, 11 deg target crowned. Coated in Cerakote™

BARREL LENGTH: 610 mm (24 in)

MUZZLE THREAD: 5/8" x 24 UNEF

RECEIVER: High tensile steel with plate recoil lug. 20 MOA Picatinny rail. Coated in Cerakote™

LENGTH OF PULL: Adjustable via inserts

TRIGGER: Single stage, three way adjustable for weight, sear engagement and draw length. Factory set at 1.5 kg release.

ADJUSTMENT RANGE: Approximately 0.75 kg – 1.9 kg

SAFETY: Three position, bolt shroud mounted, rotating safety catch with indicator. Safety catch over-cocks and blocks the firing pin and disconnects the trigger. Settings; FIRE, SAFE with bolt locked and SAFE with bolt unlocked.

MAGAZINE: 10 round Removable, double stack box magazine, steel construction, AICS pattern

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Nikko Stirling riflescopes

rubber-lined magnification selector rings slip when trying to change settings.

Internally the Meteor benefits from Nikko Stirling's years of manufacturing expertise. While the Meteor is marketed as a budget riflescope line, its internal features give the hunter what they most desire with no unnecessary frills. The second focal plane four-dot glass-etched reticle with dual-colour illumination is a variant of the German 3P#4 and is the only reticle offered in the range. Thicker horizontal and lower vertical stadia morph into a fine cross-hair with the illuminated dot in the centre (without illumination this dot appears black).

The lenses on the review scope are multicoated and gave good edge-to-edge sharpness and field of view. Clarity, contrast and colour were excellent and while not tested at night, the ability in this case to set the magnification to 8x to achieve a 7mm exit pupil would be appreciated when shooting under a lamp. Range testing involved the usual check of elevation and windage adjustments at 100m with a tracking test moving the point of impact around a target giving excellent results, the first and last shots overlapping.

Shooting out to 300m, a sunny day meant a fair degree of heat haze but winding the riflescope up to 12x and aiming at a steel plate, the quality of the lenses were up to the task. It must be noted the three Meteor models offered are solid, no-frills hunting riflescopes, nitrogen purged and filled, waterproof, shockproof and will do what the hunter wants without the bells and whistles of more expensive rifle optics. The Meteor models come with user manual, cleaning cloth, bikini-style lens covers and lithium-ion button battery



The slim and compact ocular housing has an adjustable eyepiece (diopter) focus and aluminium magnification power dial.

for the illumination. The Meteor range is manufactured in China for Nikko Stirling.

Nikon Prostaff P5

Nikon is highly regarded for its photographic equipment the world over, its foray into the sport optics market as Nikon Sport Optics just as successful and comprising some fine optics suited to the hunter and sports shooter alike.

Prostaff riflescopes are one of Nikon's premier ranges and include a few different sub-models. Not one to rest on their laurels, the Prostaff range is constantly being refined and upgraded to embrace cutting-edge technology and design, the P5

just one of the new ranges which comprise eight different models.

Prostaff P5 4-16x50 SF Matte BDC

The review scope arrived in the black Prostaff P5 carton - and you can tell a lot by the packaging. The P5 includes a host of user manuals in various languages, warranty cards and bikini-style lens covers. What's immediately noticeable is the scope is built on a one-inch aircraft-grade alloy main tube and finished in matte black. The review item measures 368mm and weighs 562g, its weight surprising and in no part attributed to the one-inch main tube - a similar scope based on a 30mm main tube would be around 200g more. The 4x zoom ratio across the P5 range offers maximum magnification versatility and the review scope in 4-16x50 would be close to ideal 'all-round' specification.

The turret housing in the middle of the tube body contains the low-profile aluminium-capped elevation and windage dials and parallax side-focus adjustment. The elevation and windage turrets are well designed, spring-loaded and easily resettable to zero after sighting in. Clear and concise markings on the dial body and collar mean it's easy to make precise adjustments in the field, adjustments being one click equalling $\frac{1}{4}$ MOA with clicks easy to feel and audible.

The parallax or side-focus dial on the left is also aluminium and adjustable from 50yds to infinity, the dial moving smoothly between settings, and it's refreshing to



Elevation turret and reticle illumination dial on the Meteor.

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Nikko Stirling riflescopes

see the turret caps and dials on the P5 made of aluminium. The ocular housing is a slim and compact unit which houses the magnification dial and adjustable eyepiece focus ring. The 4x-16x magnification dial is aluminium, easy to grip and moves smoothly through all settings. The eyepiece diopter adjustment is fully adjustable for all eyesights and generous eye relief from 94-104mm will be welcomed by heavy calibre users.

Internally there are no surprises, all glass lenses highly polished and fully multicoated to give maximum light transmission. All images are crisp and clear from edge to edge, with clarity and contrast excellent in the review scope. Shooting to 300m at the range, the ability to employ the side parallax focus and 16x magnification made shooting at that range a breeze - it's easy to see what you're shooting at when you can see it clearly!

The second focal plane reticles offered on the P5 will suit all prospective users. While the review scope was fitted with the BDC (Ballistic Drop Compensating) version, the standard Duplex 'Nikoplex' reticle is also offered as is the recently-designed MK1-MOA which will attract long-range aficionados. I'm a fan of uncomplicated reticles but rather like the BDC with its fine cross-hair centre and thicker horizontal and lower vertical stadia. The provision of hold-over 'circles' on the lower vertical cross-hair make it easy to allow for precise corrections when shooting at extended ranges.

The BDC, as with all Nikon reticles, can be optimised with the Spot-On Ballistic Technology on their website through an app on any smartphone or tablet. Simply plug in your calibre and load information, pick your Nikon scope and reticle and you can generate a drop-chart and information to assist in achieving the correct holdover with the ballistic reticles or dialing in point of impact change through the elevation turret. As ever, it pays to verify data generated on the ballistic software at the range.

Internal lenses are further protected using quality seals and nitrogen purging and filling to guard against thermal shock and internal fogging. The Prostaff P5 range is waterproof, shockproof and covered by Nikon's 'No Fault Policy' which offers lifetime repair or replacement if the scope fails.

At the range the P5 was tested on distances up to 300m and performed well. A tracking test at 100m verified the

preciseness of the windage and elevation adjustments with point of impact changes round the target being accurate and the first and last shots overlapping. It was a pleasure to use another Nikon riflescope after a long hiatus and the P5 and its extensive model range has something to suit every user and application. The Prostaff P5 range is made for Nikon Sport Optics in the Philippines. More at osaustralia.com.au ●

SPECIFICATIONS

	Nikko Stirling Meteor 3-12x56	Nikon Prostaff P5 4-16x50 SF Matte BDC
Magnification	3x-12x	4x-16x
Objective diameter	56mm	50mm
Exit pupil	4.7-18.7mm	3.1-12.5mm
Field of view	3.6-14.6 m at 100m	6.3-25.2ft at 100yds
Tube diameter	30mm	25.4mm (1")
Eye relief	85mm	94-104mm
Weight	652g	562g
Overall length	340mm	368mm
Adjustment graduation (elevation/windage)	1 click = 7mm at 100m (1/4" MOA per click)	1 click = 7mm at 100m (1/4" MOA per click)
Parallax	Fixed - 91m	Adjustable side focus (SF) 50yds to infinity
Max internal adjustment	60 MOA	40 MOA
Waterproof/fogproof	Yes	Yes
Finish	Matte black	Matte black
Reticle	Second Focal Plane - No.4 dot glass-etched, illuminated. Five illumination levels - green or red dot colour	Second Focal Plane - glass-etched BDC Reticle (as reviewed) also available in Nikoplex and Mk I-MOA reticles (non-illuminated)
Warranty	Lifetime (to original purchaser only), electronic warranty five years	Nikon 'No Fault Policy' - Lifetime repair or replacement*
RRP	\$320	\$580
Distributor	Outdoor Sporting Agencies	

*Excludes lost or stolen items and intentional damage



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Bushnell Nitro 4-16x40 SFP Grey\$610
Bushnell Nitro 4-16x40 FFP\$815
Bushnell Nitro 3-12x44 SFP Grey\$565
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VX-Freedom 3-9x40 Duplex\$365
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NZ buyback plans far from watertight

John Maxwell



New Zealand shooters are now part way into their buyback of semi-automatic and some other firearms, a process Australia undertook in 1996 and which we recall none too fondly. Both buybacks stemmed from similar outrages, shooting massacres conducted by unhinged individuals armed with semi-automatic rifles, both governments seizing the chance to rid the community of such firearms.

It's worth comparing how Australia did it more than two decades ago with how New Zealand is doing it now. There are similarities . . . and differences. New Zealand introduced its buyback in the wake of the Christchurch massacre in which an Australian man living in NZ used several guns to murder 51 people in two city mosques. He was granted an NZ firearms licence in 2017 and subsequently obtained two semi-automatic rifles, two shotguns and a lever action firearm.

Precisely what type of weapons were used hasn't been clearly stated but the gunman's own live streaming of the attack shows him using an AR-15-type

rifle with high capacity magazine. Under NZ's (former) gun laws were restrictions on handguns and on what were termed military-style semi-automatic (MSSA) firearms.

To acquire and use MSSA rifles you needed a Category E licence endorsement (Cat E). The MSSA definition applied to any semi-automatic centrefire rifle with one or more of the following features - a detachable magazine holding more than 10 rounds, pistol grip, flash hider, folding or telescopic butt. However, an AR-15-pattern semi-automatic rifle with 10-round magazine, thumbhole fixed stock and no flash hider or bayonet lug fell into the least restricted Category A, along with most everything else - bolt-action, lever-action and single-shot rifles, shotguns and air rifles.

It appears the Christchurch gunman caused most of his carnage with a readily available and legally acquired Cat A firearm rather than a more restricted Cat E weapon. The NZ Government's response was to ban these rifles and some shotguns but they haven't gone quite as far as Australia, which banned all semi-automatic centrefire

and rimfire rifles and shotguns along with pump-action shotguns.

New Zealand's ban applies to all semi-automatic centrefire rifles and associated parts as well as rimfire rifles, self-loading and pump-action shotguns, but with exemptions which mean many won't have to be surrendered. For rimfires the ban doesn't apply if the gun has a removable or fixed magazine of 10-round capacity or less. Semi-automatic shotguns with fixed tubular magazine of five rounds or less capacity aren't banned while any pump action shotgun with detachable magazine is banned but not for those with fixed tubular magazine of five-round or less capacity.

New Zealand will allow modification of semi-automatic and pump-action shotguns with fixed tubular magazines so they meet the five-round capacity requirement and will even contribute up to NZ\$300 towards the cost of gunsmithing of eligible firearms.

As Australia's buyback unfolded, gun owners pressed the government to allow a similar process of modification, known as crimping, to restrict shotgun ammunition capacity, the government eventually ruling it out on the grounds it could be reversed, although not easily.

As New Zealand has never had general firearms registration it has no idea how many now-banned firearms are out there. Neither did Australia in 1996 as not all jurisdictions had registration in place but the process of introducing registration for all jurisdictions proceeded in conjunction with the buyback. In NZ registration may be the next step despite ample evidence it's an expensive waste of police resources, creating a vast bureaucracy which does nothing to hinder the criminally minded while imposing cost and inconvenience on the law abiding.

As Australia did, NZ is seeking to encourage compliance with an element of 'carrot compensation' for firearms surrendered and 'stick' - tough penalties for anyone in possession of banned firearms. There are certain exemptions for those who need



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NZ buyback plans far from watertight

semi-automatic centrefire rifles for animal control, and collectors who can demonstrate their collections have a theme and are not just an ad-hoc group of firearms.

Like Australia, NZ has drawn up a long list of now banned firearms along with what compensation will be paid for their surrender but has adopted a different mechanism for calculation. Australia set prices for items in new and used condition and once a firearm was assessed to be either new or used, there was no further assessment and the owner paid the scheduled sum.

Australian gun owners were not happy to surrender guns they'd lawfully acquired and safely and responsibly used but were mostly happy with the compensation, in many cases substantially greater than what their guns would have fetched had they been sold legally the day before Port Arthur. New Zealand can surely expect to see exactly what Australia experienced - with their buyback money Aussies went out and bought more guns.

The NZ buyback list nominates a base price for each firearm. For those assessed as new or near new, owners will receive 95 per cent of the base price, for used firearms 70 per cent and for those assessed as poor non-functioning condition, 25 per cent. It would seem to follow that most guns likely to be surrendered, other than new shop stock, fall into the used category. Considering the difference in what's being paid for used and poor condition guns, it could also follow that some owners will do their best to renovate scrap guns and claim maximum possible compensation. New Zealand is also seeking to buy back component parts and accessories and has again set a base price for nominated items but will pay just 70 per cent of that price for new, near-new or used items and 25 per cent for parts in poor condition.

For the Australian buyback owners took newly-banned firearms to police stations and there were some community hand-in events. NZ is seeking to do this mostly through community events, though there are some provisions for hand-in at police stations. Owners are advised to register online in advance or on the day which involves creating an account, notifying police of firearms licence, items to be surrendered and bank account for payment. The first collection was held in Christchurch in mid-July while the buyback and associated amnesty runs until December 20.

So how's it going? Media reports indicate a good early response although numbers of guns surrendered don't seem that large but, as the scheme runs until December, it would be human nature for owners to hang on as long as possible.



What does success look like? As New Zealand has never had full firearms registration, no-one knows how many now-banned guns are in the community. Even Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern acknowledged they were very much in the dark as to how many banned guns were in circulation but it's known there are around 15,000 Cat E firearms. NZ's Council of Licensed Firearms Owners (COLFO, counterpart to the SSAA), estimates 250,000 to 300,000 now-banned guns.

The New Zealand Government budgeted NZ\$208m (A\$183 million) for the buyback and COLFO says that could more than double to NZ\$500m, the government having already added additional funds, saying it will provide more if needed.

Unsurprisingly, many Kiwi gun owners aren't happy with the less than adequate process of consultation, with losing their guns and the level of compensation. COLFO is talking about a legal challenge. "The view by many is this pricelist doesn't fairly reflect the prices - they were out of whack with what people thought they were worth in the secondhand market," said the NZ Opposition police spokesman.

There appears to be one other significant loophole - compensation will only be paid to licensed gun owners. Those without a licence can still hand in banned guns but won't be paid. "Perhaps the greatest tragedy is the government's decision to exclude illegally-held firearms from the buyback. It appears to be telling law-abiding firearm

owners 'line up' while telling criminals 'keep doing what you're doing', said New Zealand crossbencher David Seymour, leader of the ACT party. "The net result is we'll likely be less safe than we were on March 15."

Maybe some of NZ's unlicensed gun owners will do the right thing but you'd have to think many won't and these guns will just disappear into a criminal black market, perhaps to surface years down the track in a bank robbery. That's the criminal fraternity.

But just as occurred in Australia, some NZ gun owners are murmuring about not surrendering their firearms. As Australia's buyback unfolded there were anecdotal stories of hardware shops selling out of six-inch PVC pipe and end caps, which shooters were buying up to bury their guns.

Certainly Australia's buyback was lauded as a great success with 640,000 guns surrendered though wasn't a total success and a large part of the estimated 250,000-plus illicit firearms across the country are guns not surrendered post-Port Arthur or subsequently registered. New Zealand likely has this in its future.

The Kiwis are entitled to conduct the buyback their way but considering their ultimate policy objective is to remove as many 'dangerous' guns from the community as possible, that won't be helped by measures which seem aimed at doing this on the cheap and which, no matter how well intentioned, seem likely to drive firearms on to the black market. ●

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What the Dickinson?

Right price no-nonsense bolt-action shotgun

John McDougall



John McDougall puts the Dickinson T1000 through its paces.

Made in Turkey and distributed by SJS Trading of Melbourne, the Dickinson straight pull, bolt-action 12-gauge shotgun is certain to win a following in Australia and will ideally suit those hunters who like an extra shot (or three) above the two offered by an under-and-over or side-by-side shotgun.

Totally unlike a self-loading shotgun but styled along those lines, this in-line straight pull bolt-action is much like a gas-operated option but with the restriction that it must be manually worked. You need to pull the bolt handle back each time it's fired to chamber another round then upon firing, pull back on the cocking handle to eject the fired shell in order to reload.

As a long-time licensed user of self-loading (Category C) firearms it can be a bit frustrating as I had to relearn from prior experience, instead of just continuing to pull on the triggerfoot with nothing but the first round firing. Those familiar with pump-action firearms would be in better stead while those who've never had the chance to use either will be in prime position as old habits will not have to be overcome.

Priced from around \$895 and with a two-year warranty, this is a good introduction level sporting arm for the enthusiastic pig, deer, fox or duck hunter.

Barrel

The single barrel measuring 700mm (27½") is well constructed with a ventilated rib and perfect black satin finish. There were no traces of residual solder from fixing of the ventilated rib to the barrel which is always a good indication of the quality assurance undertaken at the factory.

There are five chokes supplied, all packaged into a convenient plastic box holder along with the choke tube spanner and ranging from cylinder (no choke) through to full choke. The full choke is the only one


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What the Dickinson?

with an extended collar beyond the muzzle while all other choke tubes fit flush with the muzzle.

Notches are marked into the ends of the choke tubes for ready identification - one notch for full choke, two for improved modified choke, three for modified, four for improved cylinder and five for cylinder - the standard nomenclature used by gun manufacturers worldwide. At the chamber end the gun is suited to be used with 3" (76mm) cartridges with all steel shot sizes able to be safely fired with no tighter than half choke (modified). Bore size is 0.723".

Receiver

This is made from aluminium alloy and is extremely robust. The gun, because it's an in-line slide/bolt-action, is capable of firing five shots - one in the chamber while holding four in the magazine. This still enables the gun to be accepted as a Category A firearm and not Category C with its more severe restrictions.

The Dickinson T1000 is easily loaded. Once the breech is opened by pushing the small black button on the underside and to the rear of the cartridge carrier, the bolt can be pulled back and locked in position to load a cartridge into the loading/ejection port then chambered by pushing the silver button on the same side, just below the loading/ejection port. When this is closed the remaining rounds can be fed into the magazine via the carrier on the underside of the receiver.

Directions for disassembly are quite straightforward by following the instruction booklet supplied, barrel and fore-end removed first by unscrewing the fore-end cap. The wooden fore-end may need to be jiggled to clear the inner mechanism about the magazine tube but otherwise it comes apart simply.

With the bolt in the closed or forward position, a screwdriver or similar is used to pry the bolt-action handle from the bolt which permits the bolt and attached rails about the magazine tube to be released. A simple pin retains the cocked trigger mechanism that can then be removed (the trigger mechanism must be cocked to assemble and disassemble).

To reassemble the process is reversed,



Dickinson T1000 27½" barrel and walnut stock model beside the synthetic stock 20" barrel version fitted with Holosun sight.



Disassembled view of the barrel extension and bolt head protruding from the receiver once the barrel is removed.

cocked trigger mechanism installed first into the receiver, bolt and connecting rails next, cocking handle third then the barrel and fore-end can be replaced with the magazine cap retaining all under spring pressure. Note that when assembling, it's imperative to sit the locating lip on the rear of the wooden fore-end into the groove in the receiver front. This may take some fiddling to install but is necessary for correct functioning and to avoid damage to the fore-end wood.

Design of the triggerguard is reasonably generous, permitting a snug fit for those who wear gloves in cooler conditions. The safety catch is conveniently located to the rear of the trigger mechanism and a red line about the button shows whether the trigger is in 'fire' or 'safe' mode. Choke tubes should also only be changed with the gun unloaded. The trigger release measures 1.8kg (4lb), quite acceptable for a hunting firearm.



The T1000 walnut stock right-handed model with peculiar bolt handle protruding from the bolt.

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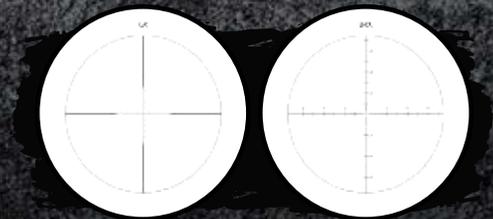
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What the Dickinson?



Dickinson synthetic model with Picatinny scope mount rail and Holosun red dot scope fitted.

Stock and fore-end

To accommodate as many shooters as possible with correct gun fit, the manufacturers have provided a selection of five shims that fit between the stock and to the rear of the receiver. These adjust the stock for cast-on or cast-off depending on whether the shooter is left or right-handed as well as raising and lowering the stock to suit. Such accessories are usually only found on more expensive shotguns but are provided here as standard.

The quality of the walnut stock and fore-end is excellent and the chequering is, while not as extensive as I'd have liked, well finished and provides a reasonable grip, the grain and colour matching well. I was delighted to find a well-designed slip-pad fitted to the butt of the stock to provide fine gun mount and some stability while shooting heavier field loads. Design of the pistol grip on the stock is comfortable and provides a firm and positive hold with relaxed reach to the trigger.

In the field

I took the review gun to Frankston Australia Gun Club to ascertain the



Close-up of the receiver with bolt closed.

handling in regards to balance, swing and pattern performance along with a test of my dexterity to manoeuvre the firearm. The Dickinson mounted well straight out of its box and quite a few clay targets, including some report pairs and a simulated pair, were bought to grief. On this occasion I'd inadvertently left the full choke tube in and probably overtaxed myself on closer targets, but further and mid-range clays out to 30m were convincingly destroyed.

Operating the gun was simple but was always going to be a test for me as a new set of skills was required. By the end of my second round of 25 targets my brain began to realise I not only had to operate the in-line bolt slide to reload another cartridge, but also had to activate the bolt handle to



Chokes and propeller-type choke tube spanner.

eject the last empty cartridge to ensure the gun was safe, the bolt remaining open for all to see.

Distributor Steve Sayers revealed many right-handed shooters were opting for the left-handed model so they could direct the bolt by supporting the gun by holding on to the stock. As a right-hander I chose a right-handed gun that required me to support it by the fore-end while operating the trigger and action with my right hand - forcing me to release my hold of the pistol grip. By the end of my first round of 25 targets, and with a greater degree of concentration, I was operating the gun as intended.

Conclusion

I found the Dickinson a delight to use albeit a challenge for someone like me. The standard model was excellent and I couldn't help thinking about shooting a few foxes or pigs with the added firepower of a five-shot capacity shotgun, particularly the synthetic model with a Holosun red dot sight fitted for deer hunting in heavy scrub.

Steve also distributes these and set one



The shims, five in total, after cast-on and height of the stock.

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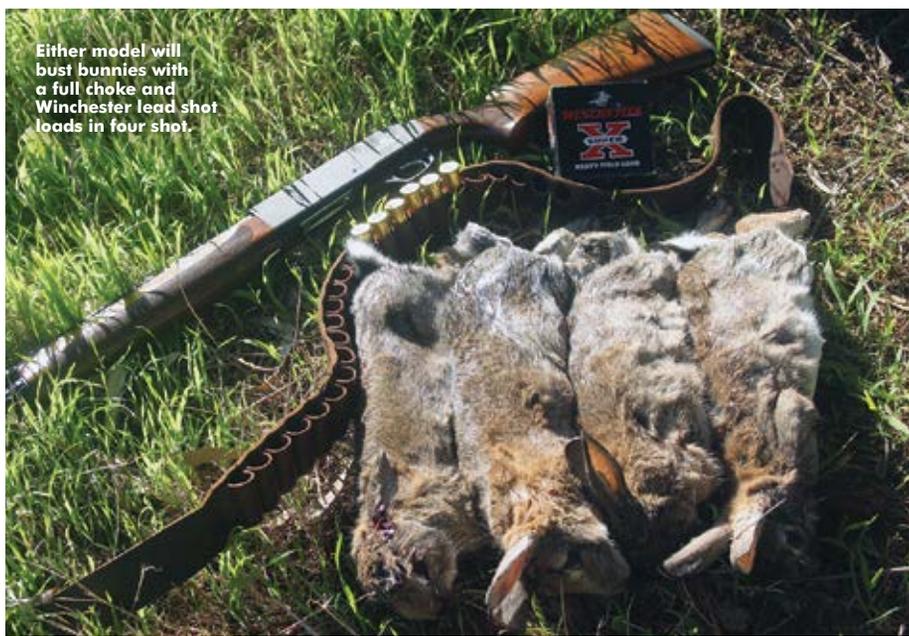
What the Dickinson?

up on the synthetic model for photographic purposes. The Dickinson T1000 is the wooden version but there are also camo, tactical and synthetic stock alternatives as well as a combination set with every model available in left or right-handed option. Prices start from \$895 for the basic

model up to \$1190 for the combination set with two barrels, the Picatinny rail for the scope mount is around \$35 and with the Dickinson having a two-year warranty, it offers excellent value for the keen medium-sized game hunter or waterfowler. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Dickinson, Turkey
Model: Dickinson T1000
Distributor: SJS Trading Co., Melbourne
Configuration and chamber: In-line, bolt-action five-shot, 12-gauge shotgun, 76mm chamber
Overall length: 1280mm (50½")
Barrel length: 700mm (27½")
Overall weight: 3.16kg (6lb 15oz)
Proof: Guaranteed by Turkish Government. Steel shot compatible with no tighter than Modified (½) choke
Bore size: 0.723"
Chokes: Interchangeable choke tubes; Cylinder 0.722", Imp. Cylinder 0.712", Modified 0.702", Imp. Modified 0.694", Full 0.683"
Trigger pull: 1.8kg/4lb
Warranty: Two years
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Ballistic brilliance

Swarovski raises the bar - again

Chris Redlich

The ballistic turret is perfect for long-range shooting over open plains.

Ballistic turrets are not new as far as Swarovski Optik are concerned and they recently added the new compact Z5 2.4-12x50 (BT) to their Z5 range. I own a pair of Swarovski Z5s with standard turrets so the chance to review the 2.4-12x50s with ballistic turret was too good to pass up. In comparison to my other Z5 riflescopes this latest offering is shorter and its compact, lightweight design makes for a feature-filled and well-balanced outfit.

Overview

The Z5 2.4-12x50 (BT) is not a replacement for any of the existing Z5 scopes but an addition to their already impressive range. Z5 stands for five-times zoom and the 2.4-12x50 is designed to offer the hunter a versatile magnification option suited for short range in close terrain and long range in open ground, a perfect choice of zoom for deer hunters doing the hard yards in dense bush or varmint hunters controlling ferals across open paddocks.

Magnification adjustment on the Z5s is found forward of the ocular housing and easily rotated by the rubber grip. The rubber dioptic ring is firm enough to ensure it won't move when accidentally

knocked yet easily rotated for focus and obtaining a sharp reticle image quickly.

At the business end is the 50mm objective lens with Swarovski Optik's anti-reflective coatings along with coatings to repel water, enable ease of cleaning and provide superior light transmission and that leading lowlight performance the brand is famous for. In addition, the coatings throughout the internal lens system ensure brilliant colour and help retain the maximum light transmission available.

The 2.4-12x50 (BT) boasts the largest field of view and highest light transmission of all the Z5s thanks to the combination of 50mm lens and low magnification option of 2.4x. The popular one-inch main tube makes for an overall sleek, lightweight and compact scope that can be mounted low on the rifle with medium height rings depending on brand of mounts. The one-piece tube is made from lightweight aerospace-grade alloy and has Swarovski Optik's durable scratch-resistant anodised matte black finish.

The review scope came with one of my all-time favourite reticles, the Plex, located in the second focal plane which enables the target image to be increased or decreased

without affecting reticle size during zoom adjustments. It's housed in the turret by Swarovski's patented four-point spring coil system which helps the reticle stay rock solid shot-for-shot and not shift under the heaviest of recoiling calibres.

Windage adjustment includes 50MOA of lateral movement and the ballistic turret has a generous 90MOA of vertical adjustment at 100m, each windage and elevation adjustment click equivalent to 7mm at 100m (¼" at 100yds). Clicks of the adjustment dial are firm and positive and, unlike other Z5 riflescopes, the 2.4-12x50 (BT) doesn't have a parallax adjustment as this is set from the factory to be correct at 100m.

Ballistic turret

Just when we thought a scope couldn't get any better, Swarovski Optik developed the ballistic turret a few years ago and it's right at home on this scope. Other manufacturers have ballistic turrets for hunting scopes but only available on request and must be set from the factory. Swarovski's is a unique design and by far the most versatile and can easily be set up at home to suit whatever load choice or calibre of rifle you mount the scope to.

The ballistic turret allows the shooter



Ballistic brilliance

to customise a pre-determined zero for a chosen distance with the aid of three supplied, colour-coded rings and for the purpose of field testing I mounted the scope to my .22 250 Rem for busting ferals on open paddocks. My first adjustment was set to a 100m zero indicated by the arrow, green dot for 200m, yellow dot for 250m and red dot for 300m. I believe this to be a realistic range set-up and at 300m is an acceptable distance for the capability of the .22 250 shooting 55gr projectiles to control varmints.

Additional adjustment ranges are available as the BT will have enough scope to reach close to 500m if required. An addition to the BT is Swarovski Optik's Personal Ballistic Cam (PBC) where the three rings are replaced by one larger ring fully engraved to suit your ammunition. PBC styles can have as much detail as you like with four engraving options, the most popular having marks every 25yd/m and continuing out to the last click on the BT. The PBC can be ordered any time once you've found the best ammunition for your rifle.

Setting up the ballistic turret

A ballistics program calculator is available on the Swarovski Optik website or the App



Setting the ballistic turret adjustment rings with yellow marking 200m.

can be downloaded free to aid with set-up of your desired calibre and load combinations but I set mine off the bench at my range. For starters, all range adjustment rings and sighting coupling are removed from the ballistic turret by unscrewing the turret cap using the supplied removal tool.

After disassembly you'll find the standard height elevation adjustment dial exposed. Turn the bottom dial anti-clockwise until it stops then sight-in your rifle as normal, making the necessary click adjustments.



Personal Ballistic Cam (PBC).

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Business card thickness separates the 50mm objective from the barrel.

After sighting, the lower section of the elevation dial must be rotated clockwise until it stops. Finding zero at 100m I slipped the base coupling back over the splined elevation dial and lined it up with the zero mark. For ease, the arrow marked on the coupling lines up with the dot on the base of the scope turret and is found at the six o'clock position.

For setting at 200m the coupling is now rotated to allow for the elevation adjustment and, as with the zeroing process,

I lowered the next ring down over the splined coupling until the green dot lined up with the dot on the turret base. The same process was applied for the other range settings and the turret cap re-screwed to lock all adjustments in place.

During the sighting-in and set-up phase I was surprised at how accurate my three-shot group averages were over the newly-set ranges. My target was a SSAA 200m 'six pack' and A4 sheet of paper with hand-drawn black cross,



Adjusting the BT and removing adjustment cap with the supplied tool.



Ballistic brilliance

the A4 used for sighting-in to measure fall of shot for individual ranges. Using a spotting scope I checked the A4, calculated the necessary adjustments then fired a confirmatory shot.

With the range confirmed I moved to the six-pack target and fired a three-shot group, my first groups at 100 and 200m pretty good and as the ranges extended my group size averages remained close. All three-shot groups were one-offs and fired consecutively after each adjustment and with my 300m group measuring 1.2" I was rapt. All adjustment information can be found in the supplied user manual which is a breeze to follow.

Field testing

Back at my usual hunting patch I was shocked by the rise in the local hare population, the critters darting back and forth in the spotlight on nocturnal crop-raiding duties. While the hare isn't as destructive to the landscape as the rabbit, in large numbers they can be a menace to farmers trying to preserve crops and maximise yields.

With the Z5 and .22-250 Rem combination I took 10 hares in a very short time with no misses, a few of them shot at 100m, but for longer distances the range adjustments made sighting a breeze and took all guesswork out of aiming. My longest shot presented at 235m and with a quick turn of the ballistic turret dial, one click short of the 250m setting, I comfortably squeezed off a long-range head shot. Rotating the turret anti-clockwise until it stopped had me back at the 100m zero in the dark without the aid of a torch.

Conclusion

I'm not a bit surprised by the performance of the Z5 2.4-12x50 (BT). The confidence I gained from range testing the ballistic turret on paper targets combined with Swarovski Optik's high resolution lenses made field testing in poor lighting easy. Any hunter after a quality lightweight scope with user-friendly ballistic turret will be





New for the Howa Mini Action rifle - .300BLK

Con Kapralos

It's fair to say the .300 Blackout (.300BLK) was a cartridge born with the US market in mind. The AR-15 platform, being hugely popular in the US, was principally designed to perform with the 5.56 NATO cartridge and while this calibre needs no introduction, many AR-15 users and owners wanted a .30-calibre projectile in a case that would feed in the AR-15, hit harder than the 5.56mm load and be suited to subsonic applications.

Enter the .300BLK. It would be a matter of time before this would be offered in a bolt-action form and Legacy Sports International and Howa of Japan, with their collaborative intuition, released this calibre in the ever-popular Mini Action rifle. A more suitable link than the Howa Mini Action for the .300BLK you couldn't find and it supplements the other calibres offered in this rifle line-up - .204 Ruger, .222 Rem, .223 Rem, 6.5 Grendel and the ubiquitous 7.62x39 Russian. For short, compact cartridges the Howa Mini Action is king.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Australian importer and distributor of Howa rifles, contacted *Australian Shooter* with a request to evaluate the new Mini Action rifle in the .300BLK chambering and unpacking the carton yielded a surprise - this rifle sure is short and stubby. Weighing around 2.7kg and measuring 900mm long the 410mm varmint barrel with threaded muzzle is its most dominating feature.

Action

The Howa Mini Action has a receiver and bolt 12 per cent smaller than the regular short action and are made from steel with a conventional blued finish. The receiver has a cylindrical profile with flattened top section on the rear receiver ring and cylindrical front receiver ring which are both drilled and tapped to accept scope mounting hardware based on the Remington 700 pattern.

The underside of the receiver has an integral recoil lug, something the Howa M1500

is renowned for and which will never be compromised when it comes to strength. The forward receiver ring has a small vent to allow hot gases to escape from the chamber as a safety precaution, the bolt release lever is left of the receiver, directly across from the safety and works effortlessly to release the bolt when required.

The bolt is designed on the classic Howa M1500 Mini Action, scaled down to suit the action and features a 90-degree bolt lift with the ever-reliable opposing dual-lug design. The forged bolt, even with its reduced dimensions and weight, is still immensely strong. The bolt head with its two-lug design also houses a long claw extractor and plunger-style ejector through the bolt face which provides ultra-reliable extraction of fired or unfired cartridges.

A cocking indicator on the rear of the bolt shroud allows easy identification as to whether the rifle is cocked or un-cocked and as always the Howa Mini Action bolt was slick and smooth to operate.



New for the Howa Mini Action rifle - .300BLK

Barrel

This gives the rifle its purpose and identity. The 410mm (16.14") #6 contour varmint barrel is purposely designed with the use of subsonic ammunition and moderator in mind (where legal).

Muzzle threads are cut with a $\frac{5}{8} \times 24$ TPI thread pitch which is compatible with most of today's .30-calibre moderators. Having said that, the use of sound moderators is highly restricted in Australia so Legacy Sports and Howa would be wise to offer the .300BLK with a standard sporter-weight 560mm (22") barrel which would make it a dandy short-range hunting rifle.

Internally the drawn steel, cold-hammer forged barrel is well finished with twist rate of 1 in 7" to handle all .300BLK factory ammunition from 120gr up to 220gr and is matte blued to match the action and bolt.

Magazine assembly

All Howa Mini Action rifles are designed to use the Howa Ammo Boost detachable polymer magazine system. This assembly is fitted to the rifle as standard and consists of a polymer one-piece triggerguard/magazine housing and matching 10-round polymer magazine (in the .300BLK chambering). The magazine is easy to load and clips securely into place. It performed well during testing and this confirmed my thoughts as I know of several Mini Action owners, myself included, who've never had any feeding issues with Mini Action magazines.

Trigger and safety

The HACT (Howa Actuator Controlled Trigger) system is a unit which has been supplied on all Howa M1500 barreled



The bedding arrangement on the HTI Mini Action stock.

actions for a few years. It's of a two-stage design with a much improved, lighter trigger weight pull and little creep. Fully adjustable, it's in the range from 1.1 to 1.7kg and on the review rifle is set at 1.3kg, perfectly adequate for testing and left as was.

The safety catch is on the right-hand side of the receiver, just behind the bolt handle and is of a three-position design as a complete unit with the HACT trigger mechanism. The forward position allows the rifle to fire while the rear blocks the firing pin and bolt handle. In the middle position the firing pin is still blocked but the bolt can be cycled to unload.

Stock

The synthetic HTI polymer stock is the standard unit but there are many other options offered by Outdoor Sporting Agencies. I've seen the HTI stock cop a fair



Howa Ammo Boost magazine kit as fitted.

bit of criticism in the shooting press but I love it, light weight being its best attribute.

For a rifle you'll carry around all day the polymer HTI stock with integral aluminium bedding pillars is hard to beat and will handle any weather conditions. If you wish to attach a bipod up front and shoot prone, a chassis-style stock in the MDT Oryx or similar will serve you best but if you're a stalking hunter, the chassis is way too heavy and HTI polymer stock just perfect.

The inclusion of alloy pillars allows the barrel to free-float along its entire length and this in turn gave some good accuracy when range tested. A decent recoil pad was fitted to the HTI stock as were sling swivel studs front and back. HTI stocks are available in black or green.

Range testing

I visited several gunshops and could source just three loads for the rifle, one each from Remington, Hornady and Buffalo River. Three ammunitions brands would give some indication of the rifle's ability at the 100m test distance. There's a huge amount of 'expert' knowledge on the effective range of the little .300BLK round - some believable, others laughable - and I decided to stick to



The 10-shot .300BLK magazine is easy to load and clip into place.

Product Safety Recall



Tikka .308 rifle ammunition (20 and 50 round packets)

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Defect: In some circumstances, corrosion on the inside of the cartridge has occurred, weakening the strength of the cartridge.

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info@berettaaustralia.com or www.berettaaustralia.com.

**See productsafety.gov.au for
Australian product recall information**

New for the Howa Mini Action rifle - .300BLK

100m as a testing distance and let prospective owners decide for themselves as to what range to shoot their targets.

Starting with the lightest load, the 120gr Remington UPC, I quickly had it shooting Point of Aim at 100m and five 3-shot groups produced respectable results straight off the bat. The Buffalo River loads were next followed by the heaviest in 208gr subsonic Hornady Black and, as expected, these required adjustment in the elevation to have them shooting on the target proper. But once again both Buffalo River and Hornady Black loads shot well and the rifle and all loads were comfortable to shoot with no perceived recoil.

The three loads tested all produced groups of less than 1.5 MOA (42mm) at 100m. Impressed? Very much so (see Table 1 for accuracy results). While I'd be comfortable

shooting the .300BLK at targets out to 200m (with target ammunition) hunting with this calibre would need a bit of research before venturing into the field.

A good quality hunting projectile, either factory or handloaded, would be a prerequisite and having a strict hunting ethos as to what game you're targeting and distances shot would be of paramount importance. The .300BLK is an ideal short-range hunting calibre but only in the hands of seasoned hunters. For plinking or range work it's a real blast and I encourage everyone to try shooting this calibre in the Howa Mini Action.

Overview

The Howa Mini Action in .300BLK was an interesting rifle to shoot. Even though it wasn't possible to shoot it in its intended

application (with sound moderator fitted), it was still fun at the range, light recoil being its best attribute.

A sporter-weight 510mm barrel would be a nice addition to the options for those who can't use sound moderators due to legal constraints. The Howa Mini Action in .300BLK with HTI stock retails for \$649 or fitted with the MDT Oryx Chassis for \$1340. More at osaaustralia.com.au ●



The buttstock of the HTI synthetic stock was well profiled and came with a decent recoil pad.

Table 1

Accuracy testing of Howa Mini Action .300BLK at 100m

Ammunition	Best group (mm)	Worst group (mm)	Average group* (mm)
Remington UPC 120gr OTFB (Supersonic)	15	45	31
Buffalo River OSA 125gr PP SN	20	37	28
Hornady Black 208gr AMAX (subsonic)	17	33	25

*Average group calculated from five 3-shot groups at 100m

Specifications

Manufacturer: Howa, Japan

Model: MI500 Mini Action

Action: Bolt-action, push-feed, 90-degree bolt throw. Chrome-moly steel receiver and bolt, matte blued

Trigger: HACT (Howa Actuator Control Trigger) two-stage adjustable

Safety: Three-position

Barrel: Cold-hammer forged, 410mm (16.14") #6 contour varmint profile, muzzle threaded to accept accessories (5/8x24 TPI), matte blued

Sights: Clean barrel, receiver drilled and tapped to accept scope mounting accessories

Calibres: .300BLK (tested) also available in .204 Ruger, .222 Remington, .223 Remington, 6.5 Grendel, 7.62x39 Russian (specs dependent on calibre)

Magazine: Howa AmmoBoost polymer detachable, 10-shot capacity (tested)

Stock: HTI synthetic, alloy pillar bedded in green or black

Weight: 2.7kg

Length: 900mm

Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies

RRP: \$649 (HTI stock), \$1340 (MDT Oryx Chassis stock)



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10 out of 10

for Howa magazine conversion

Daniel O'Dea



All you need - cleared rifle with bolt removed, Floorplate Conversion Kit, new Howa magazine and tool to remove the action screws.

Traditionally most hunting rifles of the past 100 years or so have come with hinged floorplate magazines with a capacity of three to five rounds dependent on calibre. In more recent years detachable magazines of similar capacity have become more common and perhaps even a more likely standard offering for some firearms manufacturers.

Detachable magazines certainly have

their advantages, the most prevalent being ease of reloading with the ability to carry additional rounds preloaded in a spare magazine. From a safety perspective a detachable magazine also increases the ease of unloading a firearm to make safe.

For balance you could also argue a tradition floor plate can't be lost, nor can it be not fully inserted, resulting in the rounds not being picked up off the follower, hence it could be argued the floorplate

system is both more dependable and reliable. From a commercial manufacturing perspective there would have been little argument as to which system was cheaper to produce, as with a floorplate in most cases there were generally less parts and likewise less complicated manufacturing steps.

Less parts and simpler manufacturing translate to lower cost and a cheaper price point at retail, so this proven system continues to be relevant with most well-known manufacturers. However, with modern polymer moulding this argument perhaps doesn't hold as much weight with the advent of durable, cheap and reliable polymer magazines.

Another benefit of detachable magazines is they present a simple solution to increasing ammunition capacity. Need more bullets? Simply insert a bigger magazine and although it could be said that for general hunting if you can't get it done in five rounds you shouldn't be shooting at all, there are circumstances where increased capacity is either beneficial or even essential. Examples could be for feral animal control or competition disciplines that include timed stages with higher round counts than five.

So there's good news for those who might like to increase capacity or realise the advantages of a detachable magazine



Floorplate Conversion Kit and polymer magazine increased capacity of the Howa rifle in .223 Remington to 10 rounds.

10 out of 10 for Howa magazine conversion

without the need to buy a new rifle. Outdoor Sporting Agencies, the Australian Howa agent, has a simple Floorplate Conversion Kit. If you own a Howa 1500 or for that matter any co-branded variant of the same rifle such as a Weatherby Vanguard, Smith and Wesson M1500, Mossberg 1500 (and I'd assume older Australian Mountaineer, CMC Howa etc.) you can now upgrade your fixed floorplate magazine for a detachable set-up.

The conversion requires no gunsmithing as such and can be completed with basic tools in a matter of minutes, requiring the purchase of two items - a new magazine adapted triggerguard (the Howa Floorplate Conversion Kit) and a magazine itself.

The new components are made from hard-wearing polymer as found on many modern firearms with magazines available in both five and 10-round capacity. The system is available for short action Howa variants covering all the favourites such as .223 Remington, .243 Winchester, .308 Winchester and others.

The conversion itself is done as follows. Firstly, maintaining safe muzzle discipline ensure the rifle is completely unloaded and clear with bolt removed. Next, using an appropriate screw driver or hex key, remove both front and rear action screws then withdraw the triggerguard and floorplate assembly which includes the magazine spring and follower.

Also remove the old internal magazine housing that normally sits between the action base and floorplate, install the Howa Floorplate Conversion Kit then reinstall and tighten the front and rear action screws. Job done! You can now use either Howa five or 10-round polymer magazines.

For several years my go-to farm rifle has been a Howa 1500 in .223 Remington. Ironically, prior to the Howa I had a Remington ADL in the same calibre that featured a blind magazine (no magazine floorplate). Although a great rifle, the blind magazine was one feature I didn't like as to empty the internal magazine I had to cycle all rounds through the action. With the floorplate at least you could hit the floorplate catch and drop the rounds into your hand and with a detachable magazine it's now even easier.

Another consideration for farmers and primary producers are safe storage regulations. Back in the day, in my experience when visiting rural properties the 'treat all guns as loaded' adage was even more pertinent in that all guns generally were left loaded. The chambers may well have been empty but rifles were often left with rounds in the magazine so they could be quickly



Step 1: Remove both front and rear action screws.



Step 2: Withdraw old floorplate, triggerguard and fixed magazine components from the stock.



Step 3: Insert Floorplate Conversion Kit and retighten both action screws.

brought to bear on any would-be pest as opportunity presented.

These days, if there's a fox in the hen-house good luck if you can get a gun out the safe, the ammo from the lock-box and have your rifle locked and loaded before the chooks are dead and the fox has fled. Regulations vary state-to-state and as a firearms licence holder you must ensure legal compliance in your jurisdiction, but in general terms a detachable magazine may mean a better chance to put your rifle into action when needed urgently.

As can be seen from the photos, I completed the conversion on my Howa quickly and without fuss over a few minutes on the farm workbench. Once upon a time I might have baulked at switching the steel bottom on my rifle for a polymer replacement, but after years of seeing the successful application of polymer components on modern rifles and handguns I no longer have any concerns.

At the range, rounds fed flawlessly and there was no discernible difference in point of impact for having done the conversion. To that end I guess it doesn't really affect the bedding of the rifle, as to make the change there was no need to remove the barrelled action from the stock. The large magazine release lever was easy to operate



Job done! You've converted your fixed magazine Howa to a detachable, shown here with 10-round magazine.

and ambidextrous in design, all up an improvement in the rifle's functionality.

The Howa Floorplate Conversion Kit is distributed by Outdoor Sporting Agencies and available at all good gun stores, retailing for around \$95. An online check found both five and 10-round magazines retailing for similar money. More at osausastralia.com.au



Howa polymer 10-round magazine in .223 Remington.



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Ozkanlar SHS STP-12 12-gauge shotgun

Dick Eussen



Neale Ellis reckons his STP-12 is a handy scrub gun in the slug-barrel configuration.

Made by Rec Arms of Turkey and imported by SH Shooting Australia, the SHS STP-12 12-gauge shotgun is well suited to the market Down Under. It's available in three finishes and stocks - walnut, black synthetic and woodland camo - with barrel lengths of 20" and 28" and a choice of five-piece interchangeable chokes - full (F), improved modified (IM), modified (M), improved cylinder (IC) and skeet (SK).

The choke tubes are screwed into the barrel with a wrench and magazine capacity is four with one in the spout, while the receiver is dovetailed for a red dot sight or scope. The 20" rifled slug barrel has adjustable iron sights and the metal finish is matte black or camo.

The shotgun is also available in either a 20" or 28" barrel for those not needing a second barrel and a tactical model with 20" barrel can also be had. The STP-12 shoots all traditional hunting and target loads from 28g (2¾") to 52g (3") shells as well as steel

shot loads, which are recommended to be used with 3" 12-gauge shells.

Straight-pull

While straight-pull rifles have been in use since 1889 when the format was adopted by the Swiss government as the Schmidt-Rubin for its military option, shotguns are much rarer. The rifle was also called the Schmidt after Colonel Rudolf Schmidt as Colonel Eduard Rubin's only input was the 7.5x53.3 cartridge. The straight-pull S/R action is locked by a rotating collar or sleeve on the front of the bolt. A separate rod slips in and out on a slide cut into the right side of the receiver and part of the rod extends inwards and engages with a slot in the sleeve that locks the turning bolt head. When the bolt is pulled back the sleeve rotates, unlocking the bolt and pulling the fired round back with it.

It's a secure system that never caught on, the bolt-action being favoured due to its reliability and strong locking mechanism.

The S/R straight-pull action was always plagued by gunk problems, not something you want in combat. Ozkanlar has used components consisting of simple but effective engineering designs based on the S/R, an innovative and improved turning-bolt block bolt locking system and cartridge-feed cut-off that makes STP-12 shotguns very reliable for practical use and ease of stripping for cleaning and barrel interchange.

The STP-12 operates by pulling the extended bolt handle back with the now-compressed spring pushing a shell into the chamber with no help needed from the operator. When fired, the bolt slide and rotary bolt twin-lug head are locked and only released when the bolt handle is pulled back, unlocking the action, ejecting the fired case and it closing again by itself due to the compressed spring action. It picks up a new round from the magazine well, locks and cocks, ready to fire.

While not as fast as a double, self-loader

or slide action, the bolt handle can be worked speedily - and, with practice, matches the lever-action shotgun. The STP-12 has a unique trigger that allows the trigger finger to contact it swiftly after pulling the bolt back and releasing the handle.

The gun comes with two interchangeable barrels, a standard 28" and a 20" rifled slug barrel. Changing barrels is as easy as unscrewing the knurled magazine nut, pulling the barrel out and replacing it with the chosen one. This means you have a great field or target gun when fitted with the long barrel or a slug gun for use on pigs and other large game when using 12-gauge lead slugs and large shot like SGs.

The STP-12 has a safety button behind the trigger with a visible red ring indicating the gun is ready to fire, otherwise it's on 'safe' position. The tube magazine feedwell is in front of the trigger, the magazine holding four rounds with another in the chamber. The beauty of this system is you can insert a new round at any time to replace the shell used.

It matters little if you use 2¾" or 3" shells in a tube magazine as all 12-gauge shells will work. Unloading unfired shells can be done by working the bolt handle or, with the safety button on, pull the bolt handle back all the way while pushing the carrier-latch button on the magazine. Release the bolt and press on the carrier with your forefinger and a shell pops out from the bottom. Repeat until there are no shells in the tube.

The STP-12 comes with an easy-to-follow instruction booklet though loses a little in the translation from Turkish to English. Also supplied are five choke tubes which are fitted with a special choke wrench. Before



The free-swinging handle that works the straight-pull action and magazine well makes for a fast-action shotgun.

installing remove the choke in the barrel, clean all threads with a brush, screw in the replacement choke and tighten, ensuring it doesn't protrude from the muzzle.

Dismantled, the STP-12 is surprisingly well finished, the receiver nicely polished inside and out and with steel inserts designed to guide the opening bolt when recycling.

In the field

The STP-12 has a synthetic straight stock with recoil pad. The stock pretty much puts the eye in direct alignment across the top of the ventilated rib-fitted 28" barrel and will bust clays all day providing they're 'blocked' out by the front fibre-optic sight. The gun appears to be good for both quail



You have a choice of five choke tubes.

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Ozkanlar SHS STP-12 12-gauge shotgun

and ducks but with bird hunting banned by the Queensland Government we were unable to test the gun on birds. Following an early start to the wet season, rabbits were hidden in the prolific growth of grass and hard to find.

But we had an impromptu session on clays which proved the gun is highly adequate for the job, no jams experienced with the gun thoroughly cleaned and serviced before use. All too often new guns aren't cleaned by owners in the mistaken belief they're spotless. Far from it, new guns are covered in special grease/oils for protection which must be removed before use.

Test patterns with 12-gauge SB Club 32 70mm 32g No.4 shot ammunition at 20m proved the long barrel put 87 per cent in the 76cm circle with full choke tube fitted, more than adequate for birds and small furred game. With practice we were able to gain fast acquisition to a second target by rapidly working the bolt and remember the bolt returns to battery by its own inertia, a skill easily learned. But it's very fast and, with the option of being able to reload and replace fired shells at any time, a brisk rate of fire is possible.

The rifled slug barrel

When fitted with the short 20" slug barrel, the balance of the STP-12 changes from a quick-to-sight shotgun to what feels more like a well-balanced rifle. The barrel is fitted with adjustable rear sights and a front optic bead. Due to the stock design the shotgun comes to battery quickly with the sights lining up on target when the cheek is down on the stock.

Years ago I hunted a lot with a Winchester Buckmaster slide-action shotgun and shot many pigs with both rifled slugs and SG shot. Even buffaloes and scrub bulls are not immune to a well-placed rifled lead or Brenneke slug. My method was to have one slug load in the barrel with a follow-up in the mag, followed by SG shells. Generally when hunting you have a standing shot - or two - at game before it



takes off. When encountering a mob of pigs the SGs come into play for running targets.

We fired Winchester Defender 2¾" 1oz rifled slugs rated at 1600fps, less in the short barrel. Groups fired from a rest at 25m averaged 50mm with open sights which is fair, as you can't expect bench rest quality from rifled slugs. The rear sight ran out of adjustment and the gun still shot 20mm below the target. Again, there's a good case to fit a scope or red dot sight which will also improve groups.

Winchester OO Buck 2¾" shells loaded with nine pellets to 1325fps were shot from the bench at 25m and averaged 28cm, enough to slow even the biggest boar down, especially in the thick scrub and rubber vine we hunt in. They should group much better in the full-choke 28" barrel rather than the open cylinder slug barrel.

The Ozkanlar SHS STP-12 is an affordable shotgun that will do double duty as a bird/small game gun as well as a big game gun with simple change of the barrel. It retails for around \$1200, not bad as you have two guns in one and a handy high-impact plastic carry case. ●



Specifications

Make: Ozkanlar SHS STP-12

Calibre: 12-gauge 2¾-3" shells

Stock: Walnut or synthetic in black or camo fitted with swivels

Magazine capacity: Four plus one

Barrel lengths: 50.8cm, 71.2cm (20", 28")

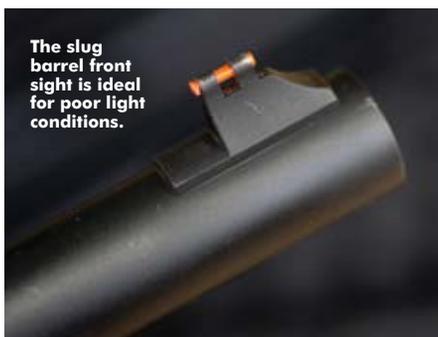
Action: Straight-pull bolt

Total length: 107cm with 20" barrel, 128cm with 28" barrel

Weight: 2.2kg (5lb)

Trigger pull: 6.1lb

Price: Around \$1200





An expert's view on selecting tints

Luke Higgins

When it comes to finding the right shooting glasses for you, there are two factors we must consider when selecting a tint - hue (colour) and saturation (darkness of colour). Theoretically, for optimum sporting performance a shooter should choose the tint that alleviates symptoms of glare but be as unsaturated as possible while achieving this. Basically, choose a tint that's as light as possible, alleviates glare and feels comfortable.

The reason for this is that studies have shown the darker the tint, the longer the message takes to travel from your retina to the occipital lobe in your brain that's responsible for interpreting the images your eyes have 'seen'. This reduces speed of target acquisition and will impact on your response time.

The level of saturation an individual will feel comfortable with is dependent on a few variables:

- Size of the pupil - children and young adults generally have larger pupil size and will prefer darker saturation/darker tints;
- Iris/eye pigment - less-pigmented eyes (blue and green) will generally be more glare-sensitive and prefer darker tints;
- Ocular pathology - many eye conditions such as macular degeneration and glaucoma cause us to be more glare-sensitive and those individuals generally benefit from darker tints with selective hues. Often for patients with cataract I prescribe a yellow tint and for those with macular degeneration an amber tint.

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

and causes most of the glare symptoms we encounter, so if we block the blue light we experience less glare symptoms and often have better contrast with targets standing out against the background. Below are some general guidelines on tints.

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

Yellow - good for reducing blue light and glare symptoms, in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky.

Red/amber/vermillion - excellent for fluorescent targets and for black/banded. Good for reducing blue light and glare symptoms and against broken backgrounds (trees, bushes, grass, sky).

Purple - works well in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky. ●

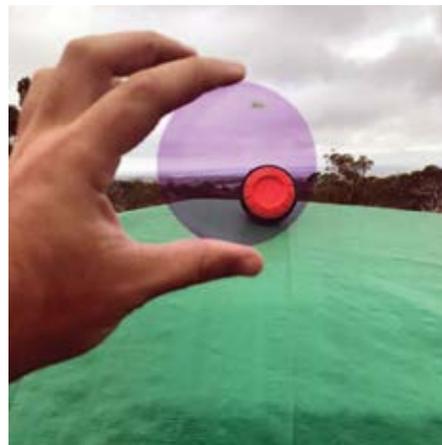
• *Dr Luke Higgins is a clinical optometrist, SSAA member and competition clay target shooter.*



Orange tints work well on black and fluorescent targets against broken backgrounds.



Yellow is best for reducing blue light and glare symptoms.



Purple is favoured in lowlight conditions and when shooting targets against open sky.

Accurising the budget Ruger

James Hoffman



I picked up the little 16" Ruger American 'Ranch' .300AAC/BO as a package deal with an entry-level scope then auctioned the scope for a surprisingly decent price, net result being the bare rifle cost me a very reasonable \$580. From a value standpoint Rugers sure are hard to beat.

As a handloader I see the .300AAC/BO as merely a dialed-down .30-cal. This appeals as I don't see a huge argument for running the .308W at distances under 300m and I already own quantities of .30-cal reloading supplies and equipment. Don't get me wrong, I adore my Tikka CTR .308W - incredibly accurate, reliable and overall a simply stunning rifle. It's a competition winner but a heavy thing and the .308W running full-power loads dishes out more than the casual boot, not what I'd call a 'fun' rifle.

And to criticise reduced .308W loads, in

my experience half-case loads are a tricky thing to perfect as I'm always conscious of powder positioning and the potential pros and cons of the various case filler options. Then there's the timeless question 'which powder should I choose...' for that optimal (yet still punchy enough) reduced load. On the contrary, simply a full cartridge of fast-burning rifle powder in the little necked up .223 case - now that's what I call fun. Due to the milder recoil from the 300AAC/BO, even at close range, the shooter will often see where their (missed) shots are falling, invaluable for shot correction in the absence of a spotter.

The rifle

First impression of the RARR out of the box was it felt somewhat cheap and 'plastic', rather like a budget model Savage. The plastic injection-moulded stock had some nasty edges and the fore-end was actually



touching the supposedly 'free-floating' barrel all down the left side of the channel. The trigger was rather mushy too and while adjustable down to 3.5lb, really didn't compare to some of my higher quality triggers. I'd say for a hunting rifle the factory trigger is adequate. Also for a scoped rifle, the low American-style comb is not to my taste.

Nevertheless, on the positive side the little 16" barrel points well and is comparatively thick for a sporter, measuring 0.743" in diameter near the crown. The three-lugged front locking bolt is also one chunky unit with a convenient 70° throw and removing the stock also pleasantly revealed aluminium bedding blocks for the two action screws. This rifle certainly showed some promise in the accuracy department.



The factory RARR is far from perfect but nothing the home tinkerer can't rectify. With a bit of work I felt this little bolt gun had some real potential so I decided to carry out three modifications: properly free-float the barrel, add a permanent cheek riser and replace that factory trigger.

Home improvements

Free-floating the barrel was simple enough, a socket closely matching the barrel profile wrapped in sandpaper made short work of the undersized channel. I also removed a lot of the nasty plastic edges making the rifle much more pleasant to handle.

Adding a Kydex cheek riser was also straightforward and I had no qualms boring

through the plastic stock. My 'top-of-the-line' \$99 drill press made short work of this although it can also be achieved with a humble hand drill and a little finesse.

Next came trigger replacement. I picked up a Timney 'Ruger American' trigger for almost half the price of the rifle, expensive but addressing my biggest complaint with the RARR. After disassembly I noticed the factory trigger housing was pinned to the action using hollow, split pins which I've since learned are called 'roll pins' and are a type of spring pin.

In firearms, especially US-made ones, roll pins are becoming more popular over traditional straight dowel pins and are prevalent in modern AR-style platforms,



The aluminum bedding blocks.

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Accurising the budget Ruger

so I imagine Ruger have standardised their manufacturing in this way. There are punches designed specifically for the removal of roll pins as at the very least using a traditionally shaped punch will heavily affect the delicate ends of the roll pins.

Following the Timney instructions, the drop-in trigger installed easily enough and after the three modifications the rifle was now feeling much better. I must say those Timney triggers are truly exceptional, up there with the best I've felt and something I'd definitely recommend.

At the range

Range testing saw the modified RARR shooting the budget 125gr Speer TNTs easily into MOA at 50m. The stubby 300AAC/BO cartridge likes fast-burning rifle powder such as ADI AR2205 or Hodgdon's Lil'Gun. I picked up some quality Jagemann brass so went straight to (listed) maximums for my preliminary tests.

Both powders shot well but compared with AR2205, the Lil'Gun groups were a 'lil' tighter. One characteristic I noticed with the RARR is the barrel didn't seem

to heat as fast as some of my other 30 calibers. I put 10 rounds through it and could still comfortably touch the barrel so this will certainly be useful in a target shooting scenario.

With brand new brass the gun had one light primer strike out of 60 shots (using CCI-400 primers). Apparently the 300AAC/BO RARRs are headspaced on the looser side and my humble calipers measuring the shoulder on some fire-formed brass seemed to validate this claim, appearing at least five thou over SAAMI specification which may not bode well with under-specification factory ammunition.

Furthermore, from what I gather the RARR prefers a thinner primer like the CCI400 over a harder magnum primer like the CCI450. If light primer strikes start occurring with any sort of frequency, or if I was intent on using magnum primers, I may need to consider tightening up that headspace.

The rotary magazine is on the flimsy side but fed the 125grs without a hitch and to be fair I actually prefer a flush magazine because it's flat where I balance the rifle

on my index finger for the standing offhand stance, not to mention being more ergonomic for carrying.

Conclusion

Overall I'm chuffed with the result. It's a cheap, accurate, hard-hitting yet compact little unit that's an absolute pleasure to shoot. I do feel I'm avoiding some issues by handloading and neck sizing however - various factory ammunition may not be so compatible due to the liberal headspacing, something I haven't tried.

I plan to use this rifle for practical target shooting at 100m and 200m and it'll be interesting to see how it reaches on the 300m line. At a shade under 3kg scoped, the RARR 300AAC/BO would also make a superb hunting rifle and will be accompanying me in the field. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Ruger
Action: Bolt, front locking three-lugged
Calibre: 300 AAC/Blackout (0.308")
Capacity: Five
Metal finish: Blued
Safety: Tang safety, two-position
Stock: Synthetic
Trigger: Single stage adjustable, retrofitted with a Timney
Sights: None
Weight: 5.9lb/2.6kg
Barrel: Length 16.12", twist 1/7" RH
Overall length: 36"
Length of pull: 13.75"
Scope mounts: Rail installed
Ammunition: Handloads; 125gr projectiles over AR2205 or Hodgdon's Lil'Gun using CCI400 primers.
Distributor: NIOA
Price: About \$700



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Clubs & competitions

The SSAA has about 440 clubs and ranges throughout Australia. We cater for target shooters and hunters who may want to sight-in their firearms at one of our many ranges. Our clubs also offer many different types of rifle, shotgun and handgun shooting competitions, whether you are a weekend club shooter or are aspiring to be a serious national or international competitor.

ssaa.org.au/disciplines

Magazines & more

The *Australian Shooter* magazine is the pride of the Association and is mailed as a bonus to our members 11 times per year, saving them almost \$100 each year on the newsagency price. Our other publications cover topics such as hunting, a how-to guide to shooting and hunting, handguns, politics, state updates, something for teenagers and even a handful of cookbooks. In the digital age, we have a variety of websites, e-newsletters and social media. We also have our own SSAA TV channel on YouTube featuring how-to videos on competitions, hunting, butchering, firearm maintenance and more.

ssaa.org.au/publications

SSAA Gun Sales

SSAA Gun Sales is an online service for SSAA members, dealers and the Australian shooting and hunting community, including firearm owners, collectors and enthusiasts. Designed to be Australia's most comprehensive firearms and accessories trading website, it has heavily discounted listing fees for members and is safe, secure, legal and easy to use.

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Insurance

With SSAA membership, members are automatically insured for up to \$20 million public liability and personal accident cover up to \$750 per week with \$75,000 life insurance when participating in a shooting-related activity. SSAA General Insurance Brokers can also arrange cover for your business whether you're a tradie, doctor, lawyer or retailer plus your personal covers. Perhaps one of our most popular insurance products is the SSAA Members Firearms Insurance, which covers your firearms for theft, accidental loss such as fire or flood and accidental breakage, not just at home but also at the range or out hunting for up to \$25,000. For just \$30 a year, this is remarkable value only offered to SSAA members.

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SSAA members can also sign up free of charge to the SSAA Farmer Assist program, which connects members with farmers who require wildlife culling to maintain their property. The program is run online at farmerassist.com.au and requires members to undertake accuracy accreditation to be eligible.

Many states run dedicated hunting programs often called SSAA Conservation & Wildlife Management. Members can learn four-wheel drive, GPS and other outdoor skills that will enable them to be better hunters while helping preserve Australia's environmental balance. Across Australia there are a variety of hunting-specific courses and clubs available to all members that will introduce you to game stalking, butchering and, of course, firearm safety in the field. Whether hunting rabbits, ducks, foxes, pigs or trophy deer, the SSAA can point you in the right direction.

ssaa.org.au/hunting

Membership services

Our members are the SSAA and we have a dedicated team of professionals available to ensure you get the most out of your membership. Our goal is to reach 200,000 members by 2020. We can only do that by satisfying our stakeholders, supporting our dedicated volunteers and continuing to expand and improve our services. Newly introduced benefits include our extremely affordable firearms insurance and discounted online firearms trading through our SSAA Gun Sales.

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SSAA Store

We wear our logo proudly and we encourage our members to do the same. Our SSAA Store features many items for sale including clothing, camping gear and firearms accessories. You will also find the SSAA's mascot, Trigga the Koala. This Australian icon helps explain to our local and international friends alike the conservation role that hunting and the SSAA play in protecting our distinctive Australian environment and wildlife.

store.ssaa.org.au

Lobbying & SSAA Legislative Action (SSAA-LA)

The SSAA lobbies all arms of government including local, state and federal. The SSAA can often be found consulting with firearms registries, state parliamentarians and also at the table in federal parliament negotiating to protect members' chosen recreations and pastimes.

Through our SSAA Legislative Action (SSAA-LA) department, we specifically praise and publicise lawmakers and commentators who support us, while exposing the ignorance of those who wish to damage our sport.

On the international front, we even have Non-Government Organisation status within the United Nations and regularly participate in international forums. You can follow our political activities in our variety of magazines, websites and social media.

SSAA SHOT Expos

Each year, we host at least one large, professional shooting and outdoors expo showcasing the best products and services available in the Australian market. The SSAA SHOT Expos can attract more than 15,000 people during a weekend looking for the perfect firearm, scope, knife or accessories to add to their kit. Previously held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, upcoming expos are advertised throughout our magazines, websites and social media.

Youth development & firearm safety education

The SSAA conducts regular safety classes and practical instruction on firearm safety. The Association works closely with the firearms industry in the promotion of responsible firearms handling among junior shooters across Australia. You can sponsor a junior's membership and help set them on the right path to responsible firearm ownership and to the enjoyment that comes with being a sporting shooter.

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Hornady TAP Urban 60gr ammunition

Daniel O'Dea



Daniel O'Dea tests .223 Remington Hornady 60gr TAP Urban ammo in an older one-in-12 twist Howa 1500.

There has been much development in ammunition, not just in propellant and projectiles but in general manufacturing terms. Years ago it wasn't uncommon to find variations in brass and other components among factory rounds, especially with cheaper ammo.

As a handloader I recall brass with non-concentric primer flash holes for instance, things like standard deviation for velocity was greater by today's levels. Nowadays with modern manufacturing, such tolerances seem to be held to a much tighter criterion and I'm often surprised by the accuracy obtained from factory ammunition that might be otherwise considered value offerings.

It could actually be said we live in an age of abundant high-quality factory ammunition. When I started in this game if you wanted affordable, consistent and accurate ammunition, you had little choice but to load your own. There was premium factory ammo to be bought but choice was limited

and relatively expensive by modern benchmarks.

Today, for the more popular calibres, choice would appear endless. For instance, based on ammo sales, .223 Remington is the most popular calibre in Australia and certainly the most prolific used in the western world. This is especially the case when such calculations include the manufacture and sale of the 5.56 NATO cartridge which is the military's nomenclature for what effectively is the same round loaded to higher pressures, the other key difference left to a small variance in chamber dimension.

Hornady Ammunition for example lists 52 product offerings in .223 Remington/5.56 NATO on its website. Everything from 35gr Varmint to 75gr HPBT Match loadings in boxes containing 20 rounds up to 1000 and Hornady is just one ammunition manufacturer of many. It seems we're really spoilt for choice, so what to use?

As with firearms themselves much development in ammunition has been made with military and law enforcement clients in mind, as these areas generally produce the largest opportunities in sales to the manufacturers. But as is often the case, civilian shooters can reap the benefits as product attributes developed cross over to dual civilian use.



Hornady 60gr TAP Urban .223 Remington ammo comes in boxes of 20 with 10 boxes to a carton.

There's no better example than with Hornady TAP Urban Law Enforcement Ammunition in the 60gr .223 Remington loading, TAP being an acronym for Tactical Application Police. In developing a round for law enforcement that delivers dependable performance in urban areas, who'd have thought it could be equally at home in the Australian bush?

There are a couple of factors at play with the Hornady 60gr TAP Urban round that indeed makes it worth the consideration of Australian shooters. In 1957 when the .223 Remington round was first developed, it had a 55gr projectile to be fired in a rifle (the ArmaLite AR-15) with a one in 14 twist rate. This was shortly after revised to a one in 12 twist which up until recently was the most prevalent twist rate found in civilian .223 Remington calibre rifles. This was most suitable for varmint weight projectiles in the 40gr to 55gr scale.

In the 1980s, looking to improve the terminal ballistics of the military version of the round, the 55gr loading was replaced by a 62gr loading that required a one in 7 twist rate to stabilise the heavier bullet. In more recent years on the back of improved performance obtained by the use of heavier projectiles, the .223 Remington

It could actually be said we live in an age of abundant high-quality factory ammunition.



has become a more versatile cartridge and its appeal has grown. Many new commercial .223 rifles now come with a faster one in 9 twist rate to be more flexible with heavier projectile choice.

One problem has been if you owned a rifle with the one in 12 twist you may not have been able to take advantage of the versatility gained by using heavier projectiles. My own go-to around the farm rifle has long been a .223 Remington (one in 12). Originally my regular loading was always a 50gr Ballistic Tip or V-Max which worked great on roos under permit and small vermin such as rabbits, foxes and cats. My preference for heavier game has always been a larger calibre but fate would sometimes dictate the only gun at hand when the odd pig popped up was my .223 Remington. Although I found with proper bullet placement pigs could still be despatched humanely, I did change to 55gr projectiles and would have preferred heavier if the one in 12 twist would have allowed.

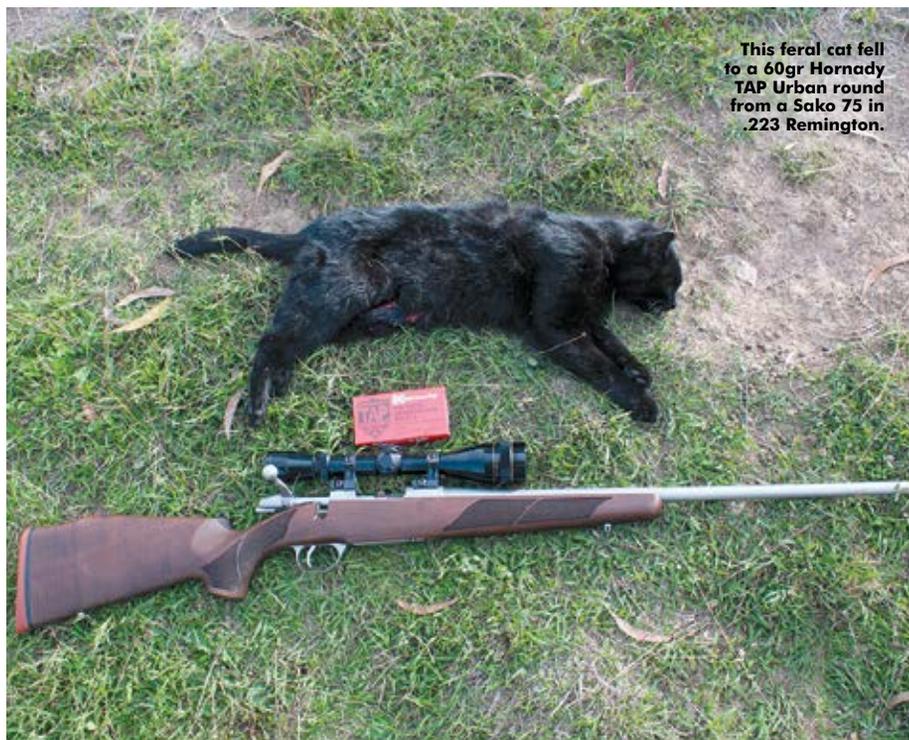
The Hornady 60gr TAP Urban offering is loaded with a flat-based polymer-tipped projectile which, being shorter for weight than the equivalent boat-tail 60gr projectile, means it still stabilises well in a one in 12 twist. To quote directly



Hornady TAP Urban 60gr ammunition

from the Hornady website in referring to this loading: "TAP Urban is the heaviest polymer-tipped bullet acceptable for 1:12 twist rifles. The heavier 60gr bullet transfers more energy to target for enhanced terminal ballistic." What this basically means is you can take advantage of the harder hitting 60gr projectile in your one in 12 rifle. If you have a newer rifle with a one in 7 to one in 9 twist, even better.

I would note the lack of a boat-tail projectile design means little to most shooters. While they may look the part, in reality for practical use they offer no real advantage at moderate ranges. The boat-tail design comes into its own at extreme long range in the transition from super to subsonic velocities (transonic range) which in this loading does not occur until about 640m.



This feral cat fell to a 60gr Hornady TAP Urban round from a Sako 75 in .223 Remington.



The 60gr TAP Urban projectile (right) beside the popular Hornady 55gr V-Max.

Hornady distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies (OSA) having recently secured a large shipment of the Hornady Tap Urban ammunition, organised a sample for *Australian Shooter* to review and having access to several rifles chambered in .223 Remington I tried the ammo in my Sako 75 and Howa 1500, both older versions with a one in 12 twist. I also had on hand a Remington 7615 with a one in 7 twist.

I didn't shoot any tack-hole groups myself - I seldom do these days. But average groups across all rifles ran around

the 1 MOA mark for five-shot groups and half that when measuring the best three from five. Ultimately accuracy is dependent on both the user and equipment. OSA rep Greg Coleman shared with me an image of a target shot with the same ammo in a current Howa 1500, a T3 Tikka and a Shilen barrelled Ruger M77 which all put my groups to shame. Even so, my own testing established consistent practical accuracy across an array of firearms.

I put the Hornady 60gr TAP Urban ammo to some practical use when, in the

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wake of Cyclone Trevor, I made a quick trip to the Northern Territory to inspect some damage on a property I do some work for. Knowing there would be a .223 Remington on site (another Howa 1500) I threw a packet of Hornady TAP Urban ammo into my kit. I was there on business but didn't miss the chance when a solid young boar wandered across the track in the distance. Jumping out of the vehicle I followed the trail and was shortly presented with a shot, a single round to the side of the head bringing a swift end to his travels, the result leaving no question as to the lethality of the round.

Back on my own farm a feral cat made the mistake of slinking out from behind some brush when I happened to be armed with my Sako 75 loaded with TAP Urban ammo. I knew the distance to be about 220m so hold was adjusted and a shot despatched. As with the pig the result was emphatic. I didn't have any current roo tags but have no doubt the 60gr TAP Urban load would deliver immediate and humane results equally in this application.

In summary my assessment of the Hornady TAP Urban 60gr ammunition was it would present a good all-around choice in the .223 Remington for Australian shooters targeting soft skin vermin such as rabbits, foxes, cats or dogs as well as providing ample energy for well-placed shots on feral pigs. I understand OSA has been able to offer TAP Urban 60gr to the market at a competitive price, a quick check online seeing it retail for as little as \$18 per box of 20. This is great value for a premium polymer-tipped offering so should really appeal to professional shooters and farmers who don't reload. ●



A single Hornady 60gr TAP Urban round to the head brought a swift end to this NT boar.



The Hornady Match grade brass case on the TAP Urban round has a primer crimp.

Specifications

- Ammunition:** Hornady 60gr TAP Urban
- Muzzle velocity:** 3124fps
- Muzzle energy:** 1300ft-lb
- Ballistic coefficient:** .265
- Sectional density:** .171
- Bullet length:** .873"
- Case:** Match grade brass
- Propellant:** Temperature stable, flash retarded



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Living on the more useful edge

Henri Lach



A folding knife that can't be opened easily and quickly with one hand is as useful to a hunter in the field or a fisher at his favourite waterhole as an ashtray on a motorbike. Argue if you will but that statement is backed by years of experience - I believe I speak with authority. But before we go any further, let me make it clear the so-called stiletto-type 'flick knives', spring-loaded that open at the push of a button, are not part of this discourse. While I question the logic of this, I accept such folding knives continue to remain a

prohibited import item to Australia.

Meanwhile, magnificent one-handed opening folding knives from such iconic brands as Boker, Gerber and Leatherman are readily available on the Australian market. Check out the SSAA online shop for some quality one-handed openers at a great price, a JKR folder at a mere \$34.95 boasts: 'The thumb knob allows for easy one-handed opening.'

Knives, like guns, including airguns (not to be confused in my day with 'firearms') have been my passion since well before a

razor was needed to enhance my boyish good looks. I had the insight at a tender age to realise that being in the bush without a useful blade for company would be like being stranded in a storm without weatherproof coveralls.

The traditional vision of the Outback stockman with his two-bladed nail-pick folder in a homemade pouch crafted from the hide of a recently departed marsupial looks fine in TV docos. In reality, the few times this bloke may need to deploy his knife is when he's sitting around the campfire yarning with his mates and slicing a bit of barbecued steak or cutting a piece of rope for whatever purpose. I know this from my many dealings with such Aussie stockmen.

Blades in the field for me, a dedicated hunter and fisher, have always been a good folding knife in the pocket of my bush gear, a blade I could access with one hand and deploy quickly with the same hand. Big hunting knives, Bowies and such, in huge leather sheaths weighing down my hip have not been my forte. I've never wished to look like a Western Frontiers man. Commonsense also tells me it wouldn't impress my quarry on land or water either.

Good pocket knives I could open with one hand have come and gone over the years, some worn out, others lost in the field of battle so to speak. It was once a hard task to replace them, but not today. As mentioned, certain one-handed openers are non-starters legally for the hunter and fisher.

Don't get me wrong, I don't avoid good fixed-blade knives, in fact I'm an avid admirer of such tools and a vintage Puma Skinner still has a place of honour among my possessions. It may have had many days as a hard-working tool but today enjoys total retirement so mates and I can just admire it.

Puma, of course, also make magnificent conventional folding two-handed opening models. Quality folders with their nail-picks by Puma, Buck, Kershaw and other renowned blade manufacturers have adorned my display cabinet over the years.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I repeat that none has ever been in my pocket on a hunting or fishing excursion.

Such knives are things of aesthetic beauty and pleasure but cumbersome at a time of urgent functional need.

Telling this to some people is a waste of time. I painfully recall a bone-headed hunting mate trying to open his expensive Puma Deer Hunter model nail-pick folder with his teeth while wrestling an uncooperative large hare which refused to believe a .22 rimfire round had just relegated it to the stew pot. I liberated that knife after the excursion with the help of dollars far exceeding its original purchase price. His former possession passed to an associate with similar attitudes to mine and now also enjoys total retirement.

But I digress. As already mentioned, cleverly-made new model 'pocket knives' with one-handed opening capacity have always been my companions on outings into the field or on the water. These types of blades now come in various configurations thanks to the ingenuity of our northern neighbours and cooperation with their partner blademakers in the West.

With a bit of shopping around the astute hunter/fisher can pick up one-handed opening folding bladeware at a good price from many local outlets including the aforementioned SSAA website. Other one-handed opening folders currently available in Australia carry iconic brand names like Boker, Kershaw and yes, even Puma, albeit most now are made under licences in other than their countries of origin.

At this stage of our mentally-developing view of the economic universe, the label 'Made in China' still continues to draw derision as did the 'Made in Japan' tag in the 1960s. Today, any Japanese-made bladeware is very functional, much valued and even collectable and Chinese and Taiwanese producers have taken over where the Japanese left off. Eastern manufacture has evolved to a point of excellence where possession of a Chinese-made blade could soon be a status symbol.

So I may be a little ahead of myself but consider this - the German Boker brand has a button-lock model that's been available from Australian outlets recently. It derives its model name from the ubiquitous AK47 Kalashnikov assault rifle and comes in a hard cardboard box replicating that rifle's 30-round magazine.

The quality of this model has all the aplomb of traditional German engineering, razor sharp and tight as a fixed blade when locked on opening. The design comes from the mind of Dietmar Pohl in the industrial city of Solingen, home to some of the world's greatest bladeware. That model's place of manufacture now is Taiwan but obviously under stringent quality control by German artisans. As many blade lovers have discovered, some judicious tinkering improves that model.

This analysis would be shallow indeed without reference to Victorinox, a name synonymous with the Swiss Army Knife,



A couple of beautiful Puma nail-pick folders - highly collectable but probably not for in-the-field use.

although that company's forge into one-handed opening folders hasn't been much of a success. In my book, their design lacks the ease of deployment unless the user has a very strong, pliable thumb.

But the company still commands respect for its output of pocket knives, its flagship, that huge lump of multi-tool configuration is a useful tool indeed, in its place. Undoubtedly it provides immeasurable comfort for the owner who has an hour or two to spare in his or her workshop, or a Swiss soldier during a break in military field exercises. Few would argue the concept of this company's designs has spawned a plethora of multi-tools, the US Leatherman marque and its clones immediately coming to mind.

While I confess to being a guardian of several such items, their place is in my home drawers for use around the house and workshop, or the glovebox of my vehicle for whatever problem circumstances may demand. These tools never come with me when I'm actually out on the hunt for fur, feathers or gills.

Please note my purpose here is not to promote this or that brand of bladeware, simply to tell of my appreciation of knives and preference for the various types of designs I consider most useful in the field. Let's just say I've always been in my absolute comfort zone with a good one-handed opening folder in my pocket, irrespective of its trademark. ●



A Victorinox contribution to the one-hand opening market.

Fascinating tale of French service bolt-action rifles

Daniel O'Dea

As a writer, one of the great joys I have in researching articles is discovering the history and stories behind the subject matter. Quite often along the way I'll find, regardless of how unique that subject matter is, there will be a person or persons who have expert knowledge of it. Gus Gintzburger is such a person and in this case his area of expertise is French bolt-action service rifles from 1866-1978. His passion for these little-known or forgotten (to most Australians) French service rifles led him to write a book.

For enthusiasts of military firearms history there's a wealth of information in the public sphere for most of them, largely documented in English. In writing this book, Gintzburger has explored much information only available in French and not readily available to the English-speaking community.

He has put together a volume which not only covers technical descriptions and history but addresses ballistics, reloading and practical range testing of samples from his own collection, a journal arguably unequalled on the specific subject to date.

Gintzburger is a scientist, botanist and rangeland ecologist. Born in Tunisia to French parents at the end of World War Two and educated in France, his youth and teenage years were dotted with relentless news on the French colonial wars in Indochina and north Africa. His father, who took part in the north African WWII campaigns, taught him early about firearm safety, types and use and this was the start of his interest in armaments.

He later migrated with his parents to France where he studied in Alsace (eastern France). As a teenager he collected antique firearms and blades from long-lasting conflicts between France and Germany. Many firearms, some centuries old some much more recent, were hidden

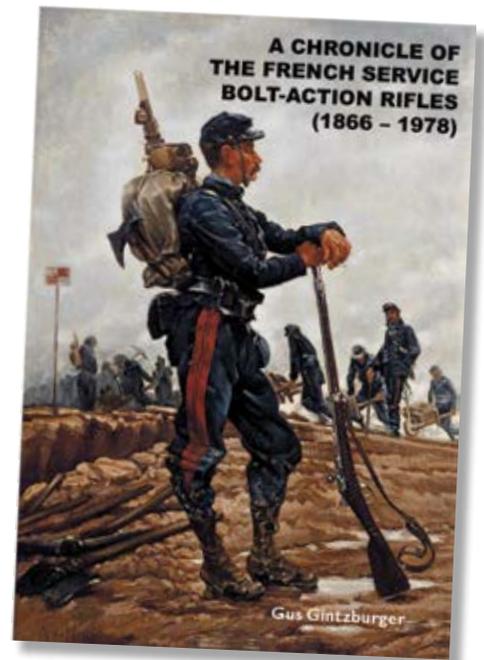
and forgotten in barns and cellars along the German border and during summer holidays working as a farm labourer, Gintzburger found dusty and rusty muskets, bayonets and blades, rifles, carbines, pistols, ammunition, helmets, gas masks and many other war relics.

Law permitting, he restored his findings, learned about the mechanisms and polished antique wood stocks. At school, history and geography were still taught in detail giving him a solid background and understanding of conflicts and battles that ravaged Europe and the world for centuries. It gave him a chance to place into historical context the various pieces of equipment he discovered.

Later, he took up target shooting in Australia and France, again collecting French service firearms when he retired to WA. While regularly practising at his club and in competitions, Gintzburger was puzzled by the lack of awareness of French and European firearms and knowledge of world service firearms, with the exception of the ubiquitous Lee-Enfield and Mauser.

Thanks to the abundant firearms literature in French, English and other languages he gathered over the years, a modest firearms collection and his shooter's experience, Gintzburger started writing on the subject under pen-name Alek Wadi, publishing papers for a few years in Australian magazines. Encouraged by friends, he decided to publish his own book on individual French bolt-action service firearms.

I came into contact with him a few years ago on taking possession of a Turkish Forestry Berthier carbine from the deceased estate of a friend from central-west NSW, pretty much a barn find no one in the family knew anything about. Around the same time I saw a wanted ad for Berthiers from a WA-based collector, sold the rifle to Gus and it now appears in this book.



The book is well researched and illustrated and I'd be lying if I said that prior to receiving it I had any interest in the history of French military service rifles. The fact that despite this I found the book easy to read, interesting and incredibly informative all made for a positive experience, having greatly increased my knowledge on the subject.

This book will appeal to collectors of military service rifles of the period as well as being a great reference work and I'll personally be far better informed next time I cross paths with one of these uniquely French military rifles.

A chronicle of the French service bolt-action rifles (1866-1978) by Gus Gintzburger is 164 pages A4 and features 158 images and 35 illustrations. Price is \$85 plus P&H. To buy your copy email the author at mas361945@gmail.com ●



The Kuiu Icon Pro pack with carbon fibre frame and harness.

What pack should I pick?

Douglas Riach

There's a multitude of brands and types of backpacks available for hunting and while I don't intend to recommend any particular product, I'll instead discuss the features you should look for when buying a hunting backpack.

Rival manufacturers tag their packs by different names. Some state 'day pack' or 'three-day pack' referring to the size related to the need to carry food and supplies for the designated time, others offering capacity in litres (or cubic inches for US-made packs). This style of labelling lets you choose the size of pack in relation to your requirement to lug kit. In the case of a pack with compression straps there's nothing wrong with buying a larger one and, when not full, use the straps to shrink the size and hold the content still. This allows you to use your five-day 90-litre pack on a single-day hunt. Even when fully packed the compression straps are an advantage as they stop items moving around or creating noise.

If you're considering multi-day backpack hunting you'll be pondering larger volume packs. The facility to attach a sleeping bag or tent to the outside is a bonus, leaving more room for clothing, food and hunting gear, so external straps are a good feature.

A pack with a bow or gun sling allowing the bow/gun to be safely fastened is also beneficial on a long hike when the bow/rifle will not be used. It allows both hands to be free and distributes the weight over the shoulders and waist belt.

Hiking packs differ from hunting packs in some aspects. Hiking packs are often top-loading to stuff in as much as you can and pull it out again at night when setting up camp. Hunting loads often require access to articles such as rangefinder, GPS, meat bags and knives and it's an advantage to have outside pockets for storage. Outside pouches are also useful for storing water bottles, snacks, ammo, rain gear and gloves so you don't have to pull everything out to find what you want.

Hunting packs often have a disruptive pattern or camouflage whereas hiking packs are usually more colourful, some hunters preferring the old-style single colour green or olive packs and these are still widely available.

Top-loading packs can be 100 per cent waterproof. The US Fieldline model pictured is top-loading and totally waterproof with fully taped seams and roll down top under the top flap to seal out the rain. It has two zip side pockets which don't enter

the main compartment to maintains its waterproof status.

Other packs may state they're water resistant but zippers will allow some water in, as will seams and stitching if not fully taped on the inside, but you can add a lightweight waterproof cover to keep everything dry if the bag is not totally waterproof.

Handy features

Whether you prefer an external frame, internal frame or no frame is personal choice. Most packs designed for carrying heavier loads have a frame to support the weight and maintain shape, so if you're considering carrying out game meat and/or trophy heads, think about buying a strong-framed pack.

Good padding on shoulder straps and waist belt is important for comfort. A secure hunting pack will have padding in the waist belt, shoulder straps and the pack or frame which comes in contact with the body. Back padding should be shaped to allow sufficient air to circulate through the gap, preventing the 'wet back' effect.

The pictures of the Kuiu and CamelBak show what standard of padding you should be looking for. Good padding with air spaces on the frame or pack itself allows the bag

What pack should I pick?

to sit comfortably on your back, making a big difference on long hunts or carrying heavy loads. Due to our varying sizes and shapes and the fact our needs change when wearing a bulky jacket all waist, chest and shoulders straps need sufficient adjustment for your size in both summer and winter clothing.

Good quality packs have an adjustable harness or come in different-sized harnesses to suit tall, medium and short people. This allows the same pack to be comfortably worn by anyone by changing the harness. It's important to try on a pack before buying and if possible fill it up and feel what it's like when loaded.

Numerous packs are available on the internet but this doesn't let you examine them, so in that instance it would be wise to find a friend who has one and try it, wear it and work out the harness sizing before ordering.

It's tempting to attach or hang other items from the shoulder straps which may be fine for hiking but not for hunting. There's no need to be quiet when hiking but when hunting, swinging items on the shoulder straps have a habit of making a noise at the wrong time. Remember, the shoulder you bring the rifle to must be free of add-on equipment or buckles and have a smooth surface to take the butt. The off-side shoulder strap usually has a hydration tube but there may be space to add an extra pouch or hang a GPS but make sure it doesn't swing around or make a noise when walking.

If using a hunting bow avoid hanging additional items on the shoulder straps which may be in the way when at full draw on the bow. Packs with pouches on the waist belt or provision to attach extra pouches are another plus factor. I carry a



The Kuiu Icon Pro pack showing the padding.

GPS/compass, rangefinder and ammunition in these pouches as they're easily accessible on the move and still allow you to lie flat on the ground without breaking equipment or feeling uncomfortable.

Weight when empty is a balance between a bag which is too light and too flimsy that will tear on the first branch or blackberry you tangle with, and a bag that's too heavy you'll dread carrying. The frame is often the heaviest part of the pack and this is reduced with the use of aluminum frames or carbon fibre in the case of Kuiu packs.

The option to add one or more water bladders and be able to drink on the move is valuable if hunting in summer or walking



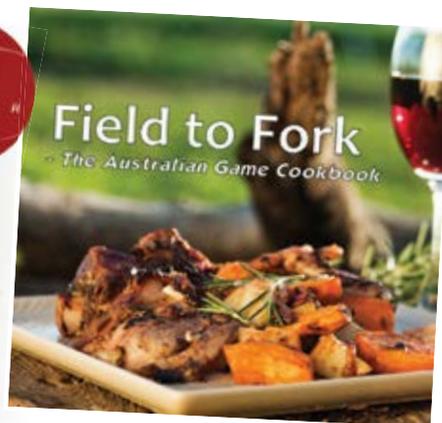
The Fieldline waterproof day pack.

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long distances. This feature should be considered as a vital requirement to maintain hydration and comfort.

Specialised packs

There are a number of specialised packs on the internet, mainly from the US, an example shown in the photo of the Ground Hunting pack. The frame folds into a seat which is great for resting the legs or sitting on when calling in foxes.

Water fowl packs are unique, designed to carry bulky but lightweight duck decoys. The Kuiu Icon 5200 is a multi-day hunting pack with the feature of moving rearwards on the frame and carrying meat bags between the pack and the frame. This keeps the inside of the pack clean or lets you carry meat when the pack is full of equipment.

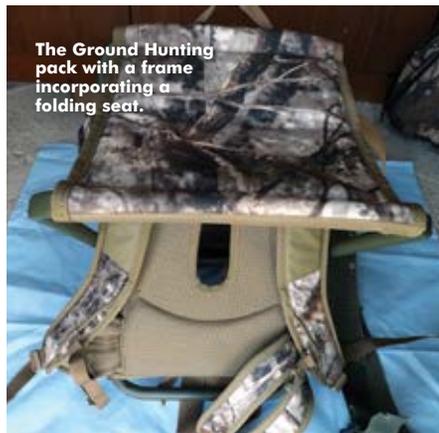
Kuiu is not the only manufacturer offering this load-carrying feature which is specially honed for hunters lifting packed meat after a successful hunt. The CamelBak Pack is a modular (MOLLE) format where the pack is 40 litres but the lateral webbing straps can easily have additional pouches added to the outside to increase carrying and storage capacity.

Conclusion

Selecting a new pack is not as simple as it may appear, requiring an assessment of the item's features and what your needs are. I recommend exploring all options to make sure the harness and straps adjust to fit your body size and shape. Price is not always a guarantee of quality, but a pack with good features and material is unlikely to be cheap though if looked after should service your hunting needs for many years. ●



The CamelBak MOLLE pack highlighting its padding.



The Ground Hunting pack with a frame incorporating a folding seat.



The CamelBak MOLLE pack.

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Binoculars

Useful or just extra weight?

Douglas Riach



The beautiful Flinders Ranges - but no wildlife visible until (inset) the binoculars spotted a billy goat on the rock.

I firmly believe good binoculars are worth carrying when hunting as they increase the chances of finding game which ultimately results in a more successful hunt. I'll explain why. Obviously if you don't see game you can't stalk and harvest it, so the first part of any hunt is finding the target animal.

The human eye, no matter how good your eyesight, leaves a lot to be desired in the hunting environment. You're often hunting or at least looking over long distances, searching for game which has much better eyesight than yours. Not all game is brightly coloured and stands out like a white goat on a brown hillside, some you really have to look hard for.

In the accompanying photograph looking from a high point in South Australia's

Flinders Ranges over a rocky outcrop and down to the plains, you might think it's just a scenery shot but did you spot the black billy goat sunning himself on the large rock? Through binoculars as in the magnified image of the same area you can clearly see the goat, and without binoculars he'd have gone undetected and no doubt have sat there and watched the hunters move across the other ridge.

In open country you may feel you'll see game more clearly and don't need binoculars but look at the photograph of rolling hills and scattered trees. Nothing here you might think but through binoculars you can clearly see a mob of different coloured goats grazing the hillside. Those same goats are easily spotted through binoculars but missed with the naked eye.

The principle behind using binoculars also applies to larger game. You'd think an animal the size of a deer would be easy to see but I've been in situations with the late afternoon sun going down, looking across a paddock with apparently nothing happening.

Then a scan through the binos alerts me to the fact there are deer feeding in the fading light and even if stalking them because of the location and open country isn't an option, it's good to know they're in the area for the following day or future reference.

It doesn't matter where you hunt, the principle stays the same. Sometimes it's not actually spotting game but finding and identifying a suitable trophy animal. While hunting on an Alaskan hillside I



An empty hillside - or not - as the bins picked up a mob of grazing goats.

spotted a mob of white mountain goats on a rocky outcrop, and after observing them through binoculars it became clear the vast majority were female with no trophy animal among them. There was no reason to stalk this mob - saving a long hike and tiring climb - and without the benefit of binoculars it would have been a wasted afternoon.

Gazing down a spectacular valley in the Rocky Mountains of northern Canada I was admiring a picturesque lake in an open section. On second glance through the glasses I was excited to pick out a moose grazing by the water's edge but my hopes were dashed when it turned out to be a pregnant cow and not to be hunted. Again, the bins showed me something never visible with the naked eye.

All these scenarios clearly demonstrate the value of binoculars in finding and identifying game animals in all manner of terrain and at wildly varying distances, and even at reasonably close quarters binoculars add clarity and definition to what you're looking at. Sometimes you'll catch just an ear or the tip of an antler but more often than not that will be enough to raise the level of excitement.

If you perceive weight as being an issue there are a number of manufacturers who make small and lightweight binoculars, and the use of a harness where the glasses are suspended on front of the chest with straps around the shoulders also reduces the felt weight and makes them more accessible.

So why not use your riflescope as a way of searching for game and identifying

animals? Well, apart from the extra weight of the scope when attached to a hunting rifle and its limited field of view, there's another reason. Remember the first basic safety rule of firearms and hunting - never point a firearm at anything you don't intend to shoot.

Using a riflescope to survey the landscape may also result in you looking at another hunter, bushwalker or even the property owner. As the scope is attached to a gun this means the rifle is also pointing at that person and the way to avoid such a safety breach - and the wrath of other hunters or landowners - is never use your riflescope as a substitute for binoculars. ●

Definitive tale of the Birmingham gun trade

Geoff Smith

In the words of author David Williams this book “explores the relationship between the technology and history of gunmaking”. The timeframe is focused mainly on the late 17th century to the mid-20th century and explores techniques used to manufacture firearms in the period prior to the Industrial Revolution right up to the era immediately following World War Two, with some concluding notes detailing the current state of the Birmingham gun trade. Although primarily about Birmingham, other manufacturing centres in London, Europe and the US are discussed in some detail as new methodologies emerged, were shared and in some cases pirated.

Any enthusiast with an interest in how gunmaking has changed over the centuries will find this book difficult to put down. Described as “more than a narrative on gunmaking” the contents provide details of the inter-relationship of toolmaking and gunmaking, and how it developed from a highly labour-intensive cottage industry to one in which thousands of people toiled, primarily to produce weapons of war.

Much of the content is devoted to the invention and production of the machinery used to more easily and accurately manufacture firearms and ammunition as well as the people who did so.

As it developed the industry paved the way for other ones, including the manufacture of numerous other goods such as bicycles, motorcycles and sewing machines and while the industry expanded, the machinery and energy sources used to make it work also evolved. Likewise the names of so many key players are provided in a way that makes them more real and enlightens the relationships they had with each other. The sciences of metallurgy and metrology were born in this period.

Beginning with the smelting of pig iron in the English midlands in 1709, the slow fuse for the Industrial Revolution was lit and James Watt, Matthew Boulton and

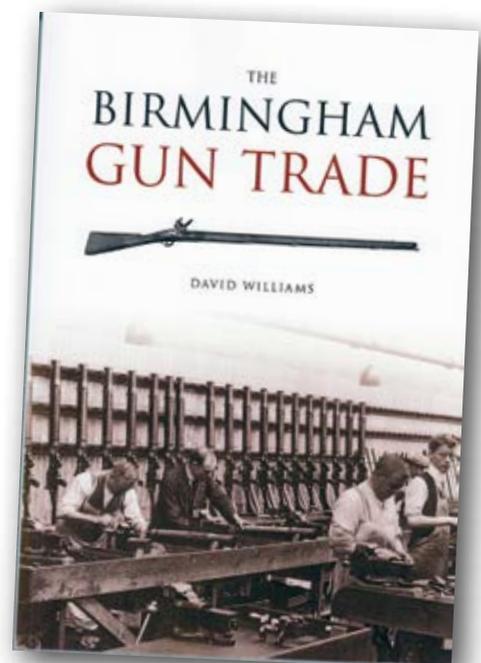
John Wilkinson were early contributors to the development of steam power. Large numbers of guns were needed for the military and also the slave trade and by 1707 there were already 400 gun and gun-lock makers in Birmingham. By 1811 there was one factory churning out 10,000 barrels a month using 120 horsepower steam engines and the number of firearms being produced by the turn of the 19th century was mind-boggling.

To make a barrel in those early days, a piece of steel 12" long, 5½" wide and half-an-inch thick was rolled and welded into a 12" long tube which was then drawn out into a 40" pipe, the process so effective that only two in every thousand were rejected at proof.

War provided great prosperity and during the Crimean, American Civil and Franco-Prussian conflicts more than 7000 gun and bayonet makers were working in Birmingham. As time passed standards of measurement improved, Joseph Whitworth introducing standards of screw threads among many other innovations. The British Institute of Mechanical Engineers was founded in 1847 and American Eli Whitney was a key figure in the introduction of ‘armory practice’ where machines took the place of hand power and piecework overseen by skilled craftsmen came into being. Interchangeability of parts was recognised as being of critical importance.

The Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle brought a turning point in production methods as copy lathes and lock morticing machines for stock making, mills, planers and steam hammers for forging and machining metal parts increasingly came into use. Tolerances became finer and finer and metallurgy continued to improve with Whitworth’s invention of fluid pressed steel and Bessemer’s process in 1856.

By the end of 1871 BSA had converted 156,000 pattern 1853 rifles to breech-loading Sniders. Famous machinery makers like Thomas Greenwood and John



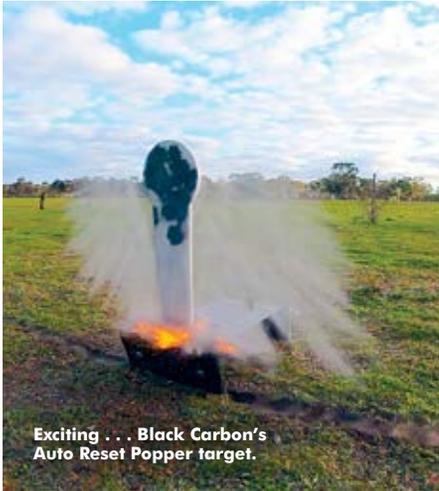
Batley began making ammunition-drawing machinery and their former apprentice James Archdale invented a brass cartridge case-drawing machine that would make cases up to 8" calibre, 7ft long! Other famous names such as Kynoch, Tranter, Hollis, Greener, Westley Richards, Purdey, Holland and Holland and many more feature in the text.

Over 192 pages the book, which contains 130 black and white photographs and diagrams, also explores the social environment in Birmingham during the period in question and the way in which standards have improved. The final notes discuss how the tiny remaining fragments of this once great industry have hung on with the custom sporting gun industry. In this reviewer’s humble opinion, Mr Williams’ work will become recognised as one of the classics.

• *The Birmingham Gun Trade* by David Williams, The History Press, Gloucester UK, 2009 (this edition 2016). ●

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Gun & Knife Show List

2019

November 3-4		Adelaide Knife Show	Gillian Wilson qmacinc@gmail.com
November 9-10	Penrith Panthers Pavilion, Penrith	Sydney Antique & Modern Arms Expo	Lachlan Matthews 0414 928 018 or events@razorbackguns.com
December 2		Canberra Knife Show	Gillian Wilson qmacinc@gmail.com

2020

Feb 29-March 1	Eastbank Centre, Welford St, Shepparton	200 tables antique & modern firearms, militaria and collectables Expo	Ricky Seiter 0400 567 353
March 14-15	Belmont Shooting Complex, Belmont	Brisbane Show of modern, sporting, military guns, militaria, edged weapons, collectables	Paul Brush 0412 562 252
May 23-24	Toowoomba Showgrounds, Glenvale Rd, Toowoomba	350+ tables firearms, ammo, militaria & collectibles	Dan Watson 0407 643 776
July 18-19	Belmont Shooting Complex, Belmont	Brisbane Show of modern, sporting, military guns, militaria, edged weapons, collectables	Paul Brush 0412 562 252
September 12-13	Toowoomba Showgrounds, Glenvale Rd, Toowoomba	350+ tables firearms, ammo, militaria & collectibles	Dan Watson 0407 643 776
September 12-13	Cannington Exhibition Centre & Showgrounds, Cannington	WA Arms & Armour Annual Militaria Fair	Geoff Smith 0419 955 284
October 17-18	Belmont Shooting Complex, Belmont	Brisbane Show of modern, sporting, military guns, militaria, edged weapons, collectables	Paul Brush 0412 562 252

Persons wishing to purchase any firearm that requires a licence from any arms fair in NSW should apply for a Permit to Acquire at least six weeks before the fair. For reasons beyond the control of show organisers, some of the above dates may be changed. It is advisable to check the show dates before travelling.



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Pensioner Available on production or photocopy of both sides of your Australian Concession Card.

Includes \$35 insurance premium for SSAA Member Firearms Insurance for 12 months, valid until next membership renewal.

5-year Adult Contact SSAA for firearms insurance information.

Member for Life Contact SSAA for firearms insurance information.

Overseas Available to members living overseas.

Junior (under 18 years) Parent's or guardian's signature

Supporting Adult member No.

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SIGN UP ONLINE

ssaa.org.au

PLEASE READ AND SIGN

This application is made in full recognition of the Association's requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Association. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion. The Code can be found at ssaa.org.au/code

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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

SSAA Inc collects personal information of members. The information you provide on this form will be disclosed to the state or territory branch of the SSAA to which your membership application relates. A copy of SSAA Inc's privacy policy can be found at ssaa.org.au/privacy. You can obtain access to your personal information by writing to: SSAA, PO Box 2520, Unley SA 5061.

ATTENTION NSW & ACT MEMBERS

Complete this section ONLY if you wish to use your membership of the SSAA to support your Genuine Reason for having a firearms licence. Register your SSAA activities by marking one or more of the following boxes:

- TARGET SHOOTING (longarms only)
- HUNTING (club membership)
- COLLECTING
- HUNTING OTHER (R licence, property owner/permission)

Choose the insurance offer

and for just \$35 you get \$25,000 worth of firearms and fixed accessories cover.

Want to know more?
Call us at SSAA



02 8805 3900



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SHOOTER NOVEMBER 2019

Enclosed is payment for the amount of \$.....

Cheque Money order MasterCard Visa

Card number

Expiry date Signature.....

Cheques payable to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc.

I also wish to donate the following amount to the SSAA \$.....

Jasmin Stamenic

Communications Officer Sam Talbot

From the moment I spoke to Zac Stamenic it was abundantly clear he couldn't be any prouder of his daughter Jasmin. The junior shooter is as keen as they come and jumps at every chance to head for the range so she can follow in dad's footsteps.

"Jasmin couldn't wait to turn 12 so she could apply for her licence and SSAA membership," said Zac. "We go target shooting together at Little River, which is right next door to where I shoot IPSC, and it won't be long until Jasmin starts shooting Target Pistol as well. She's set herself a goal to start shooting IPSC in the next 12 months."

For her birthday Jasmin received a .22 Savage Target rifle which she has put to good use and, despite being only 12, sets up her own targets, sights in the rifle and works on her groupings. "I recognise the benefits of starting her early and how much better a shooter she may be able to become," said Zac. "It's great that Jazzy is so enthusiastic even though she's only 12 - I was 18 before I started shooting Action Match."

Hunting is also a big part of shooting for Jasmin and she and the family go camping throughout the year in the Victorian high country. "Jasmin has always been a keen camper and hunter and likes showing her friends how to track and tell what an animal trail is," said Zac. "She can also identify

animals by their droppings as well as by their rubs. Sometimes I find myself smiling as I hear her repeating what I've taught her about hunting over the years," said Zac.

Jasmin's family along with a few other families have been camping and hunting in the same place for more than 25 years, although nowadays she's often the only female hunter. But everyone is keen to include her and she's fortunate to have many mentors. "People flock to her at the range," said Zac. "They see her setting up her rifle and come for a chat - sometimes an hour has passed and she hasn't fired a shot as she's too busy talking to people."

Jasmin dreams of representing Australia at the Olympic Games in target shooting and also wants to open the sport up to more female shooters across the country. This means she's always talking about shooting and regularly invites her friends to the range and even lends them *Australian Women's Shooter* to show them shooting isn't just for boys.

Jasmin's no tomboy though, she's also a cheerleader and competes in interstate competitions with her club Cheer Geelong. The training might be more physically demanding but she's the first to admit that cheerleading and shooting each have their own challenges. All the best Jasmin with your shooting, hunting, cheering and whatever else you decide to do. ●



Zac and Jasmine.



If she's not shooting you'll find her cheerleading.



On a family hunting trip.

Bell enters hall of fame *at Fly Shoot nationals*

The 2019 Fly Shoot national championships were hosted by SSAA Batemans Bay in New South Wales and attracted more than 80 competitors from as far afield as Tasmania, Mackay and Perth to shoot Light Gun, Heavy Gun and 200yd Rimfire over the Queen's birthday long weekend in June.

Competition was fierce on day one for the Light Gun (LG) competition with no fewer than 17 shooters posting scores of more than 250 (gold proficiency standard) and the course record for LG highest target falling to Peter Merriman with a 59.03.

Dave Groves top scored to take the title on 273.06 (an astonishing six flies) with silver and bronze respectively going to Robert Jackson (272.04) and Tony Ryan (268.05). Young Beau Lock clinched the junior title with an impressive 213 and two flies.

Sunday brought the Heavy Gun competition with Michael Bell hitting nine flies on his way to a 284 total, good enough not just for the title but to lift the Jim McKinley Trophy as overall Centrefire Fly Shoot national champion. Bell's score also

set a new national record for the highest five-target aggregate.

Second place went to the ever-consistent Grant Groves on 276.06 ahead of third-placed Vince Vaina on 268.08, Stella Cross pipping William Bailey to the junior title, the pair earning their gold medal proficiency award with scores of 251.02 and 250 respectively.

The 'big guns' were put away on day three as the Rimfire competition got under way. Kathy Dundas and Ken Perrin were locked on a 257 score and it took a countback of hits on the fly to identify Dundas as champion and winner of the Stuart Elliot Cup, Perrin finishing second ahead of bronze medallist Ryan on 243.01. Cross made it a double for the ladies when she took the junior title on 197 just ahead of Keegan McGrann on 196.01.

At the end of an action-packed weekend, Groves lifted the 3-gun trophy with a total of 783.13, Perrin a close second on 782.10 and Bell rounding out the top three on 775.15. As a result of his victory in HG and third place in 3-gun, Bell became the first competitor inducted into the Fly Shoot hall of fame.



Michael Bell with the Jim McKinley Trophy.

A word of thanks goes to everyone involved in the running of the event with special mention to Bryson Payne and Anthony Hall, the crew who changed more than 1500 targets, Steve and Pete who scored them all, John Woollams for data entry and the catering volunteers. ●



Competitors at the SSAA 2019 Fly Shoot national championships.

National

Big Game Rifle National Postal Championships

February 1-November 30, 2019
 Program: February 1-May 31: Special Snap. June 1-August 31: Group Three. September 1-November 30: Stopping Double Rifle. Rules: Championships shot as per current National Big Game Rifle rule book. Scoresheets showing competitor's name, club, rifle, scope power and result of each shot to be sent to Graeme Wright, PO Box 5085, Kenmore East, Qld 4069. Awards to 3rd place and juniors. Entries in junior class to include date of birth. Contact: Graeme Wright thepilotgw@hotmail.com

National Junior Rimfire Field Rifle Postal Championships

June 1-November 30, 2019
 All clubs/branches
 Program: To be shot between June 1 and November 30, 2019. Scores showing competitor's name, branch, age and score for each position (with 10s, 9s etc in case of countback), to Kaye McIntyre at juniorsports@ssaa.org.au by December 31. Prizes to third place in U-15, O-15 and U-18. Contact: Kaye McIntyre.

SSAA National Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

August 1-December 4, 2019
 Various locations
 Program: See website for event details. Contact 27honesuckle@msn.com.au

New South Wales

SSAA NSW Newcastle 50th Anniversary Benchrest Score Shoot

December 7-8, 2019
 SSAA Newcastle Range, East Seaham, NSW
 Program: Friday, December 6: Centrefire practice 8am-noon, Rimfire practice noon-close. Saturday: Benchrest Score Heavy Centrefire. Sunday: Benchrest Score

Heavy Rimfire. Dinner Friday for small fee, Saturday barbecue \$15 children half-price. Nominations: \$50 a day. Rules: SSAA rule book. Prizes: As per rule book. Facilities: Clubhouse, toilets, showers, camping on range (please advise beforehand). Contact: Kim Cosstick 0429 335 389 or David Billinghurst 0418 478 160 .

Queensland

SSAA Qld NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoot No.4

August 1-November 30, 2019
 Program: Long Range Conventional Pistol, Long Range Conventional Revolver, Long Range Unlimited Standing, Long Range Unlimited Pistol. Location: All SSAA (Qld) branches with approval to shoot Pistol Metallic Silhouette. Nominations: Results to state NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette chairman by December 12, 2019. Rules: As per SSAA (Qld) NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Guide Book. Prizes: Certificates to 1st, 2nd, 3rd in each grade. Each entry goes into draw for \$60 open order at Queensland Shooters Supplies, Ipswich. Contact: Hazel Bozic 07 4128 0467 hbozic1@bigpond.net.au

ACT

SSAA Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette ACT state championships

January 20, 2020
 SSAA Majura, Hector McIntosh Grove, Majura, ACT
 Program: January 20, 8.30am BPCR match; 2pm 40-shot BPCR match (see website for details). Nominations: \$10 per event, juniors and pensioners half price. Rules: When in the ACT carry your home state's firearms registration or shooter's licence. Facilities: Camping on range with water, power, showers. \$10 per person per night, juniors no charge. Fires allowed if no fire ban. Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or email mnl1@live.com.au

SSAA ACT 40th anniversary Australia Day Benchrest competition

January 24-26, 2020
 Jim McKinley Range, Majura, ACT
 Program: Friday, January 24: Practice. Saturday: 9am Light Benchrest 100yds and 200yds. Sunday: 9am Heavy Benchrest 100yds and 200yds. Nominations: \$60 per class. Email nomination and contact details to sixppc@inet.net.au. Bring current shooter's licence and SSAA membership card. Numbers limited so apply early. Rules: SSAA Benchrest rule book. Facilities: Canteen, utility service fee of \$10 per day per person. Contact: Alex Chrissy at sixppc@inet.net.au

South Australia

SSAA SA Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette State Championships

November 23-24, 2019
 SSAA Monarto, SA
 Program: Saturday 9am-noon practice, 12.30pm 40-shot iron sight match. Sunday 8.30-9.30am practice, 10am 40-shot scoped match. Nominations: \$20 per event, \$35 for both. Current RMS rule book applies. Prize draw on Saturday evening. Contact: Dave McCarthy 0414 880 333 or atm3855@yahoo.com.au

Victoria

SSAA Vic Single Action State Championships

November 1-3, 2019
 Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic
 Program: Friday, Nov 1: Long Range Rifle, side events, warm-up stages, derringing match. Saturday: Opening and six main stages. Sunday: Six main stages, Top Gun shoot-off. Nominations: \$95 main match, shooting partner \$75, juniors \$35. Rules: Single Action Shooting Society and local range rules. Prizes: State medals and trophies. Facilities: Free camping, limited powered, toilets and showers. Contact: Tony Diabolo diablot6@bigpond.com See website for full event details.

Tasmania

SSAA/IHMSA Tasmania Big Bore Handgun Metallic Silhouette State Championships

November 16-17, 2019
 Oakdale Pistol Range, Flagstaff Gully Rd, Clarence, Tas
 Program: Gun checks 9am daily, match starts 10am. Entries must be received by November 4, 2019. Contact Cody Abel codyabel@spin.net.au. See website for full details.

SSAA Tas Rimfire Field Rifle and 3-Positional State Championships

November 23, 2019
 T03 Glenorchy, Tolosa St, Glenorchy, Tas 7010
 Program: 9am practice/weigh-in, 10am start Field Rifle. 3-P starts 45mins after conclusion of Field Rifle. Nominations: Adults \$15 per event or \$25 for both, juniors \$7 or \$12 for both. Current SSAA membership/grading cards must be shown. Rules: Current SSAA rule book. Prizes: State medals for all grades incl. juniors; 1st, 2nd, 3rd for 2-Gun. Contact: Tom Banks 0403 127 732.

SSAA Tas Centrefire Field Rifle and 3-Positional State Championships

November 24, 2019
 T13 Blue Hills Range, Copping, Tas
 Program: 9am practice/weigh-in. 10am start Field Rifle. 3-P starts 45mins after conclusion of Field Rifle. Nominations: Adults \$15 per event or \$25 for both, juniors \$7 or \$12 for both. Current SSAA membership/grading cards must be shown. Rules: As per current SSAA rule book. Prizes: State medals for all grades incl. juniors; 1st, 2nd, 3rd for 2-Gun. Contact: Shane Bowden 0400 158 659.

SSAA Official Calendar

NATIONAL

Feb 1-Nov 30, 2019
 June 1-Nov 30, 2019
 August 1-Dec 4, 2019

Big Game Rifle National Postal Championships
 National Junior Rimfire Field Rifle Postal Championships
 SSAA National Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

All clubs/branches
 Various locations

Graeme Wright thepilotgw@hotmail.com
juniorsports@ssaa.org.au
27honesuckle@msn.com.au

STATE

August 1-Nov 30, 2019
 November 1-3, 2019
 November 16-17, 2019

SSAA Qld NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoot No.4
 SSAA Vic Single Action State Championships
 SSAA/IHMSA Tasmania Big Bore Handgun

Eagle Park Range, Vic

Hazel Bozic 07 4128 0467 hbozic1@bigpond.net.au
diablot6@bigpond.com

November 23, 2019
 November 23-24, 2019
 November 24, 2019
 December 7-8, 2019
 January 20, 2020
 January 24-26, 2020

Metallic Silhouette State Championships
 SSAA Tas Rimfire Field Rifle and 3-P State Championships
 SSAA SA Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette State Championships
 SSAA Tas Centrefire Field Rifle and 3-P State Championships
 SSAA NSW Newcastle 50th Anniversary Benchrest Score Shoot
 SSAA Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette ACT State Championships
 SSAA ACT 40th anniversary Australia Day Benchrest competition

Oakdale Pistol Range, Clarence, Tas
 T03 Glenorchy, Tas
 SSAA Monarto
 T13 Blue Hills Range, Copping, Tas
 Newcastle Range, East Seaham, NSW
 SSAA Majura, ACT
 Jim McKinley Range, Majura, ACT

codyabel@spin.net.au
 0403 127 732
 0414 880 333 or atm3855@yahoo.com.au
 0400 158 659
 0429 335 389 or 0418 478 160
 0401 867 839 or mnl1@live.com.au
sixppc@inet.net.au



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Shop now for exclusive SSAA products, including clothing, camping, accessories, knives, books and more.

CLOTHING

SSAA Shotgun Vest

The new SSAA Shotgun Vest is made to our usual high standards and now comes with upgraded features such as the ability to insert additional padding in the shoulders to absorb recoil.

The vest comes with lots of pockets, has front and rear leather trim and Velcro adjuster, while the back sections are mesh for added breathability.

Comes in blue and green.

Green	Blue
SVG001 - Small	SVB001 - Small
SVG002 - Medium	SVB002 - Medium
SVG003 - Large	SVB003 - Large
SVG004 - XL	SVB004 - XL
SVG005 - 2XL	SVB005 - 2XL
SVG006 - 3XL	SVB006 - 3XL

\$74.95



Back in stock!

SSAA Renegade Jacket

\$94.95

The SSAA Renegade Jacket is made from wind and water-resistant breathable material and lined with cosy microfleece to keep you warm.

The clamshell jacket comes with a structured hood to keep the rain off and has a multitude of zippered pockets to keep your belongings secure in the field, on the range, while hiking, hunting or just out and about.

Green	Black
CJG001 - Small	CJB001 - Small
CJG002 - Medium	CJB002 - Medium
CJG003 - Large	CJB003 - Large
CJG004 - XL	CJB004 - XL
CJG005 - 2XL	CJB005 - 2XL
CJG006 - 3XL	CJB006 - 3XL

See complete size details online



SSAA Softshell Vest

Our SSAA Softshell Vest is water resistant and made from 100 per cent polyester mechanic stretch fabric and comes with comfy microfleece on the inside to keep you warm.

CSV001 - Small
CSV002 - Medium
CSV003 - Large
CSV004 - XL
CSV005 - 2XL
CSV006 - 3XL

\$64.95



Front

Back

SSAA men's t-shirt

Get noticed with the Gildan Soft-styled SSAA men's shirts and wear the SSAA logo with pride.

- Pre-shrunk jersey knit
- Seamless double-needled 1.9cm collar
- Taped neck and shoulders
- Rolled forward shoulders
- Double needle sleeve and bottom hems
- Quarter-turned to eliminate centre crease

MSN001 - Small
MSN002 - Medium
MSN003 - Large
MSN004 - XL
MSN005 - 2XL
MSN006 - 3XL

See complete size details online

\$29.45



SSAA ladies' Polo

The SSAA ladies' Polo has a feminine styled 'V' neck with contrasting piping panels. The easy care fabric is 160gm 100 per cent DriWear polyester with moisture removal and mini-waffle

Purple/white	Black/teal
LP008 - Size 8	LPB08 - Size 8
LP010 - Size 10	LPB10 - Size 10
LP012 - Size 12	LPB12 - Size 12
LP014 - Size 14	LPB14 - Size 14
LP016 - Size 16	LPB16 - Size 16
LP018 - Size 18	LPB18 - Size 18
LP020 - Size 20	LPB20 - Size 20
LP022 - Size 22	LPB22 - Size 22
LP024 - Size 24	LPB24 - Size 24
LP026 - Size 26	LPB26 - Size 26

See complete size details online

\$42

CAPS and more

\$19.95 each



Blaze orange camo cap

C0023



Cool-style SSAA cap

C0013



SSAA hunting cap

C0010



Navy cap

BPC001



SSAA camo cap

New SSAA True Timber camo cap with silver SSAA embroidery.

CAM001



Blaze orange cap

NSW 'R' Licence compliant.
C0015



Cap - with traditional logo

C0014



SSAA pink ladies mesh cap

C0022



A0054



A0055

SSAA stubby holders

\$7.25 each



A0052



A0053

SSAA pistol key ring



\$7.95

A0005

The SSAA pistol key ring is the perfect accessory for any set of keys. It can be used as a bag tag, on your house/car keys or even on your safe key ring.

SSAA beanies



Black
C0024



Navy
C0017



Pink
C0019



Black
C0021

\$14.95



NEW!

The SSAA Multi-Tool, with stainless steel handles, comes with 11 functional tools in one handy unit.

Look at our online shop for full details

\$39.95

KMT001

Pewter belt buckles

Deer hunter belt buckle



P0010

\$39.95

SSAA



A0004

\$39.95



SSAA blue earmuffs

With a noise rating of NRR 23 db, they are ideal for sporting shooters, range officers, instructors and spectators. See full details online.

EMB005

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Order online now or call 02 8805 3900 or
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KNIVES

SSAA rechargeable knife sharpener

NEW!



Look at our online shop for full details

Sharpen every knife or blade you own with the SSAA Rechargeable Knife Sharpener. The sharpener is battery operated so you can take it anywhere with you, just charge the batteries before you go.

KSR001
\$89.95

SSAA ceramic knives



SSAA ceramic blade kitchen knife set comes in a presentation gift box.

Large knife blade is 150mm long
Small knife blade is 75mm long

CKN001
\$28.95

CAMPING AND HUNTING

SSAA bush kettle

These custom-made bush kettles run on a few twigs and leaves and will boil water in less than 10 minutes. Simply get a handful of twigs/leaves and kindling then place under the kettle and light it - the clever design directs heat into the kettle to boil the water.

The kettle can be used with gas stoves and has a stainless construction.



\$84.95 3L Kettle BK003

SSAA outdoors bag - black



- * Material made from waterproof 430gs, Ripstop Polyester canvas
- * Hard base sewn between bottom layers of canvas
- * 50mm adjustable shoulder strap
- * Front, rear and side pockets for essential items
- * High visibility reflective strip on front flap
- * Side footwear storage pocket

\$74
OBB001

MAIL ORDER FORM

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WHILE STOCKS LAST

November 2019

SEND ORDER TO SSAA SHOP, PO BOX 282, PLUMPTON, NSW 2761 INQUIRIES 02 8805 3900

PRODUCT CODE	DESCRIPTION	SIZE	QTY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL

Please note: For knife purchases, Member No. needed for age verification, as purchaser must be over 18.

DELIVER TO

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STATE..... P/CODE.....

PHONE

EMAIL.....

MEMBER NUMBER.....

Please allow 14-21 days for delivery

ALL PRICES GST INCLUSIVE

Please find enclosed payment in the amount of \$.....

or charge my MasterCard Visa

Card No.

Expiry date/..... Signature.....

DISCOUNT RATES AVAILABLE FOR SSAA CLUBS - CONTACT 02 8805 3900.

The color of some of the photos may vary from the actual product due to dye batch lots or current availability.

Members-only competitions



For your chance to win one of these competitions, write your name, address, phone number and membership number on a piece of paper and place it inside an envelope, along with the name of the competition on the front of the envelope, as shown in the example. Alternatively, you can enter online. Competitions close November 30, 2019.



Enter online at ssaa.org.au/win

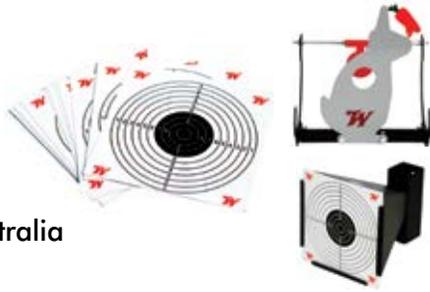
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Winchester shooting targets plus decals

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winchesteraustralia.com.au



Juniors

Shooting rest bags + 2x Spika decals

Valued at \$95



Kindly donated by Spika Pty Ltd
spika.com.au

Competition winners

Australian Shooter September 2019

1 of 4 .30 cal pens sets + deer antler stand
Ken Pamplin, NSW
Rory Moran, Qld
Peter Anderson, Vic
Ivan Taylor, Qld

September Junior - Browning hoodie (size L only) and two decals
Dominic Widt, Qld

September Best Shots Mug
Bruce Humphrys, NSW

Australian Women's Shooter

Ridgeline Ladies Mallard olive jacket
Margaret Chambers, Qld

GlowShot Long Range Target Pack
Ralph Coulson, Qld

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Cold comfort? It was at one time

As someone who has spent his entire adult life in and around the Snowy Mountains, I long ago decided the cold of winter is easier to deal with than the heat of summer. As perverse as that may seem to those of you living in more tropical climes, it's all about the practicalities.

When it's cold outside you can add another layer of clothing, throw an extra log on the fire or enjoy a mug of something hot without breaking into a sweat. When it's hot you can only remove so much before common decency prevails - and heaven help us if the air conditioning goes down.

Those were some of the thoughts that came to me one morning in early September, just after the alarm had beeped me awake. Until that point my plan had been to rise early and look for a sambar but all that changed the moment I stuck my arm out to silence the clock.

Despite the embers glowing in the wood heater, the air beyond the cocoon of the sleeping bag was barely short of frigid. That meant the windows of the truck would be opaque with frost, grass crunchy underfoot, the wattle buds would be frozen yellow balls a couple of metres above the ground and the river's edge rimmed with thin sheets of floating ice.

All of which suggested any self-respecting sambar would have had a bellyful of grass and retired to the comparative warmth of the bush long before the frost began to settle. This early in the morning they'd be bedded down and waiting for the

sun to come up before they began to move around in search of some morning browse. Trying to find them until they started to move was akin to winning the lottery, with the rather dubious bonus of being frozen to the bone until exertion and the sun warmed me up. On that basis I made an executive decision.

Disinclined to budge from beneath the blankets in her basket, Dixie watched closely as I clambered out, threw some wood on the fire and returned to the warmth of the bunk. She sighed and

Instead of a four-wheel drive vehicle to access back country huts to check on travellers, we rode skidoos kitted out with a basic survival pack in case a routine patrol somehow went pear-shaped.

We skied and snow-shoed, camped in flimsy tents or dug snow caves to escape the worst of the weather, worked in search and rescue teams or ferried out injured skiers. We carried out opportunistic pest animal work made easy by the blanket of white, baiting rabbits directly into their burrows when they'd nothing else to feed on or culling pigs yarded by the snow.

Away from work I hunted sambar deer in the Victorian high country where daylight starts were the order of the day and in later years when I hunted in America, much the same applied. In Montana I hunted and shot a wonderful whitetail buck on one of the coldest mornings I have ever experienced - the rut had started and he was trailing a couple of hinds and if they hadn't been there we probably wouldn't have seen him.

These days I'm happy to avoid the early starts whenever I can, especially

if there's frost involved. I still prefer the cold of winter but no longer have the need to immerse myself in all that it means in this part of the world - it's more comfortable to be warm inside, tapping out a column like this than it is to be out there with frozen extremities. Hunting can wait 'til the sun is properly up.



A wonderful trophy whitetail buck taken on a freezing Montana morning in 2012.

snuggled down again, clearly relieved we wouldn't be venturing out in the frost, quietly confirming my growing belief that if it's too cold for the dog to get out of bed, it's too cold to go hunting.

In my younger days as a ranger I revelled in working in the cold. Winter meant snow and that carpet of white presented a whole new world of adventure and opportunity.



Remington

REMINGTON TYRANT XGP AIR RIFLE PACKAGE

Nitro Piston technology is the standard bearer for gas piston systems due to its revolutionary design and exceptional vibration and noise reduction.

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