

THE JUNIOR Shooter

AN INTRODUCTION FOR JUNIOR SHOOTERS & HUNTERS



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Editorial



Bob Green
SSAA National President

Welcome to Issue 8 of *The Junior Shooter*. In this issue, we have a variety of hunting and target shooting stories. One is from James Adams of Victoria who tells us about his experiences in hunting hare with a .22-calibre rifle, as well as some interesting facts and folklore on the animal that is often mistaken for the humble rabbit.

Media Officer Rachael Andrews speaks with SSAA member and 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Alethea Sedgman about Air Rifle, 3 Position and Big Bore Rifle shooting and her preparations for next year's Olympic Games in London. Alethea also gives us an insight into her training schedule and eating plan - it's clear you need plenty of strength, dedication and willpower to be a successful international shooter!

Other offerings include a round-up of SSAA merchandise that you can look over before deciding on your Christmas present list, and a kangaroo burrito bake recipe for you to try out at home. Remember to enter this issue's competition too!

As always, if you'd like to send us a story for *The Junior Shooter* or even be profiled in the *Australian Shooter* magazine's Youth in Focus section, contact Associate Editor Kaye Jenkins on 08 8272 7100 or edit@ssaa.org.au ●

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Hunting hare

by James Adams

I'm not sure whether global warming is responsible for the drier weather in Victoria, but the warmer weather seems to have increased the number of hare in the field. In the various locations my father and I hunt in Central and East Gippsland, I always seem to be coming across hares in places I would have rarely, if ever, seen one in the past. There have always been a few around the fringes of the major centres, protected from hunting by their nearness to civilisation, but in the past three to four years, we have frequently seen them around Gippsland in much larger numbers, where nothing has changed except perhaps the weather. Whatever the reason, the increase in numbers has offered an opportunity for an extra bit of hunting for these interesting creatures.

My first hare

My first opportunity to shoot a hare came after I had obtained my junior firearms licence and my parents had bought me a Stirling .22 rifle. I was in the back paddock of our Central Gippsland property, waiting in hope that a rabbit would come out of some bracken ferns about 70m away. Then, from out of nowhere, a hare loped across the paddock with that peculiar gait they have. I had only shot a couple of rabbits at that time, so I was keen but a little nervous as I sighted the hare behind the shoulder, only to have it move on a few paces before I could squeeze the trigger. I sighted it again and the hare moved a few more steps. It was about 45m away now. I sighted it for a third time, this time squeezing the trigger before it had a chance to move. I was pretty chuffed when the hare just fell over on its side, kicked its back legs a couple of times and then lay still.

Another one down

Not long after this, we were in the mountains in East Gippsland and decided to go out with the gun after tea to see if we could find any rabbits or foxes. We were walking along a line between timbered scrub and open grazing land when, about 200m away near the bottom of a gully, we saw a hare quietly grazing. As it was too far for the .22, my father suggested I creep down the gully while he stayed where he was. He would watch the hare and let me know if it moved. >



James and his first hare.

The Junior Shooter

The gully was cleared, except for a single tree about 30m above where the hare was, so I set out in a crouching stalk, hoping to make it to the tree for a shot, but really expecting the hare to see me and take off long before I made it. Until then, we'd never seen hare in this area.

It seemed to take ages for me to creep down that gully, trying to keep the tree between myself and the hare. I was sure the hare would see me, though when I got to the tree, my father was still standing at the head of the gully watching and not indicating that the hare had gone. Slowly, I edged round the tree and the hare was still quietly grazing. Though it was starting to get dark, there was still plenty of light for the scope, so lying flat on the ground, I aimed the cross-hairs behind the hare's shoulder and squeezed the trigger. It gave a little jump and rolled over.

Third time's a charm

Sometime later, I was in our back paddock again, this time chasing hares, as I'd seen three of them loping through the property. The three had been putting on quite a display, with a buck hare chasing what I assumed were a couple of does.



A young hare taken at the home property.

There was also a smaller hare, no bigger than a rabbit, grazing some metres off and apparently not taking any interest in what the adults were doing. However, by the time I got the .22 out and went back down the paddock, the three adult hares had disappeared, leaving just the younger hare.

I crept down to within about 25m of the hare and waited a little while, watching it graze and looking for any of the adults to come back. After about 20 minutes, I gave up on the idea they were returning, so I aimed at the young hare, which was still unaware of my presence, and bowled him over in a clean chest shot.

Hare facts and folklore

Having spent a bit of time watching the young hare, I realised that I didn't know very much about hares at all, so I did a little research in the library and on the internet and learned some interesting things about this animal.

The hare, or more correctly, the brown hare (*Lepus capensis*), was introduced to Australia from Europe, with an initial released into Tasmania in 1837. The mainland hares, however, are descended from colonies introduced on Phillip Island and Westernport Bay in 1862, with subsequent releases around the south coast, until they are now found all the way from South Australia to South East Queensland.

There are 22 species of hares around the world, some of which are classed as 'endangered', though the brown hare is not. While hare is from the same family as rabbits (*Leporidae*), they are only distantly related and can't breed with rabbits.

Fully grown, the brown hare is slightly bigger than a domestic cat, weighing in at 3.5 to 4kg, with the female larger than the male. They are apparently immune to rabbit diseases such as myxomatosis and calicivirus and are difficult to effectively poison, making shooting the only effective means of control.

Baby hares are called 'leverets' and in favourable conditions, hares can have five to six litters a year, with anything from two to five young per litter. Breeding can occur all year round, but generally happens over the spring/summer seasons. In the Northern hemisphere, spring starts in March, hence the expression 'Mad as a March hare' - a reference to the wild boxing and leaping hares do as part of their mating behaviour.

Quite a number of cultures, past and present, have references to hares in their mythology, many of which are related to associations with the moon and not surprisingly given their promiscuous behaviour, fertility. In Egypt, the god Osiris was sometimes portrayed with a hare's head and hares were sacrificed each year to ensure the annual flooding of the Nile, which was essential to Egyptian agriculture.

In ancient Rome, the hare was the emblem for such gods and goddesses as Venus, Aphrodite and Cupid, due to its fertility. The Celts associated the hare with fertility, the moon and Easter, while Africa, China and India also have hare associations with the moon. On clear full-moon nights, with a bit of imagination, the outline of a hare can even be seen in the face of the moon itself.

Hare was associated with speed, as well as cleverness and quick thinking, and it was this aspect of hare behaviour that African slaves took to America to become the basis of the *Brer Rabbit* tales by Uncle Remus. With long, powerful legs, hares are capable of reaching speeds up to 60km an hour over short distances.

I also found a number of recipes for hare including a Roman recipe for stuffed hare ears, but not being very adventurous, the hare we hunt has ended up as food for the family Labrador. Hare has very lean meat and is good for dogs.

Hare in the paddock!

I'd been keeping a watch in the back paddock for the return of the adult hare and a few days later, there was a big buck loping around our dam in the back corner of the paddock, grazing like the young hare had been a few days earlier. Another single chest shot at about 30m took him out on the dam wall. Since that time, I have taken more hares with the .22, mainly at dusk.

After a day of hunting goats in the ranges of East Gippsland, I went out with the .22 to see if I could hunt some rabbits before dark. I was on my way back to camp after checking out a warren without success when a big buck hare came loping around the hillside. I squatted down and shot him at about 25m and then put down a couple more before I arrived at camp. All this happened again in an area where we had rarely seen a hare before.



Two hares taken at dusk.

We are still seeing hares at home and nearly every time we go out. Recently, I took two together in the paddocks at home. They had run past the house and down into the back paddocks and were grazing quietly when I shot one at about 20m. While the second one took off, it only ran a few metres and propped on its hind legs to look back, presumably for its mate. I waited a few seconds for it to put its front paws back on the ground, then squeezed off a shot for another clean kill.

Hares are not difficult to hunt with a well-placed chest shot from a .22, but there is a bit of a challenge in creeping up on them undetected and once they are on the move, they rarely stop long enough for a decent shot. While they are not heavyweights in game hunting, I find they can still provide good fun. ●

Juniors-only competition

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

October Junior competition
SSAA Media & Publications
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at www.australianshooter.com.au

Winner randomly drawn November 10, 2011

WIN a Buck
Commander
BlackFalls
hydration
system

Valued at \$95

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Training for the Olympics with Alethea Sedgman

by Media Officer Rachael Andrews

Australian Commonwealth Games gold medallist Alethea Sedgman has proven that first impressions don't always count - at least not when it comes to target shooting anyway. The 17-year-old SSAA member, who is now training for Olympic Games selection, was sure she didn't like target shooting when she started out, but five years and many international competitions later, she's more than glad that she changed her mind.

Alethea attended a Big Bore shoot in 2006 at the Horsham range in Victoria with her father and sister and admits to not liking the loud noises and recoil. In 2007, however, she found her niche in the Smallbore disciplines and began attending more regularly.

"At the end of 2007, I started to really enjoy shooting; however, I was doing netball at the same time and I didn't want to miss out on that too much," she said. "That eventually began to change and target shooting became my number one sport."

"I would go with Dad and we would have a competition to see who could beat each other...Shooting has a great family aspect and is great bonding time with Dad."

As she took up shooting full-time, Alethea's skill increased and so did her scores. With the encouragement of family and fellow shooters at the club, she began to push herself. She opted to attend a Victorian shooting camp, where she realised that junior shooters were a big part of the sport. In addition to being spurred on by discovering a strong junior competition, Alethea met future coach Carrie Quigley.

"She told me that if I wanted to improve, I needed to try Air Rifle and 3 Position shooting," Alethea said. "When I had a go, I grouped my shots in pretty much the same hole without wearing the proper pants; only the jacket."

At the end of 2008, Alethea attended another junior camp, this time at Wangaratta, and Carrie advised Alethea to try Air Rifle shooting. Scores of 96 and 97 impressed the coach and Alethea said this was when she knew she had the potential to take her shooting further.

From there, she attended the Youth Nationals and was thrilled with her score of more than 500 in 3 Position. In 2009, she attended a national training camp and her performances there allowed her to meet the national shooting



Alethea with her Commonwealth Games gold medal. Photo courtesy of AISL.



The 2010 Commonwealth Games Shooting Team including Alethea, front row, third from left. Photo courtesy of AISL.

Alethea spends time in her training schedule taking her shooting positions and practising dry-firing.



coach at the time, Petr Kurka. Alethea impressed again at the Arafura Games in Darwin, placing third, and she was consequently signed onto an international team.

“It was my first medal at an international competition; I was having fun and I was really thrilled to be invited to shoot overseas following Darwin,” she said.

During 2009, Alethea kept her scores up and managed to qualify for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in the 10m Air Rifle and 50m Rifle 3 Position competitions. The great importance of attending the competition in India was not lost

on Alethea, but she said she didn’t find it daunting, and found the facilities provided to athletes to be of a high standard.

“I was excited to be there and the Australian Team were all like my older brothers and sisters,” Alethea said.

Alethea’s gold medal came from the Women’s 50m Rifle 3 Position event, with a score of 575 and 101 from her final shots.

“I had a good feeling that day,” she said.

However, her score in the Standing Position during qualifications was not what she was aiming for and forced her to put in a bigger effort in the finals.

“I was really angry with my performance and I knew that I had it in me to win if I shot well in the final,” Alethea said. “I was pretty positive that I could shoot well and pull through, but I didn’t know how well I was doing in the final until I realised other shooters were scoring eights.”

Following her return to Australia, Alethea was overwhelmed by the response to her

win, with her local town, Natimuk in Victoria, holding a parade in her honour.

“I didn’t expect that and I didn’t expect people to turn up and cheer me on,” she said. “The well-wishers were unexpected, but they’ve really helped me to refocus.”

Alethea has now given recounts of her experiences for primary schools and has given motivational talks for various groups. She has also started to pick up her training for the 2012 London Olympic Games, as competitions that have quota places for the Australian Team, such as the Oceania Games in Sydney in November, are drawing near. However, she said she had plenty of work to do to get competition ready before then.

“I’m now training for that one event; I’ve got to want it bad enough and that’s my one focus now.” ●

The training and diet of an international shooter

by Alethea Sedgman

I normally don't change my training schedule in the lead-up to competitions. It is mainly dependent on the weather or conditions of the day and whether I am at school or if I have important school assessments that need to be studied for. I usually do something shooting-orientated every day; it might be an extra dose of exercise or just sorting my gear out, right up to actually training or holding practice.

I use my phone applications quite a lot for exercising such as arm, abs and glutes workouts, as well as squat, push-up and sit-up workouts. I also do a small amount of yoga after the exercises as a way of stretching and relaxing. I normally exercise in the morning and before bed. I don't run as far as I used to, as I only want to maintain a healthy cardiovascular system.

I have found that with school and competitions, it is really good to just find some time to relax. I enjoy going for nature walks; I'm located beside Mt Arapiles in Natimuk, and my dad is a keen rock climber. I like to have a walk

around the mountain, or if I have a full day available, we will venture out for a climb.

My diet is fairly natural, as I do not eat many processed foods and I try to maintain a low GI (glycemic index) diet. I drink a lot of water, around 1.5 litres a day, and I also drink a lot of herbal teas throughout the day. I try to refrain from eating takeaway foods, but when I do, I try to make sure it's the healthiest option available.

I have been taught by so many people that it is beneficial to do brief mental rehearsals in your mind before the competition, just so that I can be a little bit more relaxed when I actually compete. With training, I normally start off with holding my rifle without the jacket and then progress to with the jacket before I begin live-firing (or placing live rounds in the chamber). Another thing that I find beneficial, along with a lot of other people, is relaxing before a competition by listening to music that comforts me. ●

Training schedule

Monday

- 1km run
- 40-minute core and strengthening workout
- 1.5-hour shooting training session with stretching beforehand

Tuesday

- 10-minute run
- 20-minute core and strengthening workout

Wednesday

- 1-hour shooting training with stretching beforehand
- 1km run
- 15-minute core workout
- 10-minute yoga session

Thursday

- 20-minute power walk with 1.5kg weights
- 3-hour training session
- 30-minute core and strengthening workout

Friday

- 10-minute run
- 1-hour shooting training with stretching beforehand

Saturday

- 1.5km run
- 15-minute yoga session
- 1-hour core and strengthening workout
- 1-hour dry-training kneeling (no bullets)

Sunday

- 1km run
- 10-minute yoga session
- 40-minute core and strengthening workout
- 2-hour shooting training session

Eating plan

Breakfast: Fruit and nut muesli with natural yoghurt and ½ cup fresh or canned fruit with honey

Snack: Apple or piece of fresh fruit with a small handful of almonds or a handful of wholegrain crackers

Lunch: Stir-fry vegies and seafood, or frittata or pasta with vegies, or wholegrain salad sandwich

Snack: Piece of fruit with peanut butter and handful of wholegrain crackers

Dinner: Stir-fry vegies and white meat or vegetarian dishes or vegie laksa

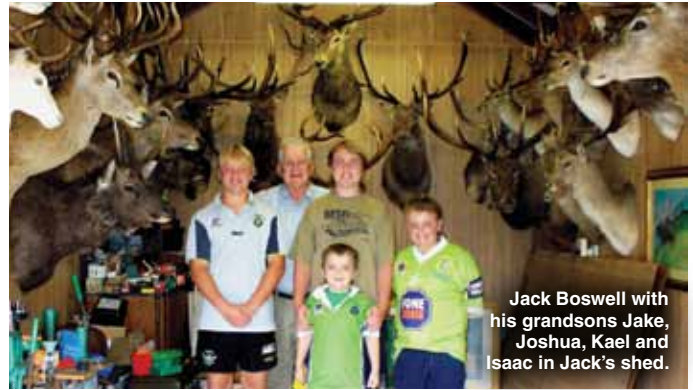
Dessert: 6 squares of dark chocolate or fruit salad or slice of homemade cake/dessert.



Pop, why do you hunt deer?

by Jack Boswell

I am a SSAA member and a former contributor over many years. Recently, my third-eldest grandson, Isaac, asked me, "Pop, why do you hunt deer?" Apart from the easy replies of "Because I enjoy it" and "It provides us with food", I realised that I had to go away and think about it properly. I ended up writing Isaac a letter and thought that I would also send it in to the SSAA to help other parents, grandparents and friends explain the benefits and enjoyment of recreational hunting and shooting with their youngsters or simply others who aren't familiar with our chosen pastime.



Jack Boswell with his grandsons Jake, Joshua, Kael and Isaac in Jack's shed.

Dear Isaac,

Last time that we spoke together, you asked me that important question, which deserves a better, more complete answer than I was able to give at the time.

You will recall that I said something about the family tradition. My father was a hunter; his father and grandfather were hunters going back several generations. A relative of ours in the early 20th century was a famous shooter and London gunsmith.

The very first artists were hunters. Some of them left beautiful paintings of deer and other game animals on cave walls in France and Spain. These paintings and others of men hunting have been dated at about 30,000 years old. That's a long time ago!

But there is more. Before 10,000 years ago, practically all people in the world were hunters or hunter/gatherers. That was the only way that people got their food. There were no farms either, and no shop to buy food - not even a Big Mac! Some 200,000 years ago, all people like us lived in Africa and all were hunters.

The main reason that I hunt is because I want to. I like to hunt in the same way that I like to sing. You may have seen a video-clip from the film *Anchors Aweigh!* where Jerry, the Warner Bros mouse (from *Tom & Jerry*), dances with Gene Kelly to a fairy story called *The Little King Who Couldn't Dance*, and the king tries to stop his subjects from dancing.

What would the world be like without dancing or music? Shooting is like dancing and hunting is like music - they are part of me. Hunting especially is an essential part of being human. Most sports are really substitutes for the hunting drive. Look up the word 'game'. Tennis and football are great games in which the players practise the same sort of skills, such as aiming, that are needed for hunting. Have you ever watched kittens or puppies playing? They too are honing their skills for hunting. As a grown-up, I need to continue to go hunting before I get too old.

Hunting gives me satisfaction, maybe even fulfilment. When I shoot a deer, nothing is really wasted. Venison is very lean and very healthy for the diet. It is also extremely expensive to buy. When I shoot a trophy stag, the game is significantly value added.

The deer with the best antlers are very old grandfather deer; they have already lived most of their lives. If the deer seen through my binocular does not have better antlers than ones I have already taken, I choose not to take it; unless it is a cull. I shoot culls just for the meat, and I like to keep my freezer well-stocked with venison.

Whenever I am feeling a little sad, I like to sit in my trophy room and I feel much better. A trophy is better than a great photo. It is a celebration of the magnificence of the animal; a beauty that will last much longer than a deer's life expectancy. It is also a celebration of a memorable hunt. My hunting mates enjoy each other's trophies. We do not think that deer hunting is some kind of competition, and none of my trophies have been scored.

Though I believe deer are the most challenging of all game, I am neither a great shot nor a great hunter. But I have been very lucky and have had a great deal of help. I have been fairly persistent and have hunted for more than 50 years. Trophy-class deer are very different to just any deer. It is like comparing Under 7 football with the State of Origin.

The animals that I shoot die quickly and with much less pain than death by any other cause that I could name. Animal welfare is very important to hunters. The animal rights movement has little credibility among real conservationists.

Feral animals are domesticated stock that have gone wild. This includes feral cattle, buffalo, horses, goats, pigs, dogs and cats. Indian mynahs, starlings and sparrows, together with cane toads, rats and mice, are simply vermin, whereas rabbits, hares and foxes are small game. All of these animals are pests when they are not managed properly. They can be economic pests to the farmers and can be very dangerous animals in any state. Strangely, they are protected in national parks in New South Wales.

I hunt animals for a reason. The RSPCA needs to kill animals sometimes for very good reasons, as do some farmers. There are some people who say that animals are equal to humans. I cannot agree with them, as I know that you are much more important. However, I do think that a lion has an equal right to hunt as I do because we are both hunters.

I am glad that you asked me this very important question. I hope that it helps you understand your old Pop.



SSAA Store round-up for juniors

by Associate Editor Kaye Jenkins

Are you new to the shooting sports and need a range bag to hold all your new gear? Perhaps you've outgrown that shirt your parents gave you when you participated in your first shoot, or you need a new torch for that upcoming hunting trip? Maybe you're looking for a special Christmas present for a family member or friend? Well, look no further than the SSAA Store - we have clothing, hats, torches, swags, camping gear and heaps of shooting, hunting and outdoor accessories. Here are a few products to get you started...

Hoodie

Made from cotton polyester, this very comfortable chocolate-brown hoodie jumper features two pockets and the words 'SSAA Since 1948' on the front. Suitable for males and females, it is available in sizes Medium to 2XL. **\$49.95**



LED lantern

This brushed silver and black mini lantern measures 160x50mm. Powered by three AA batteries, it has three light modes (100% on, 70% on and a flashing/strobe mode that can be used as a beacon light), a fold-down hanging hook and a flap on the back that you can raise and lower to create a directional beam. **\$39.95**

Cloth badges

The SSAA Store has a variety of cloth badges that you can sew onto your clothing, hats or bags. Choose from the traditional SSAA logos or from the many SSAA shooting competitions. **\$7.50**



Contrail king single swag

This king single swag measures 2000x900mm and is made of 14oz khaki canvas. It features a 50mm mattress and a mosquito net at the head end, so you can have a good night's sleep when camping. **\$180**



Hats

We have a variety of hats that you can wear in the field or on the range, including a legionnaires cap, competition cap, fly hat, beanies and a number of peaked caps. **\$14.95 to \$24.95**



SSAA's Cooks Companion

Learn how to cook up your catch with the SSAA's very own recipe book. Featuring 50 recipes from SSAA members, this spiral-bound book includes rabbit, kangaroo, pork, venison, seafood, duck and quail recipes, as well as camp favourites such as damper. **\$29.95**

Enamel cup

Sturdy enough to throw into your outdoor or hunting pack, this white enamel cup features the SSAA logo and website and will hold around 300ml. **\$9.95**



Dive/Glo torch

This torch measures 105x40mm and features a six-LED cluster, providing outstanding lighting and low power consumption. The unit's built-in, shock-resistant body and wrist/neck-strap make it ideal for the outdoors and its white, glowing body means you can find it in the dark. The torch also has a double rubber seal for full water-resistance and is waterproof to 200m. **\$34.95**



Electronic earmuffs

These earmuffs allow you to hear normally, but when the surrounding sound reaches 85 decibels, the sensor kicks in and shuts down the sound to protect your hearing. With a slimline profile, the earmuffs won't get in the way of your firearm's cheekpiece and can collapse down to fit into your gun case. **\$89.95**



Cool Dri JB polo shirt

This navy-blue and white polo shirt features the SSAA logo on the left-side chest. It is made from a moisture-wicking material and has enough stretch to keep you comfortable on the range. Suitable for males and females, it is available in sizes Small to 3XL. **\$37.95**



LED Lenser headlamp

You can use this light as a regular torch, open it up to use as a headlamp or turn the belt-clip upside down to use as a walklight. Including three high-end LEDs, providing 25 lumens and powered by three included AAA batteries, the light will run for up to 125 hours and is secured in a bright blue plastic torch container featuring the SSAA logo. **Normally \$39.95, on special for \$30**



Novelty signs

We have a number of novelty street signs that will add character to your bedroom, study or games room. Measuring around 400x150mm, the all-metal signs include shooting, hunting, reloading and outback names. **\$19.95**

Lanyards

Keep your keys and ID organised and close by with a blue SSAA website lanyard or green SSAA I Love Hunting lanyard. Measuring 145x15mm, these lanyards also feature a breakaway safety clip. **\$8.95**



Check out more products and make an order online:
www.ssaa.org.au/store

Or scan this QR code using a smart phone:





Alister with his first pheasants taken in the bull paddock.

A young gun pheasant shoot in New Zealand

by John Royle

My son Alister and I headed down to the annual Waihora Gun Club's Duck Shooters Day Shoot in New Zealand with the intention of getting the eye in for opening weekend. A Beretta shotgun was also up for grabs as the major prize, so we entered in both rounds and had each other on that we were going to win it. That didn't happen, but 12-year-old Alister did take out the Junior Shoot and won the Young Guns Pheasant Shoot prize. This is a fantastic prize sponsored by Hunting & Fishing and Beretta New Zealand in each region around New Zealand for kids under 18 with the highest overall score.

The shoot was set for August 28 and had a traditional English pheasant shoot dress code; it's a very 'jacket and tie' affair. They also only use over-and-under or side-by-side shotguns. All juniors must be accompanied by a guardian with a firearms licence, which was something I was more than happy about.

As the countdown to the big day began, Alister and I had to do a bit of shopping. I have never worn 'number ones' (best clothing) hunting, so we hit the shops - polar fleece was out and silk ties were in! Alister's stepdad kindly loaned Alister his over-and-under shotgun and then we were all set to go.

Rathmoy Estate offers clay bird coaching the day before each shoot as part of its range of services and it is a great way of getting your eye in before taking on the wily pheasants, which are generally presented to the shooters in tough shooting conditions. So a bit of practice was a good idea to get up to speed before the big day.

On the Friday before the shoot, Alister and I flew up from Christchurch to Wellington, before getting a rental car for the drive up to Hunterville. The clay bird coaching is held on Gordon McPhee's place in Rata, where he has a number of traps set up in the style of shots that you would expect on a pheasant shoot. Gordon is one of New Zealand's top coaches. He teaches about 40 kids each year and is hard as nails, but he quickly has the kids busting clays like they have been doing it all their lives.

After introductions, the first thing Gordon did was to brief Alister on gun safety, before moving on to gunfit. In a nutshell, gunfit, stance and swing is very similar to a golfer's club-fit, stance and swing; if the head moves when the gun comes up, you will more than likely have a poor shot, just as a golfer would. Only one other boy was there for coaching; a boy named Bryce and his dad Russell were there from Tauranga.

If you are an average shot, or have problems with some part of your shooting, I can't recommend using a shooting coach enough. All too often, we tend to overlook the basics when shooting. Golfing pros use a coach to perfect their swing and so should shooters.

After the clay birds, we followed Russell out to Rathmoy, where we were to stay the night at the Rathmoy Fish & Pheasant Lodge, which is situated on the banks of the Rangitikei River in Marton. Heading up the farm laneway, we saw scores of pheasants that more than had our trigger fingers twitching. At the lodge, we met up with the lodge manager, Musa, who had brought in the only other guests for the night - some boys from Collingwood who had won the Nelson Shoot. As always, when a group of shooters get together, the yarns started to flow and we turned in perhaps a little later than I intended.

The next morning, we were woken up at dawn to the sound of pheasants calling. 'This is the life!' I thought, as I swung out of my bunk and headed downstairs for that crucial first brew. Musa soon arrived and began to cook everyone a big feed. At around 8am, the other young guns, preserve staff and beaters began to drift in.

After breakfast, it was straight into the paperwork then the all-important drawing of the pegs. The excitement began to build as the owner Mark 'Sparks' Grace gave the safely briefing. Birds could only be shot at when over the skyline; no low shots near the ground are permitted. With so many people in front and behind the shooters, safety is absolutely paramount and failure to comply is an early shower.

Guardians, or 'minders' as we were called, are responsible for supplying their young guns with enough ammo. To run out of ammo on a drive is considered an offence to the gamekeeper and requires the minder to run naked past the line of shooters and to the end of the drive. Apparently, it's been done before, so I made sure I brought plenty of ammo! Most preserves only use felt ammo (which replaces the wads) because of the amount of shot fired on the property.

With the briefing over, it was time for the first drive. The shooters and minders headed out in the shooters bus, while

the beaters and preserve staff headed out in a fleet of other farm vehicles. Our first drive was the bull paddock, which is a tight little ravine with native bush on both sides.

I had never been on a bird drive before and was most curious as I watched the beaters go out. The beaters themselves were an interesting bunch of characters; there were kids, ladies, gents, young and old all mixed into the foray. Like their owners, their dogs were also a diverse bunch; there were setters, spaniels, Labradors, golden retrievers and quite a few sporting questionable parentages. Quickly, the beaters broke up into smaller groups. Some used dogs to flush birds and some carried flags, while others joined the shooters with their retrieving dogs. All of the beaters were under the control of the gamekeeper.

Heading up the ravine, Sparks began to call out the names of the shooters and give them their stations. He was accompanied by the shoot coordinator, Chris. Alister got his station well up the gully. Gordon McPhee kindly joined us for this drive to check that Alister had remembered his coaching lesson from the day before. The estate photographer, a young English lady, also joined us.

Looking skyward, I remember thinking that the terrain looked like tough shooting, as the birds would only be safe to shoot at for a few brief seconds. Soon after, Sparks sounded the hunting horn and the hunt commenced. For a few minutes, the only sound to be heard was that of the approaching beaters. Then, a shot rang out from down near the bottom of the gully. As with any shooting, someone usually gets the rub of the green. For this drive, it was the boys at the head of the gully.

Flurries of birds suddenly broke cover and headed for the top stations. These were met with several shots - I believe one of the young guns up there was a New Zealand clay bird rep and he was having a field day! I turned around to see that my photographer friend had moved off to capture the action going on upstream.

They say that a good gamekeeper can turn the birds so they can be presented to all the shooters along the line, should they all try to fly one way. This may well have been what happened next, as a score of birds soon came our way. Alister was soon taking his shots thick and fast and the first box of shells was soon empty, with only a few birds to show for it. I began to wonder if 'a downing of one's trouser' was also part of the driven bird culture. But luckily for me, with Gordon's encouragement, Alister soon found the right lead and we were on the board. Phew!

Suddenly, a shout of "Bird!" came from someone in the bush down the bottom of the gully. I turned around just in time to see a cock pheasant flying hammer and tongs up the gully towards us. The bird ran the gauntlet



The young guns, with the owner, Sparks, in the centre holding the walking stick.

The Junior Shooter



The party returns from the first drive in the bull paddock.

and managed to escape unscathed, but as he came over our position, I was rapt to see Alister take him with his first barrel. “Well done, Alister!” said Gordon, obviously also enjoying the moment. “Good one, kid!” someone said laughing from upstream, obviously mocking the older boys downstream.

A black lab soon appeared and retrieved the fallen bird. Then the horn sounded for the end of the drive. As we filed back down the gully, the beaters moved in with their dogs to check the area thoroughly for any lost birds.

It had been a good drive and as we gathered around the game cart, the bag started to grow in size. After a quick photo session, we were off for the second drive of the morning down by the Rangitikei River. For this drive, we were split up into two groups, with some going down a small gully leading to the river itself, while the rest of us were stationed around a corner in the paddock above the gully.

Alister and I were placed further back in the paddock on our own to cover any birds that got through the line of shooters. Chris, the shoot coordinator, came over and said we were in the place to be. But alas, when the horn sounded, few birds came our way and our gun was silent for much of the drive.

Those that did come our way were cleaned up by some fine shooting by the young guns. But once again, right at the death of the drive, another cock pheasant broke through the line and as it passed us high and fast, Alister brought it down with another fine shot that made Dad very proud indeed.

After the second drive, it was back to the lodge for elevenses. As we pulled up outside the lodge, a sea of hot and cold food was there to greet us. The ever-mounting bag was spread out on the steps for all of us to admire. I noticed the beaters had grabbed a large table and were getting stuck in, so I quickly joined the mob and made myself at home. Rathmoy Estate sure does know how to put on a good spread, and for this day, we lived like kings!

All too soon, it was back to the serious business of bird drives. The young guns were to travel in style by jet boat

upriver, while we minders would travel by the shooters bus. The hunting spot was basically a relatively new farm track that headed down a steep bush-clad slope.

Once again, the horn sounded and the hunt was on. Sparks moved up the line, sporting his double-barrel side-by-side shotgun over his shoulder. He paused beside me for a bit of yarn and had a few shots himself. The birds were coming our way for a change and Alister cursed me for talking too much and not keeping up the ammo to him. Such are the demands of parenthood!

With the third drive over, it was back to the lodge for lunch and this was an even bigger feast than elevenses. Man, this was getting tough! After lunch, we set out for the fourth and final drive, which was not far from where we had had our second drive in the morning.

From our station in the middle, I had a great view up and down the line. During the shoot, I saw some fine shooting from the young guns. But what interested me most about this drive was the number of birds that flew lines where they could not be shot at. In one place, I saw at least 30 birds fly below the skyline at the top of this bank and all



The bag is laid out on the steps of Rathmoy Estate.

landed in a tiny bit of bush, so not one could be shot at by the shooters! Obviously, the birds that survive a full season of drives on this property do so by being most cunning.

With the shooting over, we again headed back to the lodge, where we had a few more photos taken of the bag. It had been a great shoot, with the young guns accounting for 194 birds, with a shot average of around 5.5 each. After a few speeches and toasts to the beaters and preserve staff, we divvied up the bag and people began to drift off.

Before this shoot, I had never been on a preserve and I went there with an open mind. I soon found out that not only do they provide shooting in a great sporting manner that is second to none, but they are also quite beneficial to a much greater area, as many birds that are released on the property move out into the surrounding countryside to the good fortune of all the local hunting community. It's a win-win for all!

If you have never hunted on a preserve and love your hunting, you have to add this to your bucket list. It truly is the best fun you can have with your clothes on, and for at least one poor guy, off - just remember to take enough ammo!

Preserves are not cheap to run and that is reflected in the price it costs to participate, but it is worth it. If you do go, think about having another person act as a loader at your side; their presence adds around 30 per cent more shots to you, as well as giving you an extra pair of eyes to spot birds and another brain to shout 'No!' should the bird go below what is deemed a safe shot.

I would like to thank all the sponsors at Hunting & Fishing, Beretta New Zealand and Mark Grace and his staff at Rathmoy Fish & Pheasant Lodge for putting on such a great day. If you are interested in shooting at Rathmoy, phone +64 06 322 1632 or email andrea@rathmoy.co.nz ●

Kangaroo burrito bake

by Erica Wright

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 650-700g kangaroo fillet or topside
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium-sized brown onion - finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic - crushed
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika - smoked is nice
- ½ teaspoon chilli flakes - or to taste
- 350-400ml tomato passata
- 400g can red kidney beans - drained and rinsed
- salt and freshly ground black pepper - to taste
- 8 tortillas
- 400ml sour cream
- 1½ cups grated cheddar cheese
- homemade guacamole (see right)
- tomato salsa and salad - to serve

Method

Cut the meat into cubes and mince in a food processor fitted with a metal blade.

Preheat the oven to 200C. Heat oil in a wok or large frypan, add the onion and garlic and cook over a medium heat for a few minutes until the onion is soft. Add the mince and cook, stirring for a few minutes until browned - it won't take long.

Add the cumin, paprika and chilli flakes and stir for a few minutes until aromatic. Add the passata, stirring well to combine as it comes to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until the sauce reduces a little. Add the beans and heat through.

Heat the tortillas in the microwave according to packet directions and lay them out on a clean bench. Divide the mixture evenly between them, spooning it across the centre. Roll up to enclose filling. Place the tortillas in a large, greased baking dish, seam side down. Spoon over the sour cream and sprinkle with cheese.

Bake for about 20 minutes or until the topping melts and browns. Serve with guacamole, tomato salsa and a side salad.



Homemade guacamole Ingredients

- 2 avocados - halved and stoned
- 1 small onion - finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic - crushed
- 1 dessertspoon lemon juice
- few drops of Tabasco sauce - to taste
- salt and freshly ground black pepper - to taste
- handful of chopped coriander (optional)

Method

Scoop out the avocado flesh into a small bowl and mash with the back of a fork until smooth. Add the onion, garlic, lemon juice, salt, pepper and coriander. Taste, and add more seasoning or lemon juice if required. Transfer to a serving dish. ●

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