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*Only print issue for 2021!*

# Archery Action

November December 2021



*Special section:  
Highlights of 2021*



*Going  
Walkabout*

*Timberline 'buffalo'*

*A COVID Masters*



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*Australia's longest running archery and bowhunting magazine*





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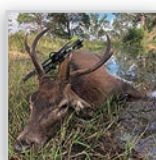
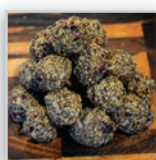
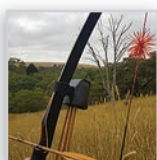




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## ◀ COVER PHOTOGRAPH

A once-in-a-lifetime sambar deer for David Luxford. See his story on Page 40. PHOTOGRAPH by Russell Cornall

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*I remember in my young adulthood whenever I was saying too much and doing too little*, my dear old stepdad, who would have been a very cantankerous 101-year-old had he lived to the present day, used to look me straight in the eye and tell me that nothing would happen until someone put a spade in the ground.

These days the spade has become an excavator and real work has become easier than ever. But has that helped? I think that now we have an ever bigger problem—we do too much playing of the blame game.

Let me unpack this a bit. We've become a society that is, excuse me for being critical, the tiniest bit lazy. Many of us are too quick to think that 'someone else should fix it' and are then apt to blame others when perfection, as we perceive it, isn't attained. We may not realise it but we have abrogated responsibility and in doing so have weakened



ourselves, our society and our chances of doing great things.

Remember the old story that anyone could have done it, someone should have done it, but no one actually did it? This is happening more and more in any club or organisation that relies on volunteers for survival. But thank goodness for the people who do step up!

Now to Part B of the equation. I'm sure I'm not alone in finding it easy to criticise another person. But rather than wasting my energy apportioning blame, when I ask myself how I could improve the situation, my brain starts working at a different level looking for answers to a better question. The solutions often have nothing to do with the other person's perceived shortcomings! From there, the tiniest action—as long as it's heading in the right direction—is all you need to start a crusade, whether that's building a new clubhouse or changing the world.

#### *And now, it's time to sign off*

The *Archery Action* team wishes you all the best for the holiday season and the new year. May you always have something to strive for, people to love and a generous share of happiness to balance the challenges that face us all. Goodbye, and good luck!

*Jenel Hunt*  
Editor

## DEADLINES

Please submit articles and advertisements by these dates:

**editor@archeryactionmagazine.com**

ISSUE	DEADLINE
2022	
Vol 47 No. 3 January-February	1 December
Vol 47 No. 4 March-April	1 February
Vol 47 No. 5 May-June	1 April
Vol 47 No. 6 July-August	1 June
Vol 48 No. 1 September-October	1 August
Vol 48 No. 2 November-December	1 October

*(November-December issue = printed yearbook)*



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editor@archeryactionmagazine.com  
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ABN 79 750 431 225

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37 College Street, Hamilton Qld 4007

#### FREELANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

are welcomed by this magazine and articles should be addressed to: The Editor, *Archery Action*. The Editor accepts no responsibility for unsolicited material. Colour photographs or high resolution scans are suitable for publication. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your articles to enable return of photographs if required.

Emailed contributions should be sent in plain (editable) text only and any photos should be sent as separate attachments, not embedded in the story text.

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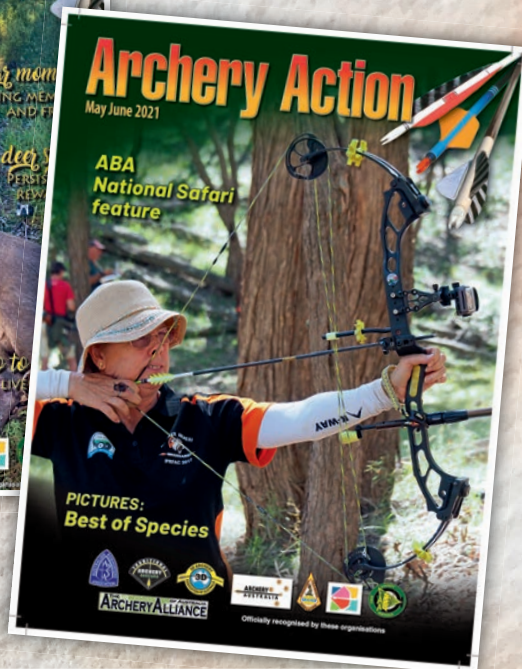
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Traditional Trails—Nick Lintern  
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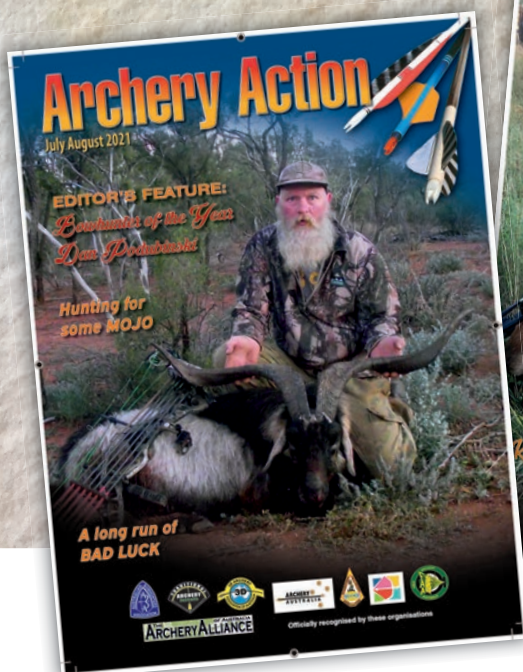




*Welcome* to 2021's only print magazine of *Archery Action*. We're sure some people have been waiting all year to hold a 'real' copy of the magazine in their hands once again!

While we've been bringing you archery news and features faithfully throughout the year with digital magazines every two months, we thought you'd enjoy a bumper edition this time featuring all our normal articles plus a special section that starts on Page 78. *Highlights of 2021* is a compilation of some of the stories that made the year what it was. Enjoy this collectors' edition.

The digital magazines are still available (for download only) on the ABA's website. The files are large—around 35MB per magazine—and generally copy to your computer's Downloads folder. Go to [www.bowhunters.org.au](http://www.bowhunters.org.au) and choose 'Archery Action' in the top menu bar then click on 'Electronic Magazines' in the dropdown menu that appears. A single click on any of the cover icons should download your file.



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*Tucked up in the warm embrace of my sleeping bag, I waited for the sun to break. It had been a long sleepless night and I had spent the hours endlessly replaying the events from late the day before. But of course, that's not where the story began ...*



# TIMBERLINE *'buffalo'*

*A frosty but glorious morning after a sleepless night.*





by  
**ADAM CLEMENTS**

**W**ith a buffalo hunting trip to the NT cancelled for the second year in a row, I was slowly working through the five stages of grief when the phone rang. It was David Luxford with some timely encouragement. "Adam, how would you like to head up to Timberline? We'll call it a buffalo hunt!" I didn't need more than a few seconds to decide there could be no better alternative than to head up into the high country, enjoy some great company, soak up the clean air, clear the mind and maybe even get up close to a few sambar deer.

So there I was. It didn't take long for the locals to come out and say hello; on the first day 24 deer were seen, I had three close encounters, an opportunity for a stalk and one arrow fired but missing its target! That afternoon I sat on the forest fringe tucked up in a fallen log waiting for the magic hour. Suddenly a majestic stag

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appeared, grazing out in the open. He was joined by a hind and calf as well as being surrounded by kangaroos and with 150m of open country between us, my only option was to pretend to be a wombat and see if I could get within striking distance. Obviously, there aren't many 110kg wombats out there as sure enough the hind spotted me, let out a honk and cleared the paddock.

On the afternoon of day two I headed back to the same spot for another chance. As I waited, I played through different options in my head trying to plan some better stalk options should the same events as the previous afternoon unfold. Sure enough, at the same time and in the same spot a deer appeared ... this time a different stag. I immediately implemented my new plan, got into the paddock's drainage system and crawled my way down and around to get closer. I made sure I kept downwind and when I was below the last spot I'd seen him I hid in some

bracken and inched my way up to peek over the rise.

There, standing broadside 40 yards away was the stag—looking right through me. Maybe he'd heard my heart thumping and heavy breathing. I slowly retreated and gave it a few minutes before peeking over the rise again. Thankfully, he had gone back to grazing.

He was now quartering away from me which gave me an opening. I took a deep breath, ranged him at 50yd, aimed at the back of his ribs and fired. After the noise of the shot I heard a thud and a crack as the stag broke into a tail-up bullet run towards cover. At the same time, I heard a honk right behind me. Unbeknownst to me, there were another three deer that had fed out into the drainage system where I was hiding!

I quickly re-focussed on the deer at hand and listened as he crashed through the bush like a wrecking ball, first in a straight line then off to the left

before the world went silent.

By then I was almost out of light but I told myself to stay as calm as I could and quickly headed to where he'd been standing and marked it with a small log. My thought was to quickly search for any blood and my arrow while I had some light, but after scouring the paddock I couldn't see either anywhere so headed back to my mark to start again.

As I looked up to check if I had the right line from the shot, there standing not far from my mark stomping his foot was another dark-coloured stag standing head-on with a commanding presence. We shared a moment, then wisely for us both he didn't let me get too close and retreated back to the bush.

Full of adrenaline, I headed back to my original stake-out log to get my pack, headlamp and put my boots back on before heading back to my mark. Then right on time I could see the headlights of David's vehicle arriving



*The stag was taken here, in the open. The drainage system was a good hiding spot for a crawling stalk.*



at camp so I quickly signalled with my headlamp and thankfully he signalled back and headed up to my location.

Confronted with a babbling adrenaline-filled hunter, he quickly calmed me down and asked me to run him through what happened. As an experienced hunter, he was confident from the details I shared that everything was looking like a successful shot but it would be best to wait until first light to begin our track. Hence the sleepless night at the beginning of my story ...

Now up, I was greeted by the sun breaking through the trees on a frosty morning as I sipped on a hot brew. As the sun melted away the frost, we got ready and headed up to begin the journey.

On the way, I was remembering all I had learned on a previous trip here when Russell, the owner of the property, had shown me how to focus on prints as well as blood while tracking. I was keen to put my new knowledge into practice. To begin with, I nervously doublechecked for my arrow again while David quickly looked for foot marks. It wasn't long

before we were on his tracks. We took our time, looking for turned-up grass and marking our trail with small pieces of toilet paper as we went. It wasn't until 100m in as we reached the bushline we found a single spot of blood. This was kind of bittersweet for me because it didn't confirm where or how he was injured but did confirm we were on the right set of tracks.

This repeated every 50m or so through the middle of shrubs, over logs and at one stage through the V of a tree trunk. It was clear where all that crashing noise had come from! Eventually the tracks turned left as I expected. Now I was becoming more confident and excited as more blood started to appear on some bracken. After 300m or so and well over an hour of tracking, we reached a huge fallen tree. Somehow the stag had jumped over it but as he'd landed on the other side he'd hit a small gum tree where a blood smear revealed a good wound height and amount of blood.

We continued for another 20m or so when I looked up and noticed a large brown figure lying up in a clearing ahead of us. YES! YES! YES! YES! A huge



*The blood tree.*

*Below: The stag that took a serious amount of tracking to find.*





rush of relief, joy, excitement overtook me. For David, this may not have been a hunt in a physical sense but to track an animal this far one step at a time and to stay the course until the end provided him with just as much hunting success and excitement as it had for me.

We spent some time soaking it all in and reflecting on this majestic creature, the amazing tracking experience and the wonderful bounty now provided. Then the work began. We headed back to the vehicle to get some gear, as we did, we re-traced our steps and paced out how far we tracked him for. Some 440 odd paces later we were astonished at how much ground he had covered in such a short space of time. After some clearing of the logs and keen driving by David, we got the vehicle in closer and now only had a short distance to walk to recover him.

We took our time to record the moment then got to work harvesting everything we could. It was amazing to watch David's skill and precision make light work of everything. It was an easy decision to get this animal mounted for the wall and it will be up there with one of my favourites as I believe trophies are there to capture memories, not antlers.

Packed up, we had a short break before the pack out. Before long we were enjoying a celebratory cold drink and letting the moment sink in. The remainder of the day was busy prepping the cape and enjoying a well-earned hot lunch before heading out for one final afternoon hunt where even more deer were seen and an opportunity arose to pass on a hind.

Once home and after the meat had been in the fridge for a week, the family and I got to work preparing and packaging the venison for the freezer before enjoying a lovely schnitzel dinner. Yum!

This amazing place and hunt will be with me forever and I am so grateful for the encouragement, selflessness, generosity and willingness to share their craft from David and others in the bowhunting community. It's a huge privilege and one I look forward to passing on.

The writer of this story wins a threepack of **TUSKER SPIRIT** broadheads



*Prepped and ready for the trip back to camp.*



*Preparing and packaging the venison.*



*Venison schnitzels for dinner, yum!*





# Australian Bowhunters Association INC



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South Australia	Brett Raymond	0418 810 598
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Tasmania – see Victoria		
Trophy Bowhunters of Australia	Ralph Boden	(02) 4392 6810

## COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

The protocol for contacting officers is: Member speaks to relevant club officer. If the club officer cannot answer the query the officer passes it to the Branch representative who then contacts the relevant National Officer if required.

If you have any queries for National Officers, please direct your communication to the National Office (contact details as above).

## AFFILIATIONS

**BOWHUNTING:** WORLD BOWHUNTING ASSOCIATION  
**FIELD ARCHERY:** INTERNATIONAL FIELD ARCHERY ASSOCIATION  
CONFEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN SPORT

**WEBSITE** <http://www.bowhunters.org.au>

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# BOWHUNTING DIVISION REPORT

by Allan Driver  
Vice-President Bowhunting Division



## The past, the present

The ABA has some very strong roots going back many years to its beginning to bring together like-minded bowhunters to engage in creating who we are today.

ABA has evolved like no other organisation when it comes to bowhunting and archery in general. We are a stand-alone organisation that promotes bowhunting and field archery.

Our members are able to hunt many of the introduced feral animals that make a negative impact on the environment. We help reduce the number of those feral animals and we attempt to do so quietly, humanely

and with minimal disturbance to the environment. Our members appreciate the opportunity to be able to hunt and want to guard the freedom they have to do so. That's a good reason for being a member of the ABA.

There are many other places in the world where bowhunting is not permitted such as the United Kingdom. It could be said that the rest of the world is envious of what we have in this great nation of ours. Many hunters make the effort to come here to enjoy bowhunting varied feral species. Buffalo is a favourite.

Anyone who likes to hunt with the humble bow and arrow and is not already a member of an approved

organisation should endeavour to join the Australian Bowhunters Association as the ABA offers many educational advantages and opportunities to connect with other bowhunters.

## Annual General Meeting

The ABA Annual General Meeting has just been held, with national and Branch representatives attending.

It was a great meeting in terms of our association transitioning from an incorporated body to a company limited by guarantee.

This move will not result in any major changes to the bowhunting side of things; if anything, it will enhance our great association.

## Summary of Australian Bowshot Records

Species	Holder	Australian Record	Record Class	Trophy Class
Boar	Michael Dacre	37 2/8	29	25
Goat	James Finlay	151 2/8	110	95
Buffalo	Peter Griffiths	114	86 4/8	80
Camel	Kimberley Nicholas	32 6/16	29	25
Fox	Graeme Duff	11	10 2/16	9 3/16
Cat	Tim Pitt-Lancaster	8 5/16	7 10/16	7
Red Deer	Dan Smith	315 3/8	200	175
Fallow Deer	Darryl Bulger	276 4/8	190	150
Chital Deer	Dan Smith	204	160	140
Hog Deer	Stephen Tilley	111 7/8	70	55
Sambar Deer	Dean Scott	203 5/8	162 7/8	140
Rusa Deer	Jay Janssen	236	170	150
Shark BHFF	Barry Feeney	35 2/8	20	15
Shark BF	John Van Den Heuvel	51 6/8	41 4/8	15
Stingray BHFF	Barry Feeney	11 3/8	7 4/8	6
Stingray BF	Gleewyn Butson	14 3/8	11 4/8	10

## Ladies Best of Species

Boar	Kristan Bell	34 4/8pt	2017
Goat	Katherine Agale	127 1/8pt	2010
Buffalo	Christie Pisani	87 4/8pt	2017
Camel	Christie Pisani	30 7/16pt	2014
Fox	Helen Duff	10 14/16pt	2016
Cat	Lorna Hopkins	7 12/16pt	1984
Red Deer	Elissa Rosemond	275 2/8pt	2021
Fallow Deer	Elissa Rosemond	205 7/8pt	2019
Chital Deer	Elizabeth Proctor	161 3/8pt	2019
Hog Deer	Cheryl Morris	60 5/8pt	2018
Sambar Deer	Nil		
Rusa Deer	Elissa Rosemond	197 6/8pt	2020
Shark BHFF	Lynda Fell	25 4/8pt	2016
Shark BF	Lynda Fell	23 5/8pt	2000
Stingray BHFF	Carolyn Rundle	9 7/8pt	1987
Stingray BF	Gleewyn Butson	14 3/8pt	1986



This has been a long process for our association, taking some three years in the making.

### Hunting reviews

Over the past six months, hunting reviews have been taking place in many States around the nation. The ABA has submitted many review papers to State Governments to put our case and recommendations to them which will hopefully be taken on board.

One major step forward has occurred in NSW with the introduction in law for bowfishing for carp in inland waters. It has been a very long process over many years to get to this stage. Bowhunters have had a huge win in having legislation introduced at a government level. We need to thank all those who were involved for this great result for giving their time so freely to put forward the criteria that was needed to have it put in place.

Once the final details are made known they will be available on the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website.

Victoria is also going through a review of its hunting regulations and we have been approached to help out with the Game Management Authority (GMA) in the creation of modules for them.

This will continue for some time and I will let everyone know how it is progressing.

The GMA has just released information on deer taken for last year. Fewer deer were harvested than before with numbers being 69,900 in 2020, a 60 per cent fall in the estimated 173,300 in 2019. Sambar deer was the most harvested with estimates at 50,635. Fallow was the next most taken at 11,372. The reductions would most likely be due to the COVID-19 restrictions which led to lengthy lockdowns in Victoria.



### T/C and upward and/or First Kill/Species

Bnch/Hunter	Club	Award	Game	FK/FKOS	Size
B Graham McComiskie	Twin River Bowhunters	Shark	TC		15 1/8
B Graham McComiskie	Twin River Bowhunters	Shark	TC		15 2/8
B Graham McComiskie	Twin River Bowhunters	Shark	TC		17 4/8
D Eric Creighton	Grange Bowmen	Pig	TC		26 6/8
D Barry Clarke	Lakeside Bowmen	Rusa	RC	FKOS	171 3/8
D Barry Clarke	Lakeside Bowmen	Pig	TC		26 4/8
D Barry Clarke	Lakeside Bowmen	Pig	TC		26 6/8
D David Pender	Lakeside Bowmen	Pig	TC		25 4/8
G Christopher Bourne	Macalister Trophy Bowhunter	Sambar	RC		169 7/8
H Chris Baty	Geelong Trophy Bowhunters	Goat	TC		102 2/8
H Rebecca Zammit	Geelong Trophy Bowhunters	Rabbit	GA	FKOS	0



ABOVE: Rebecca Zammit, rabbit.

BELOW:Graham McComiskie TC shark, 17 4/8pt.





## Bowhunting achievements to end September 2021

### Master Bowhunter

Dan Podubinski 380

### Trophy Bowhunter Award

David Luxford 290

Toby Gall 230

### Bowhunter Award

Tyler Atkinson 190

Daniel Ferguson 130

Toby Gall 130

John Teitzel 120

Benjamin Ireland 110

Elissa Rosemond 110

Peter Griffiths 100

### Bowhunter Royale

Barry Clarke

### Bowhunter Imperial

Christopher Bourne

### Bowhunter Supreme

Nil further since last report

### Senior Member of TBA

Nil further since last report

### Members Admitted to TBA Club

(membership granted after taking first Trophy Class or better animal)

Chris Baty

2020 Trophy Bowhunter Award  
220 points

Gold Ishi Patch

Dominic Neeson



# Trophy Bowhunters of Australia Club



## Introducing TBA MEMBER Chris Baty

### Where do you live?

North Geelong, Victoria.

### Personal history?

I'm 48 and live with my partner Rebecca who is also deep into archery and bowhunting.

### How long have you been hunting?

I'm relatively new to archery, having picked up a bow about 3 1/2 years ago and taking to bowhunting about a year later.

### How long have you been an ABA member?

Knowing that joining a club would make the bowhunting journey smoother I joined the ABA straight away, so 3 1/2 years.

### What got you into bowhunting?

I loved archery as a kid at school camps but as an adult have spent all my recreational time fishing. I have a few mates in the fishing scene who also bowhunt and I guess seeing their successes on social media time and again tipped me over the edge.

### Are you a member of an archery club; if so what one. Do you hold a position in the club?

I'm a member of the Geelong Trophy Bowhunters but do not hold a position within the club. It's full of great bowhunters and their mentoring has certainly helped speed up my success rate.

### How often do you get to go hunting?

Life's busy, so not as often as most. That said, I'm lucky that I have a property reasonably close to chase rabbits and foxes so I try and get there at least monthly. I like to plan a yearly bigger trip as well as a couple of bowfishing trips across to SA. With the recent changes to NSW bowfishing laws I hope a regular trip north is on the cards going forward.

### What equipment do you use (compound/recurve/longbow)?

I'm currently shooting an Xpedition X33 compound shooting Feral X Hellraiser arrows tipped with Kayuga Pilot Cut 2 broadheads. For my bowfishing I shoot a PSE Kingfisher recurve.

### Has this encouraged you to do more hunting?

Every taste of success drives me to try to do more.

### Do you have any hunting goals that you would like to achieve/bowhunter awards etc?

I love to travel and like my fishing I will use bowhunting for different species as the catalyst to see new parts of the country. I'd certainly like to start putting a bit of effort in on deer.

### Did you know much about TBA before this?

Only a little, to be honest.

The TBA Committee congratulates you, Chris.





## The hunt

“

I was finally handing my first set of goat horns over to our club scorer Mark. It seemed like they'd been coming for an eternity, possibly because I'd been wanting to get my first goat for quite some time. I wondered what they might score ... a quick field score had suggested 100-plus points but official scores don't lie.

Of course I'm getting ahead of myself here. Let's wind it back a bit. With my second trip to Cape York to attend one of the Kayuga Bowhunting courses locked in, I had decided to make a road trip of it. The idea was to fit in a bit of fishing during the travel up and back and a goat hunt too if I could swing it. Without properties to hunt and little idea about how to go about chasing goats, I reached out to Ben Salleras of Silent Pursuits with the hope that he might be able to pair me up with someone who could show me the ropes.

Although there was nothing on the books, he did have something in the pipeline and a plan was set to hunt a

property just outside the town of Mungallala in Central South Queensland on my way home from the Cape. This plan had its beginnings way back at the start of 2020 and as we all know COVID destroyed many plans that year, including that trip north ... well, at least for 12 months.

Fast forward to the end of June 2021. Victoria was in COVID lockdown but my plans had seen me cross into NSW just in time to legally travel out of the State without quarantine. I'd been on the road for several weeks. I'd done some State Forest hunting in Northern NSW, a successful bowhunting course with the team at Kayuga on Strathburn Station which saw me get a few pigs on the ground and now as a finale I was walking into the classic Mungallala Hotel to meet my guide Jeff Rankmore to get acquainted over a cold beer while we planned the coming hunt.

Jeff is an old hand at this bowhunting caper, and chasing goats in Cobar, NSW is at the core of his experiences. But he







said he was new to guiding and to this particular property. I realised straight away, though, that I was in good hands as he ran me through the plan for the next few days. He had done some scouting earlier that day and had a load of pics to show me of goats he'd encountered.

What I wanted from this experience was to learn as much as possible about how to hunt goats. I was not interested in just being led to an animal. For me, a successful trip was going to be one where I went away with the knowledge and confidence to hunt goats on my own after these few days. Jeff was on board with that straight away.

The following day we hit the property not long after dawn and headed to the first area the goats had been the previous day. Finding a nice mob, we worked the wind and got into a hidden glassing spot that also looked like it might be a possible ambush position. While we watched and waited, we discussed the likelihood of taking one from this

mob. While I'd be happy with any of the billies here I also wanted to see a little more of what the property had to offer before making a call. It was still early and we'd seen only the smallest portion of the block. We slowly backed out. We could always come back if we didn't see much else.

It wasn't long before we found another mob. This lot were up high on a rise and quite a distance off. We discussed the lay of the land and wind direction and made a plan to drive to a section of the property that should allow for a shorter approach on foot with good wind. The property was fairly open in this area so Jeff highlighted the importance of using the topography of the land to hide our approach. It meant we would be out of sight of the goats but also they would be out of our sight. It was possible that when we got to their area they may have fed out of it.

We began our approach over the first rise. As we started our way down into the depression beyond, Jeff pulled up





*Chris Baty (left) with guide Jeff Rankmore of Silent Pursuits with a stunning Mungallala goat.*

suddenly as the sight of two billies some distance to our left grabbed his attention. We had a situation now as to continue the stalk on the mob we were after would likely see our wind cut across this pair, spooking them ... and in turn possibly the whole mob. These two billies looked better than I could have hoped for anyway so we quickly decided to try a stalk on them first. They were quite a distance away and with open country between us we would have to wait until both had their heads down feeding before quickly covering some ground. Every time either one took a break from eating and his head lifted, we stopped our approach. Sometime that was only seconds, sometimes it was 10 minutes. For me, having never stalked this kind of distance on an animal or across this kind of open country, it seemed painstakingly slow.

As the distance closed, it started to feel like we really had a chance. Then we caught a bit of a break as both goats started to feed in our direction. We crouched down on the rocky ground and waited, silently hoping they would close the distance for us. Jeff was ranging them and whispering distances to me. He knew I wanted to only take a close shot of sub-30m and it looked like that chance was coming. Seventy turned into 60 and 60 turned into 50. One of the goats was feeding almost straight towards us, the other was off to our side. It was possible, though, that if the second picked up the pace he might cut our wind and blow our chance.

From here, my memory of what happened turned fuzzy so apologies Jeff if I get this wrong. At some point our target goat was under 30m and his mate off to the side started to

stare in our direction like he was onto us. Things needed to happen. Jeff told me to take the shot if I felt comfortable. I lifted up and before I knew it the arrow was on its way, hitting the billy with what looked and sounded like a solid broadside hit. I can't honestly bring to mind the moment the pin settled, the actual taking of the shot. One moment I was squatting on the ground, the next I could hear the impact of the arrow. There wasn't much of a reaction from the animal either—a bleat, a couple of steps and he sat down. Jeff prompted me to nock another arrow just in case and moments later, with the billy standing back up I was slipping a second arrow through him to finish things off.

Walking up on my that goat, my first with a bow, was a strange moment. I was glad and a little sad all at the same time. I was happy as much for Jeff as myself that I had made the chance count. Up close the goat was bigger than I had imagined; much wider across than I thought. Certainly a lot better animal than I had hoped for my first. While Jeff went back to get the car, I took a couple of quick pics and let Bec and a few of my closest mates know I'd had success.

The rest of the arvo was spent with Jeff showing me how to skin and break down the billy and cleaning up the skull for a euro mount. A quick field measure was done putting him at over 100 points, making him my first Trophy Class animal. Some weeks later when the skull made its way back to me in Victoria, our club scorer Mark Byrne would officially measure it out at 102 2/8pt. What a way to open the account!







*Look at the size of those kids! Now that's what you call a family-friendly sport.*

By Friday afternoon as the campers started rolling in, in the distance dark clouds had the same idea. Luckily for the campers, the wind blew the storm around the club and only a few raindrops and a bit of wind disturbed setting up camp.

Eighty-four archers nominated for the event. This was a little down from expected, with COVID numbers reappearing in the Brisbane area the

week before, which may have scared a few archers off. It was great to see archers from as far away as Townsville, Mackay and Moranbah. The archers who did travel were expecting a great weekend and Renegades did not disappoint them.

The weather on Saturday was just beautiful. The practice range was opened early with everyone making sure their gear was shooting straight.

After the first round only one person, Brad Stephan shooting in Freestyle Unlimited, had shot a perfect 400. Some fantastic scores were shot on day one. By Saturday afternoon it was time for a bit of fun with the novelty events.

The Abbey Archery shooting team was on hand and ran and sponsored a steel pig competition. The target was slowly moved back, meaning that each







*ABOVE: The steel pig took no prisoners.*



*RIGHT: Darren can attest to the fierceness of the competition, after his arrow fought the unyielding beast and lost.*



*ABOVE RIGHT: Benny and Rick from Pacific trying for a 70yd shot on the steel pig.*

*RIGHT: The winner of the steel pig competition, Benny (left), with members of the Abbey Archery team.*



shot got harder each time. At 60yd there were four archers left and by 65 yards we were down to two. Benny and Rick both from Pacific Bowmen took their last shot at 70yd with Benny being the eventual winner. He was very happy walking away with his arrow still intact and a gift voucher from Abbey Archery.

Then it was on to the Knife and Axe Throwing, which proved to be very popular. It was great to see people who had never tried it before giving it a go. A huge thanks to everyone who lent their knives and axes.

Jimmy Matthews won the men's axe and Kerri Haslem won the ladies' axe. In the knife throwing, Rabbit won the men's and Katie Mann won the ladies'.

The Renegade crew put on a great feed Saturday night then people

enjoyed the rest of the night around a campfire.

Sunday started early at 8.00am with a three-arrow and one-arrow round. The Men's Freestyle Unlimited division was one of the closest games ever. Mitchell King had a blinder on Sunday, shooting two perfect rounds of 400, making it a tie for first place with Brad Stephan. They both shot 1594 out of 1600, both only dropping six points—fantastic shooting.

Other standout scores were young Heath McKenzie in Cub Boys' Bowhunter Compound (no sights), who shot two Masters scores and Junior Girls Freestyle shooter Tahilia Harthill who shot a PB with a 388 in the one-arrow round

Field archery is such a great family sport. This weekend we had two three-year-old kids competing and having

fun shooting with their parents and grandparents. You can't do that with too many other sports!

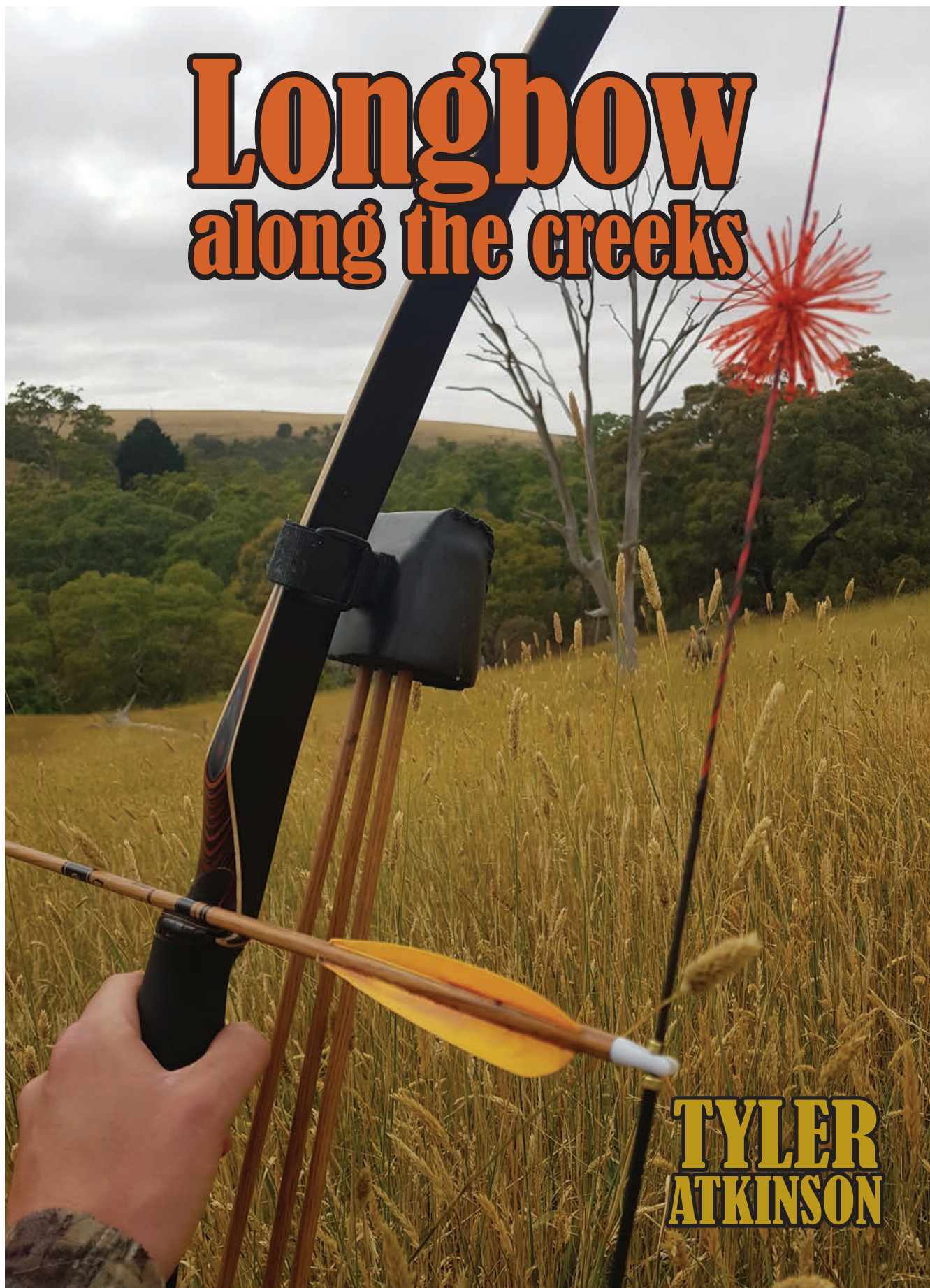
A huge thanks to everyone who made the effort to attend the Queensland ABA Titles, also to Team Renegade for setting up some great ranges and showing your hospitality.



*Heath takes aim for some brilliant scores over the weekend.*



# Longbow along the creeks



**TYLER  
ATKINSON**



**M**y transition away from the compound and to single string bows is still progressing and this year I set my goals on shooting our main fox whistling months with the longbow and not letting myself pick up the compound.

One of my first big creek runs came and I was all set. I had been practising a lot and was shooting plenty well enough to be confident on a fox at under 15m. I was up and going early as the day was forecast to warm right up and I wanted to spend as long as I could before the day got too hot to be pushing up the hills that border this creek.

The wind was a bit gusty and swirly for the first hour or so of daylight until the sun got up enough and started heating the ground a bit. Once this happened, the thermal pull set in and made a constant wind just the way I needed it.

A couple of stands later and I still hadn't stirred up a fox. It was very strange for this area as it's one of my more productive creeks. Rounding a bend in the creek and going up the bank, I spotted a young fox out in the sun enjoying a warm-up only 50m away. I ducked myself down and nestled into the gorse bushes behind me. A couple of squeaks with my mouth and they started moving everywhere! The one in the sun stayed put right where he was, and I had two others coming in hard and fast. Within seconds I had one just feet from my right-hand side in the long grass. Unable to turn and get a shot, I focussed on one that was coming in front on. At 12m he held up. I drew and let fly. The fox did some crazy jumps and growled as he took off down into the creek. I left him for five minutes as I wasn't quite sure what the shot had been like.

I went to pick up my arrow and it wasn't looking great—no blood at all— but there was a little blood on the ground. I followed where he had gone down to the creek and he was into the reeds and deadfall. I stuck around and poked in and eventually bumped him up but was unable to get a shot off. I couldn't find him again after that encounter.

Onwards I went and a couple of stands later I was calling over a small feeder gully that fed into the main creek. There was gorse and shale on the other side. I was amongst some fallen trees halfway down the steep side. Only a couple of minutes in, I had a fox burst out of the thick on the other side and down across the feeder creek.

He was coming straight up towards me then he veered to my left and all of a sudden jumped up onto the trunk of a large gum. About 1m off the ground, he kept walking along the gum heading straight to me until he was 5m out, then he bounced off the tree and back to the ground. This diverted his eyes for long enough for me to get to draw without him seeing me. He was at 5m front-on when I put an arrow through the top of his neck. The arrow exited between his back legs.

A jump and fly and he was rolling down the hill till he hit the bottom. He didn't move at all once he was there. I kept



whistling with a hope that another one would appear. Well they did. I had three more out across the feeder gully but they were very cautious. I think they must have been looking and seen all the movement. They never came in and stayed out at 50m for 10 minutes before getting bored and going on their way.

Down the hill I went and recovered the fox. I set him up for a photo and was soon off to try to track down another one. The rest of the morning didn't turn up any more foxes and it was warming right up so it was time to turn around and head back to the car. A few kilometres later I reached the car and the morning's adventures were all over.

Fast forward a few days. It was a nice afternoon and I had finished work, so it was a good opportunity to whistle at a little local spot where normally I can stir up a couple of foxes. On my third stand in, set up among some gorse and nestled in under a tree, I'd been whistling for five minutes or so when a fox slowly emerged 30m out extremely cautiously.





Sniffing the air and sniffing the ground as he slowly circled, he stayed out at that distance and nothing I was doing made him show any extra interest or look like coming any closer. Thirty seconds or so passed and he just slowly worked his way away and disappeared back into the gorse he had come from. He was never really spooked or scared, so I'm not sure what put him off. But he just wasn't quite keen enough to close the gap into shooting distance.

I was pretty confident about the next stand. I knew that there must be a den in the area close by, and that meant that there was a high chance of stirring up another fox to come in, whether through curiosity or hunger.

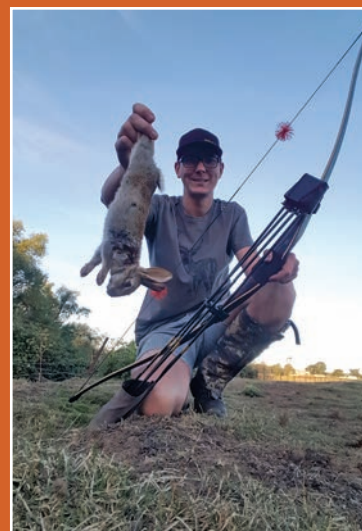
I had a very similar set-up. I tucked myself in under a lone tree but this time I was in amongst some low blackberries as well as a heavy gorse backdrop. There were two main routes that a fox would most likely come in on. The first was straight in front of me on a game trail coming out of a thicket. I would first see him at 20m entering the clearing in front of me. The second route was from the left through

some half-open berries and gorse from a small tree area. I'd be able to see him from a bit further out this way and a bit of cover would give me the opportunity to turn and set up if a shot presented itself.

I opted to set up straight ahead, expecting to get a quick shot if a fox came in that way. I whistled and whistled but I wasn't having any luck. Five minutes or so passed and that's generally about as long as I'll last on a stand before I get impatient. I decided to change it up and give a few mouth squeaks in case something was there but hanging back. Within seconds, a young fox burst out of the thicket on the game trail and was coming in at a fast trot. By the time I hit anchor he was 6m out and had hit the brakes looking for the subject of the noise. Front-on, he only offered me one shot so I let fly and the arrow nock disappeared between his eyes. He dropped flat instantly. After a couple of photos, I had about 10 minutes of daylight left so I headed back to the car and home to cook some dinner.

Another couple of days passed and another nice





*Tyler also hunted rabbits along the same creeks during that time. They may be little, but that only makes them harder to hit.*

afternoon presented itself with a wind change to a southerly in the early afternoon. One of my favourite in-close spots where I only get a chance of a couple of whistling stands was on the cards as I knew the wind would be blowing up that section of creekline.

I finished work and there was only an hour or so of daylight so I darted home quickly to grab my gear then made the short drive out to my spot. After parking, I walked a few hundred metres to get to my first stand—under a pine tree so I could call out over thick blackberry near a small creek that feeds into the main creek. I waited a few minutes for the birds and surroundings to calm down and go back to doing their thing after any disturbance I'd created walking in, then I started a little calling set. Cycling through a couple of different calls for five or so minutes, I had one fox come in to about 40m very slowly and sheepishly ... then he just moved on through. I'm not sure if he was even interested at all in the whistle or if he just happened to be moving through this spot while I was there. I set off and walked another couple of hundred metres along the creek to a spot I'd normally call from. But the grass was 2ft high and it would be impossible to see a fox coming in, let alone get a shot. I moved up and around a bit further, thinking that if I got a bit higher I might be able to see into more country and the grass might be a little lower.

About 50m further along, I found a half-decent spot, although it was by no means ideal. I would be able to see one coming until he reached the little knoll I was on. At that stage he would be 30m away, then he would disappear until he was 15m out. There were a couple of small shooting lanes through the long grass. I started to call and within 30 seconds I spotted a head out to my left bouncing in over the

grass. Every jump I'd see his head appear and then straight away disappear under the grass again.

As quick as lightning, he was in under the 30m mark and coming up to the knoll I was on. Bow up at the ready, I was waiting for him to come up into the left-hand shooting lane but as soon as he was there he was gone again and headed for the next. As I swung around to the right, he entered the next gap and must have caught sight of my movement. This worked out perfectly, as he stopped quartering-on at 16m. I hit anchor, aimed, and let the arrow loose. The sound of a solid hit returned.

He took off at a full run and my mind went to the worst case scenario as he headed straight between two large gorse bushes. He was going to punch in and never be seen again! I took off around to the other side of the bushes hoping to catch movement or noise so I would get an idea of whereabouts in them he died.

But I saw and heard nothing at all. Frustration set in. Then, for some reason, I turned to glance behind me. About 30m out, there was something strange about the way the long grass was lying. Everything was lying over to the right from the wind except one small patch which was lying to the left. Surely it couldn't be? But upon inspection there he was, lying out in the open ... so unusual as I'd say that 99 per cent of the time foxes hunker down in the thick stuff before breaking out the other side. But the big mature dog fox was down. Measuring in at 10 4/16pt, he was quite the trophy with the old longbow.

During those couple of weeks, I also did some rabbit hunting along those same creeks. They may be only little, but those ones are harder to hit!





**Nick Lintern**

## **TRADITIONAL TRAILS**

*Christmas is nearly upon us and with a bit of luck, all of the craziness of the restrictions will be behind us so we can get together with our families and friends. For those of us who haven't been able to get out and hunt or get to our clubs to shoot, I hope by the time you are reading this you are now back out there again. Here at Norseman we are still full tilt with our custom bows and traditional archery accessories.*

*This column is about the things most likely to be responsible for sabotaging your attempts to shoot accurately and really enjoy your archery. There are many gremlins that can mess you up when shooting ... and all of them are easy fixes.*

*If you've been struggling to get that score moving or not quite getting those good hits you're looking for, read on; one or more of these factors may be affecting you. Some you will have heard ad nauseum and some may be new to you.*

### *The main things that sabotage our accuracy*

The first thing I want to look at is the same old concept that we hear time and time again, but it is critically true.

#### *Being overbowed*

We've all heard this over and over again, "Don't overbow yourself". What is being overbowed? Very simply, it is shooting a bow that is too heavy for you. In some instances it's very obvious—you just can't pull the bow. That's kind of a no-brainer, and it's unlikely that you'd make that big of a blunder in your bow weight selection. The more sinister form of overbowing is the weight that is totally fine for 20

or so shots, but then you just can't maintain proper form beyond that.

The main problem is that you won't necessarily recognise that until you start missing targets and start feeling very tired. This leads to poor form that can be very hard to unlearn and of course, this increases the potential for injuries. The psychological aspect of this is that over time your confidence takes a knock, and your enjoyment takes a swan dive as well. So, what can we do to select a bow weight that is right for us? Partly the answer here lies in the type of archery you are engaged in. If you're a field shooter or hunter, you want to be able to shoot your bow





*A big group of archers having fun. Remember, this is fun, not stressful!*

for at least 80 arrows with full control. I would define field shooting as a round like an ABA 20-target course; for a target archer that number is more like 150 arrows. The difference lies simply in the fact that a round of target archery involves a lot more arrows than a field round. If you are involved in an IFAA type of field shooting the number again is more like the target number. If you are a novice archer, it's best to borrow a bow and see how the poundage feels for you or get advice from a good bowyer or experienced archer. If I have a visit from a client

who wants a bow, I put multiple different weight bows in their hands to see where they are at, strength wise, and then always favour a tad less weight. So as an example, my method for checking draw weight is if a person can draw 50# very comfortably with their natural side—say right-handed—I'll then get them to draw the bow with their left hand and hold the draw for a 10 count. If this is done without getting the shakes et cetera I'd then recommend they go for 45# to 48#. There are exceptions to this. If I have a fit, healthy young adult to fit a bow

to who has no archery experience, I'll favour a slightly heavier bow for them – maybe 50# to 55# as I know they are going to pack on strength and power quickly.

The question often comes up as to how can an archer increase their ability to draw heavier bows. That's a great question and it's easy to answer. I have a fairly extensive background in strength sports and the principles of gaining strength don't really alter in any field. Let's say you can comfortably shoot 50# but are looking for a heavier bow to hunt with or to make those

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longer shots a bit easier on the club round. The method is this: Don't aim for more than about a 5# or 10# hike initially. If you try to go for too much extra weight in one jump you'll destroy your form and potentially get hurt. The plan is to overload your muscles, and that stimulation will cause your body to have to adapt to the new stress. Then you get bigger and stronger as your muscles adapt. How you overload them is important. It's no good getting injured. So get your hands on a 60# bow, which if you're shooting 50# is a 20 per cent jump—certainly don't go more—then go to your practice butt and shoot as many arrows as you can *without* losing form. That might be 10 arrows or even less. It doesn't matter. Remember how many you got and then go on shooting with your old 50#er. No less than three days later, grab the big 60# again, and see how many you can get now. God willing, it'll be a few more. Repeat this and after a month you'll be shooting 40-plus arrows from the bigger bow as your muscles adapt and grow stronger. The three days' rest I mentioned are important. When you work a muscle beyond its normal limits, it's actually breaking the muscle fibres down. This stimulation causes the body to respond and rebuild the muscle, bigger and stronger than it was. This process takes time to achieve. So if you jump the gun and shoot the heavier bow inside three days you'll be breaking the fibres down again before they have recovered. Get good sleep and eat a good diet and you'll be stronger in no time.

On to the next factor that can scuttle our accuracy.

## *Being underbowed*

This is an interesting follow-on from the first one. While being underbowed won't undermine your accuracy anything like being overbowed, it is still an area we can fix. The principle here is this: If in your chosen archery discipline you can shoot a 45# bow all day long really easily, why would you shoot a

35# bow? There are two reasons to look at here. Firstly, a heavier bow shoots flatter and will make accuracy on those longer shots easier to achieve, and secondly, with regards hunting, the heavier bow will push a heavier arrow and will overall give a greater level of penetration. Overall though in this article, it's accuracy we're looking at. The other factor with the heavier bow is that with more weight pulling on your drawing fingers, a cleaner release is easier to achieve. Many folk may think that underbowing is not a major problem but it actually is. The correct weight for you is a bow that can be shot with total control, all day. So again, if you can easily shoot 45# all day with good form, why shoot 35#? The heavier bow will provide greater accuracy, *as long as you can handle it*. Next, we will look at the equipment more specifically.

## *Bow and arrow tuning*

I have to say here that it continues to amaze me the number of mismatches that occur with archers' equipment. It nearly always occurs when someone is flying blind on their set-up, for instance a newcomer or—what I often see—a sports store has just sold someone some gear and sent them on their way. I can't express enough how critical it is to be shooting the right spined arrow, at the right length, right weight and appropriately fletched from a well tillered and balanced bow. I've actually seen a guy trying to bare-shaft tune a 55# bow with 80# shafts! What a mess! I asked him what he was doing and he told me he couldn't get good bare shaft flight so was trying heavier and heavier spined shafts as that was what he felt the testing was showing him. I grabbed a few 55# spined arrows off a mate nearby and asked for a shot of his bow. I placed three arrows in a coffee-cup-sized circle and then mentioned he wasn't analysing—he was over-analysing! Unless you have a

350 grain point on your arrow, an 80 spined shaft will never fly from a 55# bow! Crazy stuff. One of my biggest frustrations is seeing an archer trying to shoot a really poorly made bow with even worse arrows and just struggling. There's no need for it. Get a good, reputable bowyer to make you a perfectly balanced bow, made to do what you want it to do. Then get the right spine of arrow to suit your draw weight, length and the bow's dynamic ability and away you go. It really isn't rocket science. It should be that every time you string your bow, you are confident, happy and ready to roll. You *must* be able to trust your set-up. Then comes confidence ... and confidence precedes great accuracy.

The final caveat on equipment here is that word I often use when describing bows ... balance. Too many bows are made massively out of design balance. By that I mean the maker has put too many eggs in one basket. They may have built a bow that focusses only on raw speed and thus sacrifices stability and durability. A well balanced bow is one that has equal measures of speed or cast, stability/forgiveness, durability and reliability. Plus, the design must suit your purpose. Trust me when I say that the best accuracy is achieved by the best design balanced bows.

Now onto the next factor. I have left this till last as this one is by far the biggest, and in some ways combines all of the above factors.

## *Psychology: Overthinking*

This is the singular biggest issue that compromises archers' accuracy. Archery is 90 per cent mental, 10 per cent physical. There are so many aspects to look at here. The principal reason we mess up our shooting is stress, over-analysing and the resulting tension. One such area is target panic. Very simply, an archer stresses so much about outcome of their shot that they go into mental Armageddon.





*Relax, concentrate, pick a spot and put an arrow on that spot. Shooting a bow should be uncomplicated. Relax and do it.*

They just can't complete their shot. I once spent an afternoon with a lady who was an outstanding target archer with multiple medals under her belt. Target panic had crept up and utterly destroyed her. She'd given up shooting because it had become a nightmarish horror show every time she picked up a bow. So much pressure and expectation had broken her down. I asked if she wanted to go 'roving' at the club one afternoon. Roving is an old English way of training archers that is just basically roaming the bush and shooting at random targets. The person who gets nearest to the target picks the next one. Targets are normally leaves or bushes, rabbit burrows or anything else that stands out as you wander along. Its great fun and very eye sharpening. At first, she was very stressed at the thought of shooting but when I pointed out what we were doing, just shooting—no scoring, no stress—she agreed to come along. After a few hours of shooting hundreds of arrows, she was laughing, happy and shooting really

well with impeccable form. When we got back to the camp area I pointed out to her that that's what archery was about. And ultimately this was a mental thing caused by overthinking and putting pressure on herself. Shooting a bow can be anything you want it to be—hard-core competition, hunting or just a passing great thing to do. Archery should be very relaxing, and it is nearly impossible to do well in a tense state. Again, 90 per cent mental. The English term for a release is 'loose'. That's a great example of the deep understanding of what is needed to shoot well. You need to be 'loose'. This is purely a mental state. The biggest killer of your accuracy is overthinking and being tense as a result. If you fluff a shot, let it go. If you stress out about it, you'll miss the next three shots. Stop over-analysing everything.

Very often people start 'equipment blaming'. I see folk stressing out badly about their equipment. They have a great bow, well matched arrows and

they are shooting really well. Then they have a human moment, and it gets in their heads to start bare shaft tuning and worrying about forward-of-centre on their arrows and a myriad of other things. They wonder if a different tab or glove might take them to the next level. It's so simple—if your nock follows the point of your arrow into the target there's nothing more to think about. The best thing to remember is that the best shooting comes from the confidence that your equipment is spot on, being happy and relaxed and let that stress-free, arcane innocence that we all have when we're very young to shine through. True mastery of the bow comes from knowing yourself and not allowing your own negative thoughts and the pressure of others to get into your head. Relax, relax, relax. I'll conclude by saying that the mental aspect of shooting is the largest part of shooting a bow well by far. Always remember, it's fun!

I hope you all have a great Christmas and new year period and until next time, keep traditional.



Going  
**WALKABOUT**  
*in far north Queensland*

**DAVE PENDER**





This trip was 18 months in the making. Albert Agale had guided Barry and me on a buffalo hunt a few years previously. Now he was starting a new business out of Cooktown in far north Queensland hunting scrub bulls, pigs, and fishing for barramundi. The property was on Aboriginal land and Ray, one of the traditional owners, was guiding with Albert. One of the highlights of the trip was going to be a tour of the Aboriginal rock art that was on the property.

We were lucky enough to be the first ones to hunt on this property with Walkabout Hunt'n and Fish'n Safaris. The trip was delayed as facilities had to be built and the camp made ready for hunters. Two big cyclones made it impossible to gain access to the land to commence work, so the trip was put back to the end of July/early August. The time seemed to drag but at last we were packed and on our way.

After a 12-hour drive, our first stop was Mackay. We were up early the

next morning to make Cooktown. We had to meet Albert and Ray at the Top Pub at noon on Friday, so we played tourist to fill in the morning. Once we'd met the boys, we had a quick beer and then were on our way. Ray had to pick up a few things so would meet up later that day.

An hour and a half out of Cooktown, we arrived at the property gate then had another hour to go before pulling in to camp. It wasn't a bad set-up, with proper flushing toilets and a gas hot water system for showers (towels supplied). Another plus was that there were plenty of fridges for food and beer. We spent some time settling in. When Ray arrived, he proceeded to have the Welcome to Country ceremony then we all sat back had a few beers and organised our gear ready for the following day's hunt.

On the first morning, Albert took me down along the river to a small swamp approximately 200yd from the river. As we walked around the swamp, we could see lilies on the

bank with water running off them. That indicated that a good pig had recently left. Following the cattle pad, we could see fresh tracks of quite a large pig but unfortunately we never caught up to him. We passed up a few scrub cattle feeding along the river as there was nothing of any size. We headed back to camp for lunch then went to the river for some fishing, with a few hits but no hook-up.

Ray and Barry had arrived back at camp, letting us know Barry had taken a young boar. They had hunted some swamps just down from the river crossing. The boar had just left the swamp and was heading back to the river. The first arrow was a bit high, so they had to follow him up for 100yd. The boar was getting a bit angry, so Barry quickly finished him with another shot. We both hunted that afternoon without success.

The next day we swapped guides, so Ray and I headed off. We had only gone about 2km when a massive boar crossed the track ahead of us. As soon as he heard the car engine, he was off

*FACING PAGE: Guides and hunters at an Aboriginal art site.  
(from left), Barry, Albert, Dave and Ray.*

*The camp.*







*That's what it's all about— Dave's third boar was a good 'un.*



*Barry gets one on the ground to start off the far north Queensland hunting trip.*



*When they take off, pigs can be hard to find and some serious tracking skills can be needed.*





*Another beauty for Barry.*

at a million miles an hour. We made our way out to a swamp at the back of the property, only to have a large tree block our way, so we had a very long walk to reach the swamp. The swamp had lots of pig signs, with plenty of rooting up and lots of lilies for the pigs to munch on. We had nearly finished circumnavigating the swamp with no sighting when a big boar walked out. I had an arrow on my string in seconds and started to follow him when to my surprise he turned and started to walk back towards me. I knelt behind a tree, and he walked past me not 20yd away. I pulled back and swung around only to be blinded by the morning sun. All I could see was a blurry sight ring, but it was only 20y, so I took the shot, only for the arrow to hit high. We followed him up but found no

blood trail or blood on the arrow.

Off we went to other swamps with no result. On the way back to camp we spotted a boar feeding on lilies. The water was only knee deep, so I was able to get within 16yd. With the wind in my face, all I had to do was step out from behind a tree, but his head came out of the water, and he was off and running flat out. He couldn't have seen me, so I am guessing the wind blew my scent in his direction. It amazes me how quick they can smell you. We saw a further six pigs and suckers on our trip back to camp. Barry saw a few pigs but nothing he wanted to shoot.

I was out with Ray again the next day and we headed off to Flying Fox Swamp. We saw about 12 pigs feeding but most were sows. One rather large

pig was feeding out in the reeds, so I stalked in to 34yd and took the shot. It was perfect—behind the shoulder—and the pig was down within 60yd. It turned out to be a very big sow, around 70kg! We also saw a good scrub bull and I had a stalk in to 25yd but couldn't get a clear shot. Then I stepped on a stick, and of course he was onto me straight away ... thank goodness he took off in the other direction.

In the meantime, Barry and Albert stalked in on a good ginger bull on one of the swamps. Barry put in a good shot in behind the shoulder. The bull staggered and wobbled over to some trees, so they waited for 30 minutes to see what happened. Another bull that appeared a little aggro came in to see what was up, then both bulls





*A pretty good day for Dave, taking two boars within minutes of each other.*

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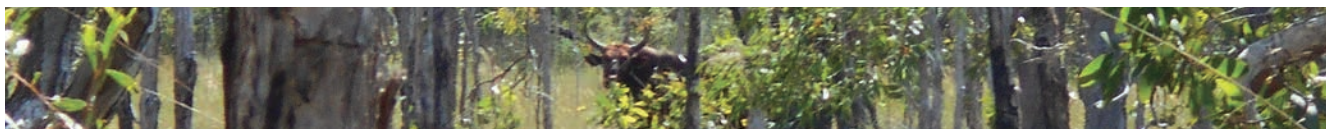
turned and walked off. It was decided they would come back later with gun back-up. They returned to the spot several times but couldn't find the bull.

As they made their way back to the car, they encountered a young boar on the way. Barry put in a good shot but the pig took off. Barry said later that if it hadn't been for Albert's tracking skills, they wouldn't have found him. The boar later measured 22 6/8pt.

On the fourth day of hunting, Ray and I went to the other end of the creek where Barry had shot his boar on the first day. We had been walking for a couple of hours with plenty of

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sign but no pigs. The creek we were following was running out of water so Ray checked his map and said there was another arm of the creek about 300yd over to our left and we should check it out. If there was nothing there, we would head back to camp for lunch. When we got there, we found plenty of water. We had only walked 100yd when Ray heard a pig squeal and looked up the creek to see a couple of pigs in the grass heading in our direction.

Kneeling, I took cover beside the bank of the creek, then more pigs came down the other side of the creek and turned in to have a drink. Right in front of me, two good boars came in. One, a saddleback boar, looked to be about 70kg and I estimated the other at 60kg. I aimed and took the saddleback with a perfect shot through the heart at 16yd. He ran off a short distance. The second pig walked over to the same spot, and I took him also through the heart. Both only went 20yd. The blood trail was amazing—blind Freddy could have followed it!

We took the jaws and headed back

to camp. The saddleback measured 25 4/8pt and the other went 22pt.

Barry and Albert had had a good morning also. They'd been sitting down having a break when a good boar walked past at 20yd. Barry had him on the deck in no time. The boar later measured 26 4/8pt.

That afternoon we went up to the top waterhole to bring the boat down to camp. Barry didn't want to fish so it was up to me. I caught two barramundi, the largest of which was 60cm. The boat had to be pulled over some shallow areas, so it was my job to keep an eye out for crocodiles while Barry and Albert were in the water pulling the boat over logs. No sense in us all getting wet, right? Anyway, they needed someone who'd be able to let them know back at camp if a croc took them.

On Day 5, Albert and I headed out to look for scrub bulls while Barry and Ray went back to Browns Creek. We had only been travelling about 15 minutes when Albert asked, "Would that one be big enough?" Not 30yd off the side of the track stood a ton of black Brahman-cross watching us

as we drove past. Experience told me that he might run as soon as he saw a car. Some did. Others would stand their ground—and this one was one of them. Albert told me these cattle had not been touched for over 15 years, so they were wild.

I got out of the car and sneaked towards him, looking for a clear shot. At 20yd I took the shot, taking out the top of the heart. He staggered another 30yd so a second quartering-away shot was taken, hitting both lungs and taking him down.

We headed back to camp to pick up Kate and Jackson to help set the bull up in position for photos. We butchered the bull, taking backstraps and rumps for home and the remainder of the meat was given to the traditional owners. The skull was removed, and Kate set about cleaning it and boiling it out. I was very grateful for that!

Barry and Ray returned to camp just after lunch. Barry had taken another Trophy Class boar 26 6/8pt.

The pig had been coming out from the swamp and Barry was able to take a 25yd shot to bring the pig down

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*Dave's scrub bull.*



*Harvesting the meat from the scrub bull. Some was taken home and the remainder was given to the traditional owners.*

in just 5yd. Ray could not believe how quick an arrow could put a pig down. So, with the morning being a successful hunt we decided not to venture out that afternoon.

The next day we went to a swamp that we named Sows' Heaven. As we made our way around the swamp we came upon mob after mob of pigs, but they were all sows. This swamp was huge, taking us three hours to circumnavigate it. Arriving back at the car after our long walk, Albert realised he had left his phone back where we all had taken a rest. He was not a very happy camper.

Back at camp for lunch Ray took Barry and Jackson fishing down the river. Barry caught three barramundi and was smashed up by a least a

metre-long barra.

Albert and I went to a little swamp not far from camp, sitting there until sundown. Four dingoes came in and I had a shot but no luck. No pigs turned up, so we went back to camp.

The following day was our last day and we headed off to see the Aboriginal cave paintings which I found very educational and moving. That night, Albert and Ray gifted a didgeridoo to both Barry and me, which was wonderful to receive. The following morning, we departed camp and headed to Cairns to meet up with another mate, Mick, to hunt rusa deer ... but that's another story.

It had been a great hunting trip. A big thank you to Albert, Kate, Ray and Jackson.





# Women in ARCHERY

## Bec Darby

Bec Darby, 39

*Number of years involved in archery?*

Thirty-three years.

*Local Club?*

Saxon Archery Club, Hervey Bay Archers.

*What type of archery do you do?*

IFAA, ABA, FITA, 3D

*Do you hunt?*

Yes, but not enough.

*Favourite archery memory?*

Competing at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi 2010.

*What appeals to you about archery?*

Archery is such an addictive sport; It encourages you to be the best you can be. It has taken me all over the world and I have achieved things I never thought I would. The friendships made with people all over the world are unbelievable and they really are my second family.

*Are any family members involved in archery?*

My Dad Kelly got me started in archery when I was 6. My Mum Lyn and brother Greg then took up the sport as well. Greg has just taken up shooting again and also has his two oldest boys Bailey and Kyel starting to shoot now as well. My partner Mouse also shoots and we have lots of archery holidays.

*First bow:* FSE Scamp. I remember it being nearly as big as me and so heavy.

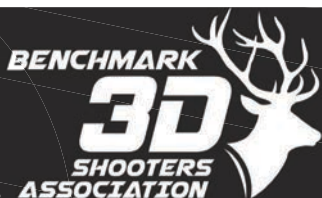
*Current bows:* For IFAA and FITA I am shooting an Elite Energy 35 @ 50#. SURE-LOC sight, Specialty scope, Spigarelli drop-away rest, Bee Stinger stabilisers, Carter Fits Me Too release aid and Carbon Express Nano 680 arrows. For ABA I shoot the Elite set-up but I have been dabbling in shooting Bowhunter Recurve with Sebastien Flute riser, WNS limbs @ 24#, Cavalier rest and Easton Inspire arrows. To hunt, I'm shooting a PSE DNA @ 52#. Pin sight, Bow quiver, 400 spine arrows and a Scott wrist release.

*Great achievements inside or outside of archery?*

Competing in the Commonwealth Games and finishing 9th in the Individual event and 4th in the Teams event for FITA. Placing 2nd in Scotland 2002 for World IFAA, 3rd in 2006 at Wide Bay Archers for the World IFAA, winning the Gold in 2016 at Wagga Wagga in the World IFAA Titles

*Sponsors:* I am currently Sponsored by Plus Arrows, TOG, Elite Bows, Scott Release Aids, Winners Choice bow strings, Slick Trick Broadheads.

*Last word:* Dream, believe and never give up!



Benchmark 3D Shooters Association is keen to help promote women in our sport—from the good sport who helps unstintingly at the club through to the top-level archer. If you know someone you think should be featured, please contact us.

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*Jeanette Dowd explains why ...*

# ‘A’ is for Archery

The word archery has a different meaning for everyone. It’s something I have done for over 35 years with my family, so when I hear the word ‘archery’ it brings back great memories of being on the ABA range or out hunting with my family when they were very little. More recent memories, but just as treasured, are from being on the range with my grandkids. Others might remember the first bow they made as a kid or watching Candice Everdeen saving the day in *The Hunger Games* ... or it might have been Rambo with his fictitious exploding arrowheads.

Archery itself is so diverse it comes as no surprise that archers come from all sorts of different backgrounds. There is certainly no ‘one size fits all’ at play here! Each individual’s needs are unique and the amazing advantage of the bow and arrow is that you can pick the type of archery that best suits you. You might choose target archery, field

archery or hunting. And in the end, every archer has at least one thing in common with every other archer in the world—the love of seeing the arrow hit the spot!

Early remains of bow and arrow usage were found in Europe, with fragments discovered in Germany dating back to 17,500 to 18,000 years ago. Archery was an important part of staying alive as the bow was used to hunt and in warfare. Could you imagine going back centuries where if you could not master your archery equipment you plainly didn’t eat and didn’t survive? In today’s society it is used more for recreational purposes as a sport or hobby, yet there are still large numbers of people who hunt and supply food for their family’s table. From field to table with no preservatives does make it taste a lot better.

In Australia there are a few archery associations; ABA (Australian Bowhunters Association), Archery

*Even the very young love the magic of bow, arrow and target.*

*People from all walks of life gather to enjoy archery together.*





Australia and 3DAAA to name a few. Each association has different rules to shoot each bow style and their archery games differ. In 2010 the associations formed the Archery Alliance of Australia with the aim of advancing matters of common interest while respecting each other's activities, fields of interest and memberships.

If you love shooting and live close to a few different clubs, you could shoot an archery competition every weekend. It is amazing just how many archery clubs there are around Australia, especially close to our major cities.

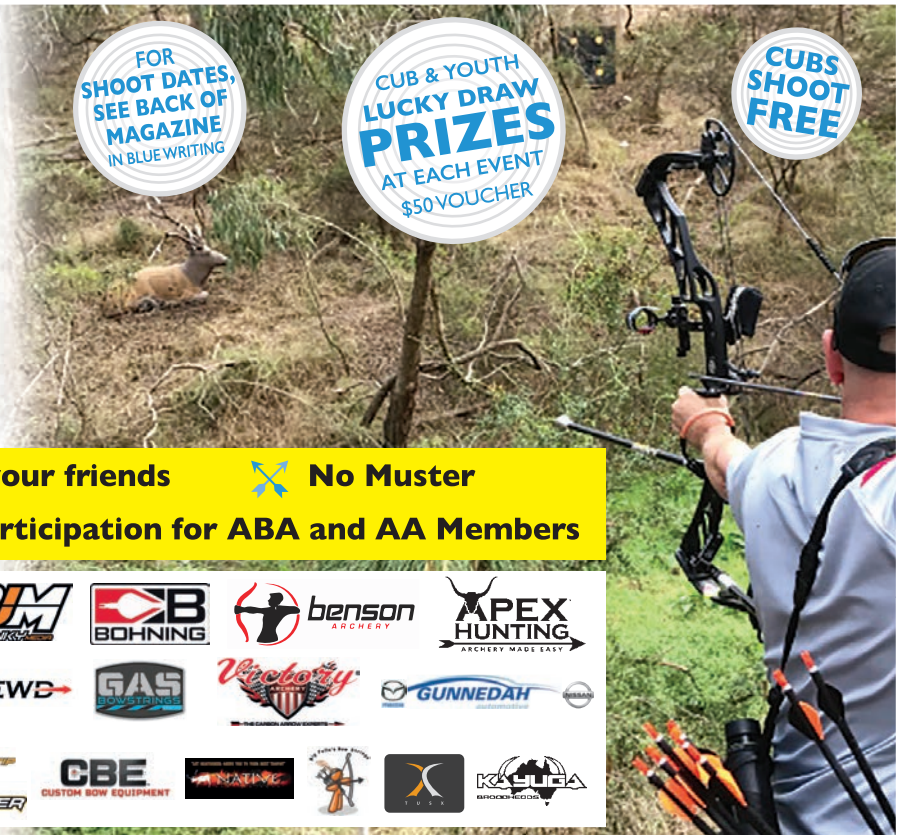
There are many different kinds of bow shapes. However, most fall into four categories—recurves, longbows, compounds and crossbows. (Crossbows are in a class of their own and we don't usually think of them when talking about bows and arrows.) If you went back 30 or 40 years ago, most people at clubs shot barebow, which means shooting with your



*Although shooting a bow is in itself a solo pursuit, belonging to a club makes it a very social activity.*



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fingers and without sights on the bow. Back in the day, all compounds were long axle-to-axle. With the short-axle compounds on the market today it is a must to shoot with a release aid or you will get finger pinch when pulling back the bow due to the angle of the string at full draw.

Even if we start by talking about recurves, there are so many ways to shoot them. You could purchase a target recurve with a plunger button and rest, shoot Barebow division or you could go all out and put on a sight, front and back stabilisers and a clicker which would put you into the Freestyle Recurve division. A take-down target recurve allows you to start with a lighter draw weight and simply buy new limbs instead of purchasing a whole bow as you want to increase the poundage. A take-down recurve is much easier to store and transport as the bow will pack up into a small case or box. There are wood recurves that

you can shoot from the shelf without a rest and wood arrows with feathers on them which would put you in the Traditional division.

Longbows are the oldest and simplest of bows which are shot from the shelf. There are a number of rules surrounding longbows as you can have modern, traditional, historical, and even self-bows. Most are shot with feather fletches but over the past few years some manufacturers have invented plastic vanes to mimic the performance of a feather.

Traditionally, bows were made from a single piece of wood and shaped to the correct form. Traditional laminated bows consist of thin strips of wood which comprise the core of the bow, and the combination of wood they choose gives the bow its beauty.

Recently at a competition I had the pleasure of observing a group of trad shooters in a group behind us on the range. The camaraderie and the cheers

as each archer stepped up to shoot was fantastic to watch. We sighted compound shooters could not believe how accurate they were. Recurves and longbows do require more practice to shoot accurately as there is no draw stop and you are holding the full weight at full draw.

Compounds have changed over the years in length, axle-to-axle and also in the actual weight of the bows themselves. The significant difference between a compound to the recurve and longbow is when you pull the string back and get over the lump of the cam you then have let off, which means on some compounds you can pull a 60lb bow back and the holding weight is only around 16lb, unlike a recurve or longbow where at full draw you are holding the full weight.

A compound bow can still be shot with your fingers as long as the bow is not too short, but nowadays most are shot using a release aid. A release aid



*Shooting from the shelf to using a rest.*



*Bow lengths can be different axle to axle*



is a mechanical device that helps to fire arrows more precisely by using a trigger to release the bowstring rather than the archer's fingers. There are so many different styles of release aids on the market from wrist, back tension, thumb trigger and resistance.

Compounds can be shot barebow (no sights) or you can now shoot with 1, 3, 4, 5 or even 7 pins as your sight depending on where you are shooting and what division you shoot in.

Out of the four categories of bows, the crossbow is the only one here in Australia that you need a license for in most States. A crossbow has a stock that is similar to a firearm, and it shoots bolts which are shorter than your average arrow.

Working in an archery store for a living, I see that television, movies and social media are a big driving force in getting people into the great sport of archery. Each time a blockbuster movie comes out which has the hero or villain shooting a bow in it, it sparks interest in people to give the sport a try.

Despite archery's prevalence in history, especially Greek history, archery was not included in the first Olympics. Instead the sport entered the Olympic competition in Paris, France in 1900. The basic equipment used way back then was way different to the bows used at the recent Olympics in Tokyo.

Recurves are the only bow that can be used in the Olympics. They also use

a mechanical sight and stabilisers.

How the technology in the equipment has changed over the last 20 to 30 years! I often wonder what's in store for the next generation of archers!

All I know for sure is that in the future the equipment may change but there will still be people taking up the sport of archery from all walks of life, loving the feeling of pulling the string back and their arrow hitting the spot.

I think archery will always have a place in our lives as a sport or hobby. Sharing the experience with family and friends means it's the best of both worlds. You shoot the bow solo, but there's a great deal of fun to be had enjoying it in a group.

# Vale:

## Merv Hall

It is with great sadness that we advise the ABA community of the passing of Merv Hall.

Merv and his wife Joy and their four children joined Bendigo Bowhunters in 1985. Our third clubhouse was under construction when he joined the club as the club had outgrown its previous ones. He was a tireless worker during his years at the club, attending many working bees needed to construct the clubhouse and to create two new courses.

Merv loved hunting and encouraged others to join him on his trips. He and the family attended many shoots all round Victoria and interstate.

Merv served the club as president and Bowhunter Education Officer. He retained his ABA membership over 36 years till the time of his passing. Over the last few years he battled serious illness but his love of archery never wavered. Merv will be remembered as a genuine lover of archery and hunting. He will be missed by many of his bowhunting friends.

Rest in peace, Merv.

**Greg McIntosh**



*ABOVE: A newspaper clipping from Merv's younger archery days. BELOW: A jolly moment.*





A person wearing camouflage clothing and a hat stands in a muddy, shallow pond or clearing within a dense forest. The trees have thin trunks and green foliage, and the ground is covered in grass and dirt. The scene is captured in a natural, slightly overcast light.

# A COVID Masters

*For those of us who hunt, what exactly is it that drives us? This is a simple question, but it can have a multitude of complex answers.*

*Having pondered this at various times, I have realised that perhaps the reason for hunting is like one of those party parcels where the outside wrapping is taken away only to discover there is another layer beneath, and another, and another ...*

*So this is my answer. As long as you are following your dreams and ambitions, experiencing adventures of a lifetime, enjoying camaraderie and friendships with like-minded people and embracing the peace and serenity of carrying a bow, then bowhunting provides the ultimate escape from what can be, at times, a challenging, tedious and frustrating life.*

**by DAVID LUXFORD**

**T**he past 18 months have been very challenging and frustrating for all of us. Many of us who enjoy travel, hunting and the great outdoors have had to cancel hunts and adjust and adapt to whatever hunting opportunities have prevailed over this time. As a southerner, adapting to State lockdowns and various local

restrictions has become a standard part of life and as for interstate travel, well, who knows, maybe one day.

I have a relatively simple philosophy and clear personal bowhunting goals. Firstly, I love every aspect the sport has to offer: the challenge, both physical and mental; the solitude and solace of the mountains; the personal

interaction with a variety of wild game; my bowhunting family and the elation of success. In respect to what drives my passion, the annual challenge to achieve Master Bowhunter status as recognised by ABA is a contributing factor.

It is nothing more than my personal challenge and every year for as long as



I can remember I have hunted hard from the first day of January to the end of April, hunting a variety of species and generally travelling extensively. However, 2020 threw a spanner in the works: my red deer hunt was cancelled, hog deer season lasted a day and we all were introduced to a world of restrictions and limited hunting opportunities.

As 2021 approached I planned a strategy that hopefully would make up for lost opportunities in 2020 and included a couple of major goals; Master Bowhunter and the taking of a Record Class red deer stag that would almost complete my aim of taking all measurable species at Record Class. The plan was set, hunts booked across the continent, arrows ready and great times anticipated. For the first few months all was good and then it went to COVID custard. A buffalo hunt, a chital hunt as well as a shark and ray

extravaganza were all cancelled.

Every year my hunting follows a set routine. I start whistling foxes early in January and generally only hunt in the afternoons with a predictable easterly breeze. The majority of my whistling stands are set for the scenario of sun at my back and breeze in my face. Combine that with blackberry bushes, manuka glades, bracken ferns and a few rabbits, then the recipe for a kill has all ingredients required.

I hunt the exact same locations every year—some spots I have visited annually for over 20 years with consistent success. One particular gully I have hunted rabbits and foxes for over 50 years!

In some instances I hunt on the exact same date and whistle from the same tree or shrub and can anticipate when the fox is most vulnerable, where he will run from, how close the shot will be and how many of my red-



*The first fox taken for the year.*



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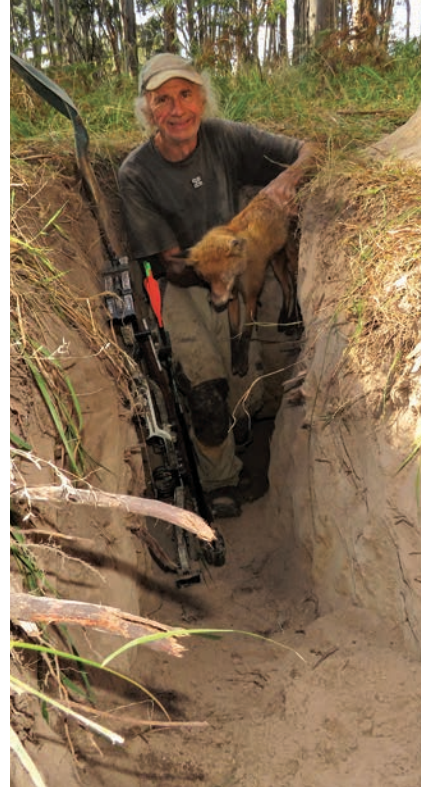




*The second fox for the year was Record Class.*



*Another fox.*



*Taking the act of recovery to new depths.*

coated friends will appear. At times it has seemed rather clinical but years of disappointment have amounted to years of experience and in a few places I come to draw before I whistle.

Most of my fox-hunting trips are of a short duration—rarely of more than an hour or so. I wait for the perfect breeze and many times venture out 20 minutes before sunset. The reason—the fox is out hunting when I am so we inevitably meet up. I also use a variety of callers: The Duff whistle, a Predator Caller and a squeaky thing under my foot. The combination and variety have served me well to such a degree that over the past few years I give myself almost unrealistic goals: five foxes in successive arrows and if I miss one I start again. (The best I have done is nine and the tenth jumped the string!)

My first venture out this year was on January 2 to a special spot that has all the foregone ingredients. Within two whistles I had taken two foxes, one Trophy Class and one Record Class. Both foxes were taken from stands that had produced results for over a decade. One stand, a lone red gum in the open with a manuka thicket in close proximity, has resulted in the deaths of nine foxes taken by me and





*These two foxes were taken from the same shrub on two consecutive days.*

five other friends at different times. Within two weeks I had taken 10 foxes, the last two being Trophy Class and taken at the same time from the same shrub two evenings apart.

By the end of January I was halfway to achieving my first goal and with State border restrictions eased, a goat hunt east of Broken Hill that had taken three years to materialise was on the cards.

It had been years since I had hunted goats with any trophy potential. Times had changed and access was limited. However, good friends can make things happen and access was granted, but there was a catch—just one goat could be taken and I felt that there was an extraordinarily high expectation of my ability with the bow and arrow to harvest one of the few big goats that roamed the red dunes.

By mid-February I was in red soil country sweltering under clear blue skies, daunted by the prospect of even finding a goat in what looked like a never-ending mosaic of dunes that folded down to black soil flats with sparse cover. However, there were two things in my favour: it was as dry as chips with little feed and it was hot. The first day was scouting, analysing potential success and finding water.

The prospects looked dismal, small mobs of very nervous goats were scattered throughout the property presenting a multitude of challenges in respect to a successful stalk.

The second day started with an introduction to the fragility of parched black soil country, cracked and potholed by countless crabs buried deep beneath the surface waiting for rain. It is treacherous enough to walk through, let alone attempt to drive across. By late morning the quarry had been located in the far distance. The breeze determined the approach but the lack of any suitable cover made every aspect of the stalk challenging. I was also convinced that any shot taken would be pushing my limits. After an hour or so in blistering heat, I had laid up under some cover just as my chosen billy and his mates had. Then after an hour they moved off and so did I. Quietly I followed, keeping a distance of about 70m behind and when they dropped in to a creek bed and out of sight I bolted, closed the gap and was in striking distance when they rose to the other side and milled around. From that moment it was all over, and for the first time in a decade a big billy with a 38-inch spread lay at my feet.

By the time I returned from the red

dune country it was time to put final arrangements in place for the long sojourn to red deer camp. It was going to be the best ballistic combo trip imaginable; leaving mid-March and returning in late April, with two fallow deer hunts on the way up and likewise on the return. However, it was not COVID that put a spanner in the works, it was Mother Nature.

My first stop was Goulburn for a couple of days hunting fallow deer prior to the rut with Mark Burrows. We saw a few hinds and got a little wet and after our evening hunt I opted to cut my stay short due to impending bad weather and flood warnings extending along the entire east coast.

I abandoned Goulburn early the following morning for Tamworth where I intended to spend a couple of days with Marc Curtis. However, my normal route straight north across the Abercrombie River was cut by flood waters, so without choice I made a major detour via Dubbo. At this point of time I had been driving in rain for three days since I had left home and there was no sign of it easing. The following morning I left Marc's property due to a fast rising creek that would have isolated me for days and headed for Queensland. However, due





*Big goats had been few and far between. This 38-inch billy was the first for a decade.*

to persisting rains and serious flooding across the region I was halted at the small town of Wallangarra on the Queensland border.

The highway had been cut a few kilometres north by flood waters and I, like numerous truckers and travellers, was stranded indefinitely. There was no room at the inn, so to speak, so I opted to make camp in an unused rail siding and prepared to be laid up for a day or two. The humble shelter was

a better option than sleeping in my vehicle like so many other motorists were forced to do. By mid-afternoon the following day the highway opened and I joined hundreds of motorists in a giant conga line moving so slowly that I engaged low first on my vehicle for most of the 38km to Stanthorpe.

News reports were doom and gloom, weather conditions atrocious, the rain had not abated and continual flood warnings were most concerning.

I kept going, but I knew I would still have 17 river crossings to make between the tiny township of Moore and the Red Deer Camp and I doubted very much that I would make my destination let alone be hunting red deer. However, the deep rain cell concentrated of the eastern side of the range and consequently the river crossing were no trouble at all. I ended up rolling into camp a couple of days early ... which in retrospect was perfect, as it allowed a



couple of days to enjoy the ambience and tranquillity of the mountains before a small army of excited hunters arrived hoping to fulfil their dreams.

I was there for the long haul—a bit over three weeks in total—hunting, guiding and assisting in the various aspects that make Red Deer Camp a unique experience. The majority of red deer country is foreign to me. I find some of it intimidating and at times confronting, but during the three weeks I had no option other than to push myself through all barriers. Mentally it's hard core: rise at 4am every day for three weeks and constantly be aware of what

camp duties need attending to and of hunters' needs and expectations. Physically it's tough, 10km to 15km of mountain walking/hunting every day, attending to clients' trophies at day's end and on this trip two weeks were spent in wet boots and clothes that couldn't be dried.

When opportunity allowed for a solo hunt, I hunted to my limits to overcome a natural tendency to be over-cautious rather than adventurous when on my own in unfamiliar climes. During my solo hunts I managed to take two stags that crossed my path—one at the beginning of a day's hunt and the other at the end as I trudged

back to camp after a long day. Over the period of time I called in stags for myself as I did for others and shared some amazing wildlife experiences. The success of hunting often relies on calculated chance and as far as big stags go we played with a few and didn't capitalise on opportunities presented.

On the last day of the hunt, I tagged along with Glenn Carlson in the morning and afternoon hunts with clients who had not taken a deer for the trip. The roar was all but over and our focus was fallow bucks. My job description was 'official rattler'. I succeeded in my duties and rattled in



*Better than sleeping in the car.*



*The conga line of trucks*



*Hunters at the camp.*

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*Rattling for fallow.*

*LEFT: A 5x4 red deer.*

a good buck for each of the hunters who were both unfortunate not to take the animals.

The 2021 Red Deer Camp came to an end and I prepared for the long three-plus days' drive home, a little bit disappointed but not unhappy. The experience was exceptional; the catch-up with old friends cherished; the interaction with a variety of hunters from across the continent unique, and not only did I learn a lot more about red deer and hunting red deer I also learned a great deal about my own abilities and myself.

On the return journey I had great expectations of taking a fallow buck, however, it wasn't to be. The rut was all but finished by the time I arrived at my destinations, and when I did get the chance at an inquisitive buck, I failed to deliver the shot. I returned home without my Record Class stag but with a very large bag of experience and a few days up my sleeve before the end of hog deer season.

I didn't venture out the first night home, but the following evening I was quietly standing in the shadows

of a tree beside a swamp waiting for the witching hour before I executed a stalk into the breeze. All was well. It was perfect, except I moved five minutes too soon and bumped a hog deer that was moving out of cover to feed. By the time I had finished my circuit, I had seen another hog deer and two sambar deer.

The following afternoon I occupied a tree stand for three or four hours and was reminded just how tough a gig it is. With exceptional weather predictions for the next day I was determined to get to the swamp early and be extremely vigilant. However, constant interruptions during the day almost made the hunt a non-event. With half an hour of daylight left I hastily left home for the swamp and as I settled in to the shade of a familiar tree I noticed the back of a hog deer stag emerge from a thicket and vanish into a hollow full of thistles and reeds a short distance in front of me. As I stared into the reeds a hind visualised then the antlers of the stag. The stag slowly made his way to the opposite side of the reeds

and stepped up onto a rise, severely quartering-away at 40m. Without hesitation I drew and sent an arrow on its way. The stag turned, revealing fletches that indicated a potential fatal shot, crossed a clearing and then disappeared into a dark glade of manuka and ti-tree. By the time I had picked up the blood trail and followed it to where the stag had entered the glade, it was all but dark.

The following morning I returned with my wife and introduced her to the world of recovery—hands and knees in a myriad of blackberries, box-thorns, manuka, cane reeds and ti-tree. The blood trail was only fair and other marks were difficult to distinguish in the loose sand but all anxiety diminished at the sight of the stag lying at the end of one of the many tunnels in this world beneath the canopy.

A hog deer stag is a highly respected and sought after trophy, and to take this fine 10-in stag in what seemed an effortless input of time and energy was indeed a trade-off for the month in red deer camp, for he





*A lesson in following a trail.*

means as much to me as my elusive record red.

I hung the bow up at the end of April and due to various lockdowns and travel restrictions had not ventured far until September, when between lockdowns I set forth to Timberline in the high country to focus on sambar deer and hare hunting. Despite a concentrated effort the sambar deer eluded me once more, but a hare fell to an arrow, completing one goal—my Master Bowhunter for 2021.

A week later I was back in the high country hunting with Andrew ‘Robbo’ Robertson. Between the two of us, we are the most frequent visitors to Timberline and thus have a fair knowledge of the habits of the deer in this area ... where and at what time they are likely to be intercepted, the thermals and winds that determine where to wait, effects of prevailing weather conditions, moon phases and preferred pastures. However, the unpredictable nature of these

majestic animals makes the hunt a never-ending challenge even when you think you know the sambar game.

By the time I arrived in mid-afternoon, Robbo was organised, pumped and ready to hunt. I wished him well, the breeze was favourable and his destination an almost surety. As I watched the dust from his departure settle and considered my options I glanced at the grazed crop paddock opposite and for some reason noticed an unusual stick protruding from the base of a large tree exactly 300m away. First thought: deadfall. Second thought: strange shape. Third thought: get the binoculars. To my disbelief, the stick materialised into an impressive set of antlers belonging to a stag that had bedded all day beside a tree in the open paddock.

At first glance it looked a stupid place for a stag to bed but on reflection the wise old warrior had chosen carefully, for he had uninterrupted



*Trophy Class hog deer.*



vision for almost 360 degrees. His only blind spot was directly behind his left ear. I hatched a daring plan and pretended to be a farmer going about my business. The stag watched my every move and even stretched his neck out and lay as flat as a big stag can in the grass blending into the tree that he rested against. Once the tree obscured my approach I hastily made a dash, conscious of the breeze and noise. In no time I had shortened the distance between the tree and me to 70m, then 50, then 30 and at 20m I came to draw and crab-walked on a closing arc until I could see the deer's rump.

Confronted by the deer's large rump at about 12m and knowing that placement would be critical on an animal so powerful, I searched for the soft spot between his tucked-up back leg and his last rib. I anticipated the entry and exit of the arrow and slowly moved until I was sure it would be an almost perfect quartering-away shot

with maximum penetration. I released the arrow.

The big stag erupted from his bed and as he bolted across the paddock I could see the arrow hanging out his off-side. He then crashed through a fence and then into another, hitting it with such force the impact bent a steel post and snapped an old strainer post off at ground level, laying the fence flat. The speed of the collision was so intense that the stag cartwheeled in the air, a full 360, regained composure for 90m then collapsed dead.

The majestic stag was at my feet, and an unrealistic dream of taking such a stag was realised. A degree of shock ran through my veins and had not dissipated by the time Robbo and Russell joined me at the last resting place of this trophy of a lifetime.

To put things into perspective, in the past 30 years of hunting with the bow I have only encountered another two stags of such calibre and even when I was rifle hunting prior to the

bow years I never sighted such a grand beast. So my COVID Masters cake was not only unbelievably complete it was now a triple sponge with cream on top and covered with a mountain of strawberries!

I tip my hat to any recipient of the Master Bowhunter Award, for I know what it takes to achieve. Even with all the plans and dreams that one makes on the journey, there are never any guarantees of success ... and that's what I like about it.

If by chance you are looking for a personal bowhunting challenge, try achieving your Master Bowhunter. I guarantee you will experience new hunting adventures, go places where you haven't been, hunt in the company of old and new friends, and maybe, like me, enjoy unimaginable triumphs.

*BELOW: At first glance this area seems to be too open for a resting place, but the wise old warrior had an almost perfectly uninterrupted view.*

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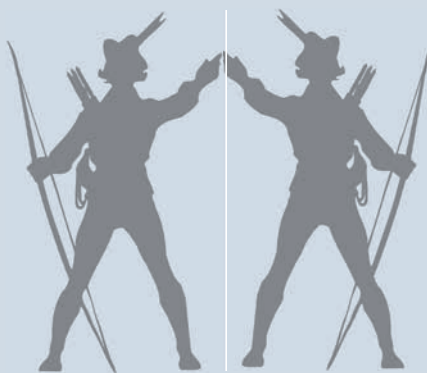




*A once-in-a-lifetime sambar deer. (Photo by Russell Cornall)*



# Around THE TRADS



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**Sue Wallace**

✿ The North Burnett Field Archers Trad Shoot at Gayndah attracted archers from Gladstone, Chinchilla, Toowoomba, with many from the Gold Coast through to Hervey Bay.

There was only the one course and it started up the hill behind the clubhouse area. Due to the layout, all groups needed to start on Target 1 or any of the novelty events set up around the practice butts. Today would be a two-arrow round in the morning and a one-arrow round in the afternoon.

In our group, when the first archer drew back, we heard a small crack. He let down, did a couple of draws, no further sound; so he shot his two arrows. But on the second target when he was almost at full draw a very loud crack sounded, indicating a broken bow. Another bow was found for him but the arrows he was shooting didn't quite match the bow.

The ground was rather rocky and dry, with the targets being well placed in amongst the grass. Many of the targets were very strategically placed, including one with a narrow shooting lane through two trees, a croc hiding under a log, two well placed pigs and a

bear leaning against a tree.

The moving target was a running goat operated by one of the club members. The aerial disk shot was an automated affair set up by one of the very clever club members. This event used flu flus with points, and had the added touch of also rotating through the shoot pegs. As your standing position changed at every shot, you didn't get a chance to work out where the disk was going to be in the sky.

The club's 30-second speed round was also truly original; small round blue disks being of heart/lung size only (for want of a better description), of various game species suspended from a rope about 1m off the ground. This round was shot inside one of the pistol range bays (the club shares the grounds with the local pistol club) surrounded by high banked walls. In the next bay (which is also the practice area), we were introduced to the Wobbly-Wobbly, another automated creation, you had one minute to shoot three arrows at a wobbling square.

The popinjay involved shooting flu flus with blunts to try to knock down disks that were hinged at the

top of a steel aerial. There was also a 60-second hunt round. You have 60 seconds to walk down the path and shoot the seven targets as set out then return down the path until your time is called.

The afternoon was the one-arrow round on the field course. The sun was higher in the sky now, so the targets that had been in shadow during the morning were easier to see.

Sunday morning greeted us with a thick blanket of fog, so we knew the day was going to be another warm one. Today we had another two-arrow round, and enough changes had been made to the course to make it seem quite different.

The official segment included presentations, raffle and a cake for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the club.

✿ For the Barambah club's Bill Baker Memorial Shoot, 80 archers had come from as far away as Toowoomba, the Gold Coast, Gladstone, Chinchilla as well as Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. On Saturday morning we assembled at the far end of the







practice range to get the event started. Graham Cash said a few words about Bill Baker, then everyone who wanted to had a shot at a rather long-range pig. Once the target was hit and arrows retrieved, we all ventured off.

The shoot format for the weekend was to shoot two arrows on a walk-up from the two orange cones for one course and one arrow from the furthest orange cone for the second course. There were also quite a few novelties.

At one target there was a set of dice, which you threw, and the numbers you rolled was the distance from which you would shoot. It was funny that we all threw at least one six ... it turned out that was lucky, as six was the closest. Sometimes the scrub was used very creatively to frame the scoring zones. Leopards and bears sat on logs, and some targets were hidden sneakily in the grass.

The hunt round was timed at 60 seconds. The blind snapshot timed round was quite a variation on the 30-second speed round. At the first blind, once it was raised, you had 20 seconds to get as many shots off as possible before the blind came down. The second blind was raised, and you had 10 seconds to get shots off, then at the third blind you only had five seconds to get an arrow or two away.

The fox and cat moving target were challenging but at least there was a big bank to catch the arrows that missed the targets! A swingy thing was a three-arrow challenge, with 20 seconds to shoot. Then we needed flunts (flu flus with blunts) to shoot grenades off a fence. Hitting the fence gave you no points, even if the grenades fell off!

The final novelty was the running pig.

On Sunday the courses were swapped around for the two-arrow and one-arrow events. You'd think having done the courses we'd all have an advantage the second day, but the course setters had taken a walk around both courses and moved the markers on all the targets. With minimal effort, they'd made all the shots feel completely different.

The day finished with presentations and a large table of raffles. The final presentation was the Best of the Best Award. Graham Cash won top male archer and I secured top female archer. We were presented with hand-forged belt buckles. We had both known Bill Baker so it was a special moment.

We can look forward to an event to be held at Barambah over the May long weekend (April 30 to May 2) in 2022 incorporating the Trad Bash and workshops where people can learn to make a bow, assemble, or even make some arrows from billets, or have a go at some leatherwork.

\* A two-day fun campout was held at Chevallan Archery Park in September. Saturday morning dawned with a beautiful clear blue sky and very light misty fog hanging over the range behind us.

We walked down to the range around 8.30am. It was certainly a mixed bag, target-wise. There were crocodiles, a small monkey, carp hanging upside down on a swing set, rabbit, fox, javelina, antelope and deer among the targets.

In the afternoon one of the interesting targets was lobbing arrows over a bamboo fence at a cougar.

On Sunday, we had two archers who had not shot trad gear before. One had never shot and had received a few quick lessons the previous afternoon. The other was a chap usually shoots a compound but was trying out an Asiatic bow.

The next weekend campout is October 16 and 17.

\* You couldn't have asked for a better day for Sunshine Coast Bowmen's Traditional Knot Shoot.

We were only using the front course, with 22 targets to the left of the clubhouse and 20 targets to the right. A mixture of 3D and vinyl targets and sometimes up to three targets from the one peg were shot as a two-arrow round, both counting, scoring 10 for A/B, and 5 for rest of body. The novelties were a flying monkey, a Texas heart shot and a 60-second hunt round.

Targets included a cricket, lioness, turkey, wild dog, wolf, beaver, a javelina hiding behind some corrugated iron, goat, iguana, fox, lynx and chameleon. That was one course.

The other course had deer, donkey, wolf and wild pig, a polar bear, crocodile, brown bear, jaguar, a skinny wild cat, fox and badger.

The hunt round was a 60-second event, with one arrow per target. The targets were very well hidden. It was a brilliant stalker round.

\* Trad shoots confirmed for December 2021/January 2022 at the time of writing are Chevallan Xmas Campout on December 11 and 12 and the Maydaan Cup on December 12. I look forward to seeing you 'round the trads.





# Out of lockdown,

Queenslanders have been incredibly fortunate compared to their southern counterparts when it comes to the severity and length of COVID lockdowns. But we all know that sinking feeling when it looks as though long-held plans might be scuppered at the last minute.

*Idyllic scene in Queensland's Gulf country.*





# outta here!

**by ERIC CREIGHTON**

**L**ockdown! Yet another three days confined to the house with the promise that it would end at 4.00pm on Tuesday, a scant 80 minutes prior to the flight of my hunting partner, Matt, landing in Brisbane. Then the dreaded news came over the air waves—there would be a further five days of lockdown. Our original plan was dead in the water, so it was decided that Matt would instead book a flight to Mount Isa and I would depart Brisbane as soon as the second lockdown expired ... if it did ... and meet him there.

Despite many expert opinions to the contrary, the lockdown did in fact lift at 4.00pm on Sunday and I left for the Isa at 3 o'clock the next morning. As Matt would be in Mount Isa on the Tuesday I had only two days to get there. Hence my early morning departure with my first toilet break being some six-and-a-half hours later at Muckadilla, west of Brisbane and Roma. Another two hours later, I pulled into Morven for fuel and it was then I realised I was no longer in possession of my mobile phone.

I'd been going to use the phone at Muckadilla. I remember that I checked the fridges in the back of the car and all I can think is that I inadvertently left the phone on the back step of the ute where it would have dropped to the road when I drove away. It had probably been run over half a dozen times by the time I realised it was missing. There was nothing else to do but keep driving.

I arrived in Winton 15 hours after leaving home and went straight to bed. Up again before sunrise and on my way, I had plenty of time to think and my major concern was how to find Matt! The address at which he was staying in Mount Isa was in a message that unfortunately was in my missing phone. Not only that, I didn't even know my own mobile number ... let alone anyone else's!

I had it in my mind that Matt's accommodation had the word 'red'



as part of its name. If this was not the case, my only alternative was to visit every hotel/motel in the Isa until I found him—a daunting prospect as there must be at least 20 motels to check out.

Arriving in Mount Isa just after 9.00am, I found a phone book, looked up 'accommodation' and found the Red Dirt Boutique Hotel. Bingo!

With Matt riding shotgun, we fueled up and headed to Kajabbi as a shortcut to pick up the Burke Development Road. As had happened the previous year (and very close to the same place), the air-conditioning belt destroyed itself about 50km prior to the Burke and Wills Roadhouse. We stayed the night in Normanton for repairs and as it needed a new pulley as well as the replacement air-con belt, it was pretty expensive.

An hour after departure the next morning, the new air-con belt started to scream so we spent the next

couple of hours to our destination in the uncomfortable heat. Once camp was set up and the belt had been tightened, we settled into a relaxing afternoon with cold beers and a good book each.

The previous year there had not been a great deal of game about and we were assured that this year would not be much better despite a reasonably good wet season. However, over the first two days we came across good-sized lone boars at a number of locations but neither of us was in a position to put arrow to bow. Things changed on day three when we walked into back-to-back swamps which had been profitable in previous years.

The area prior to the first swamp had plenty of fresh sign and as we approached the water we were halted by the sight of a boar energetically plowing the sodden ground. Matt moved into 20m but as he drew his

bow the boar realised something was amiss and bolted for safer acreage. We then split up to cover both sides of the swamp and that was the last I saw of Matt until we arrived back at the vehicle hours later. From the head of the first swamp to the second was about 800m and as soon as I approached I could see two boars feeding about 55m out in the swamp and about 150m apart. I walked into the edge of the water which still put me 55m from the unaware feeding boar. I do not normally take animals from this distance but I felt confident that I could do the job if I moved in to 50m and got some wet feet. The shot was perfect, entering well back on the chest and exiting through the animal's neck. The end was quick which meant I had to strip down and wade out to drag my trophy (later measured officially at 26 6/8pt) back to dry land.

At 70 years of age, I was absolute-



*The camp.*





*The boar and the hunter were both pretty wet by this time.*

ly knackered by the time I had positioned the pig for photos and taken out the jaw so the other boar—which was still nonchalantly feeding close by—was left to live another day as I still had over 2km to walk back to the vehicle. Unfortunately, even though I returned to this swamp three more times, I never found the other boars we'd seen previously.

Two other swamps provided Matt and me with plenty of opportunities

to take quality game. One we visited regularly and every time the same mob of 14 pigs were there but each time they were always in a position that meant they would get our wind as we tried to get into position.

With only two days prior to our departure we decided that come what may, we would make an effort to get in close enough for a shot. As it turned out, things went well! The mob sensed something was up and became

agitated. Three peeled off from the mob (two boars and a sow) but the larger boar converted agitation into arousal and mounted the sow—big mistake!

At again 50m and with no further cover I took aim at the sow and she took a lethal hit, the boar then suffered the same result. All three animals moved off by 50m when the boar went down and was finished off with a needless second arrow.





*Another piggie for Eric.*



*Matt, ready for some hunting.*

The boar, although big in the body, was small in the tooth department. Matt had followed up on the rest of the mob and was also lucky enough to get a shot while they milled around in confusion and agitation.

The second profitable swamp was also reasonably close to camp and although we rarely went out again after our first return to camp we decided to do a late afternoon hunt to this area.

In previous years getting to this swamp had been a major task, however this year the road had been newly graded and it was a piece of cake to get there. No sooner had we arrived than Matt spotted four pigs. Alighting from the vehicle, Matt got in to 20m on the pigs and again they became agitated and the boar mounted the sow offering Matt an easy shot.

While Matt was otherwise engaged, I approached the dam where I was presented with a very lean boar.

He was about 80m away moving slowly and when I put the binoculars on him I was astounded to see that he had ivory hanging out everywhere from his jaw. The best pig I had ever seen, narrow in the chest and very old. I moved quickly to try to narrow the distance between us but to no avail. The closest I got was 60m but with him on the move as well as me, a shot was not on the cards. I visited this dam again the next day but no pigs turned up to greet me.

While on the property we drove over 1000km visiting about 30 locations (some repeatedly) where we had found ferals on our regular previous trips to this property. Each year we have returned the number of sightings have reduced quite dramatically but part of the fun is actually being in the bush and enjoying the company of a lifelong friend. Taking animals with the bow is a great lifestyle, but it is not the be all and end all for having a good time.



# ROY ROSE

## *Meanderings*



### **Fitness training for archery**

I am often asked about what associated fitness programme could be adopted to enhance people's archery progress. I'm also asked if a fitness programme is an essential. The questions undoubtedly stem from the fact that at 80 I am still blessed to be in good physical shape and continue to play veterans cricket as a wicketkeeper at State level.

The reality is that our sport is not essentially about strength and we seldom see heavily muscled archers competing at international level. Archery prides itself on the notion that all shapes and sizes and ages can participate successfully at even the elite level and we repeatedly see this to be a reality.

However, I have always been an advocate of the premise that fit, conditioned archers who augment their shooting programme with a sensible aerobic and weight training schedule put themselves in a more positive frame to be successful. Aside from the archery aspect, maintaining sensible dietary procedures, allied to a rational fitness programme, is simply a huge positive for one's physical and mental wellbeing.

I have no doubt that my lifetime training routine has been a real asset to my success in archery, and even though my competitive days are over, that habit remains an integral part of my existence in my later years. I still weight train regularly, adapting my workouts now to maintain continuous injury-free progress. Athletes wishing to build strength and added muscle push heavy weights at low repetitions. At my age, building muscle and lifting high poundage is not a priority, nor is it feasible, so while I continue to train setwise, I now utilise higher reps (20 to 30). This keeps the muscles in tune and adds an aerobic factor, as well as decreasing the chance of injury.

I train shoulders and chest on Mondays, legs on Tuesdays, rest Wednesdays, back and triceps Thursdays and arms (biceps and forearms) and calves on Friday, then rest from training on the weekend. I train up-tempo, four sets of three exercises per body part and rest just a minute or so between sets. This takes around 30 minutes with stretching between sets. I ride the exercise bike each evening for 30 minutes and do some abdominal work on my rest days.

My diet is sensible, but not abnormally rigid and I augment it with vitamin supplements and whey protein. I just get up each day and do again what I've always done, and so far, so good.

Now I realise this may seem over the top for my age, and also perhaps a little more difficult to maintain for a younger archer with job, family commitments etc, but it has become a habit which has rolled on decade after decade. Many leading archers I have spoken to over the years have also included some form of exercise as an adjunct to their archery preparation.

I obviously feel that it is really beneficial, but I am also cognisant of the fact that archers do come in all shapes and sizes, and provided there is a fitness level that allows the archer to shoot a respectable and necessary poundage and see out a tournament without unnecessary fatigue, then it simply remains an option, albeit a positive one.

When I watch the top recurve men and women from Korea, the leading nation, it is clear that overall, particularly the ladies, are not above average in weight, muscular structure or height, so their form and execution does not have a physical powerbase as such. Undoubtedly their elite Olympic level shooters do have additional fitness regimes, as nearly all elite sportspeople these days augment their skills with gym work and good diets.

If your ambition or present status is inspiring you to reach Olympic or national or international status, then despite the wonderful advantage our sport gives everyone to be successful irrespective of physical attributes, I still feel certain that a rational weight training programme and fitness routine will undoubtedly help you to be the best you can be. Or you might want to be able to navigate a field course or a 3D range without tiring, or shoot higher poundages than you can currently manage comfortably.

For the average recreational shooter, it is comforting to know that our great sport caters for so many levels of fitness and strength. Your choices will be governed by your ambitions, your time and motivation. But should you aspire to elite level, then the fitness training procedures I've outlined will surely be of substantial benefit.





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**SCOTT HEIMAN**

# Bushcraft & Survival

## BACK TO BASICS



### Survival balls

If you want to truly survive an emergency situation, you can't rely solely on dumb luck. You need the will to survive; a quality which is known as the psychology of survival. Truth be known, sometimes you need a little bit of both.

Survival psychology is embodied within the individual qualities of the survivors themselves. In an emergency situation, those who don't exhibit these qualities will find themselves in the role of 'existors' rather than 'survivors' and will likely be heavily dependent on luck to see them through. By contrast, the psychological strengths of people who are truly survivors will enable them to react with the calm and competence necessary to effectively meet the challenges of an emergency or other survival situation.

The qualities we're talking about here are (1) knowledge (of skills, equipment and environment), (2) common sense, (3) tenacity and (4)

physical fitness. You don't need an equal portion of each; the balance will differ between individuals as will their relative importance within different environments and predicaments.

These same qualities are needed to achieve the four Priorities of Survival: Protection, Rescue, Water and Food. This includes fulfilling all the tasks they entail, from shelter building to food procurement and preservation.

### Woolies' worth

The body's essential requirements come in the form of water, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, protein and fats. You can find a good amount of all of these neatly packaged in oysters which can be purchased smoked and canned in oil, ready to go wherever you roam. But can you imagine how hungry the first person to eat an oyster must have been?! It looks like snot and, to the unaccustomed palate, it probably doesn't taste much

better. Yet for many it's a delicacy that we enjoy ...

Back in the day, I remember many hunts with my father and brother. We'd be sitting on a log observing as the goats on the mountains slowly grazed out in the open, watching the wind blow in the grass, determining our best of course of action—and all the while we'd be snacking on canned oysters on crackers.

The truth is that we're privileged to be able to access these nutritious 'go anywhere' foods so easily these days. We simply walk into the supermarket and buy them. It doesn't matter where they originated or whether they're out of season in our local area. Dried fruits, muesli bars and pre-cooked meals are all available in pocket-sized morsels. We owe these conveniences to global developments like the Industrial Revolution (canning) as well as people like the clever food scientists who supported the Space Race by



inventing dehydrated ice cream and space food bars that inevitably found their way onto supermarket shelves. Meanwhile, it's worth remembering that modern back country re-heat meals owe much to the work of military food technologists. In their effort to keep combat soldiers properly fed in the field, they found ways to enhance a small packet of spaghetti bolognese with enough nutrients to exceed the daily Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI) of calories.

We benefit from all these advances when we fill our pockets and quivers with light, nutritious, high-energy foods as we step out on a hunt. But what if we're caught in a 'Fit hits the Shan' scenario without a pocket full of chocolate-coated trail mix and protein bars and no nearby 7-11 store to help meet the shortfall?

## Preservation

If you become geographically embarrassed on a hunt, short-term survival is literally the 24 to 72 hours you'll need to endure before the chopper blades swoop. In this scenario, you're lucky because your camp mates or loved ones at home helped raise the alarm when you failed to return when expected.

But we still hear tales of longer-term survival where survivors have applied their knowledge of yesteryear, combined with a good dose of common sense and tenacity, to see them through longer periods of separation.

Consider yourself in a situation where you may not expect to see another soul for several weeks ... or even longer. Once you've taken care of the first three Priorities of Survival, you'll be on the lookout for number 4: Food—particularly once the meagre portions from your pockets have been rationed out.

As a hunter, you're at an advantage over many others who might find themselves in a similar predicament. While you may need to rely on scavenging and gathering until you



*We are truly blessed these days, with ready-made nutrition bars readily available.*

achieve a successful hunt, if you bag a rabbit you'll eat like a king. And, if you're smart, you'll make it last a few days at least. But what happens if you bag a goat?

Almost all fresh and cooked food is subject to attack by micro-organisms such as bacteria, yeast and molds which will spoil the food. So, you'll have a choice about how you preserve the meat for longer. And, regardless of global technological advancements over the last couple of hundred years, when it comes down to it, your choices are likely to be the same ones that have been available to humankind for millennia. Depending on the climate, environment and resources available, these choices will boil down to:

- drying
- smoking
- salting
- freezing
- keeping animals alive

In our scenario, you'll most likely be looking at drying or smoking. Happily, many of us are already dab hands at making jerky using our backyard dehydrators or smokers. But that just gets us a whole stash of preserved meat. For your body to function effectively, you need other essential vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, and fats. So, it's good to know that dried fruit, nuts, seeds and fat that's been rendered into tallow can keep for

months. Indeed, some people claim that dry meat, mixed with fat, can have an indefinite shelf-life. The secret is in how the food is handled ... and at least one group of indigenous nations have been perfecting that skill for at least 700 years.

## Pemmican

When it comes to the production of calorie-dense, nutritious and portable food, the experience of Native American tribes is particularly worthy of note. They devised a food that combined dried meat (generally bison, moose, elk or deer), fat, and—when available—dried berries. Known as pemmican, the name comes from the Cree Indian word (pimihkân), which is derived from the word (pimî), 'fat, grease'. The tribes who made pemmican ensured they had a store of food to eat when hunting and gathering became sparse.

Traditionally, the meat used in pemmican was prepared much like jerky; hand-sliced into long strips and massaged with salt (seasoning) before being dried under the sun on rocks or treated with slow smoke for several days, or both. It was then ground into a coarse powder along with nuts and dried berries when available. Meanwhile, the suet from the animal was melted down to form tallow. All



the ingredients were combined and formed into strips, bars or balls before being left to set.

When European colonists learned about pemmican from the Native American Indians, its value was soon realised. Pemmican was widely adopted by European fur traders and was later carried by Arctic and Antarctic explorers. It was even distributed to the British and Australian colonial soldiers of the Boer War. To this day, it remains an important part of indigenous cuisine in some parts of North America.

If you find yourself in the survival situation in the great Australian outdoors, pemmican still offers the prospect of a long lasting, highly nutritious food source that could make the difference between you surviving effectively over a long period, miserably eking out a meagre existence, or not making it through at all.

If you know what you're doing, there are plenty of sources of wild berries and fruits to gather that will give your pemmican extra nutritional value; whether it's native midgen berries, cluster fig or introduced species like blackberries.

Remember too, that as our colonial pioneers expanded across the country, they left a trail of orchards. So it's not uncommon to find apples, lemons and prickly pear scattered around abandoned homestead sites and



**On average, pemmican is 80 per cent fat, 20 percent protein and zero per cent carbohydrate (unless you add berries or honey to the recipe). It is often referred to as the ultimate survival food because it's lightweight and good for travel and by weight, it is very calorie dense—pemmican generally contains around 130 calories per 30 grams.**

shearing sheds even in isolated areas.

Why wait for an emergency situation before trying out pemmican? It's easy to make and gives you more options for game meat preservation, including an excellent use for the suet. Pemmican is a great option to pop in your pocket, your quiver or your snack

box anytime you head out scrub. Eat it as it is, fry it up in a pan or add it to boiling water to make a soup/broth.

Perhaps Ishi made them too! Forget the rum balls this Christmas. With survival balls in your pocket, satisfaction will always be close at hand.

## Did you know?

Archaeologists have discovered dried meats that are more than 5,000 years old. The Egyptians believed that the soul ultimately would be reunited with the body. Therefore, it would be necessary to preserve the body (mummification). When the soul and body were rejoined, the newly-living would have needs—furniture, clothing, pets, and food. Tombs dated 3,200BC have been explored, and in those explorations, archaeologists have found remnants of beer, wine, grain, produce, and dried meat. To this day, archaeologists are finding pemmican in clay pots buried in caches across the US, with a semi-industrial processing camp 700 years old found in Montana recently.





## PEMMICAN RECIPE

Just as indigenous tribes would have made pemmican from the foods they had around them, so can you. In addition to the tallow, ground dried jerky and dried fruit (for example, cranberries, blueberries, goji berries), you can add other ingredients such as ground nuts (like almond meal), seeds (sunflower), desiccated coconut, and spices (think lemon myrtle, or mountain pepper for Australian natives) et cetera. The key is that all of these ingredients need to be dried.

As a rule of thumb, equal parts tallow, dried ground jerky and other dry ingredients (combined) should be sufficient to make pemmican. Do not go less than one part tallow, two parts jerky and dry additives.

Making tallow from suet is straightforward, you just need to give yourself time. Heat the suet over a low heat. While it's okay to see bubbles forming, don't let the fat simmer

to a boil. Little crispy bits of fat will float the surface. Strain the tallow once all the fat is rendered down and just use the clear fluid.

When combining ingredients, mix all the dry foods in a bowl first and then gradually add the tallow. The consistency you need to achieve is a mixture that is thoroughly damp but not sopping wet. We find it's best to leave the mixture to cool a little before forming it into balls. The cooling process allows the tallow to congeal and helps the ingredients to bind together.

To form the balls, take a heaped tablespoon of mixture and put it in the palm of your hand, rolling it around and squeezing until it solidifies. Once finished, let the balls cool fully before storing them. Good options for long term storage include ziplock bags in the freezer or vacuum sealing.



*Top left: You already have most of the ingredients for jerky.*

*Top right: Add heat and smoke to preserve meat longer.*

*Left: Modern equipment makes short work of grinding.*

*Right: Render the suet into tallow.*





*Range captains are mean.  
Range captains are sneaky.  
Range captains shouldn't make  
other people's lives so hard.  
Range captains should get a life!*



by JENEL HUNT

Photos by  
RALPH BODEN  
UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

*When the path between targets is covered by leaf litter, adequate signage is required to keep archers on track.*

## **The joys, trials and tribulations of being a range captain**



**Y**ou wouldn't believe the things people sometimes say about range captains. The comments can devolve into 'down and dirty' pretty fast.

For the sake of absolute clarity, let's start by saying this: range captains are wonderful people. They're salt-of-the-earth folks who are the cornerstone of their clubs ... people who do huge amounts of work out in the field to ensure that archers can shoot their arrows in the great outdoors, sometimes stretching and challenging them but all in the name of making them better archers.

Now that we have all that wonderful positivity off our chest, let's find out if there is any truth in people's less-than-complimentary comments. Do range captains have a dark side?

Well, it's true that some of them actually take it as a compliment when people comment on how hard they found it to shoot a certain target on the range.

"Joe, that shot on the downhill was bloody impossible, you old (expletive deleted)."

"Yeah, pretty good, huh?"

Or, "Hell's bells, Joe, what were you thinking with that dead ground on Three?"

"Heh heh, I wondered if that one might try you out."

Or, "I lost my arrow at that target! Darn you."

Now, the range captain's reply here should show a little restraint. The one thing that RC Joe should *not* point out is that the arrow would not have been lost if the archer had hit the target. That kind of answer comes under the heading, *How Not to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Someone said to me the other day, "The range captain at that club is evil." The person who said that was considerably younger than me and we all know that these days language tends to change depending on the age group using it, so I asked, "Evil as in 'wicked' as in really good?" Umm, no.

In all seriousness, the job of range captain is pretty involved so is not one that's particularly easy to work out on your own. The best tips are often learned at a master's side out on the

field, just like important information on survival was passed down from one generation to the next in days of old.

The other thing to remember—and appreciate—is though the range captain is just one person, there is usually a hard-working team, big or small, behind that person.

Australian Bowhunters Association Vice-President Ralph Boden has long been involved in this most essential part of field archery. Whether it's at club level or being one of the people who sets up courses for the ABA National Safari, his experience spans decades (although, to be clear, at the moment he is the secretary of the club at Central Coast Moonterra Field Archers and not the designated range captain).

"The Moonterra club is very lucky to have several members who donate a lot of their time and effort in looking after the club and its field courses; and they ask for nothing in return," he said.



*Tunnel vision! Despite all the 'noise' of the scrub, the arrow has a clear path to the target. But no one said it was going to be easy!*





*The terrain has to be considered when setting up ranges to allow members with various physical capabilities to navigate the field courses. These photos show uphill and downhill views of the same path.*



*'Widowmakers' hanging in the trees above have to be taken into consideration when marking out trails.*

"Although they don't want to take on an official position, they are more than happy to get in and do the work as required for the archery club. To these members, the Moonterra club is very appreciative. Without their efforts, the club would not have the ranges in such good condition."

### **Set the course for its purpose**

No doubt you've heard the saying, different horses for different courses. It's just the same in the archery world.

"Some courses are set up strictly for competition. There are ABA guidelines about how to set out the courses. Targets have to be set out to certain distances and you need a safety area behind and to the sides of each target. Pegs need to be marked out for cub, junior, senior and every other division ... but that's certainly not the end of the story. That's really where it starts," Ralph said.

Competition rounds have to fall within specific national scoring round guidelines but every game at every club feels different and that's why many people like to visit other clubs to shoot their ranges when preparing for away competitions. Courses are as different as the topography of the land, and the more practice you have

with different scenarios, the better overall archer you will become.

But not every course is built purely for competition. For some people, field archery is primarily about shooting targets and walking around enjoying the exercise and the bushland ... and the range captain must respect that and set out the courses accordingly.

If it's a club where there are a lot of hunting members, the targets can be set up to replicate what hunting shots might look like 'in the wild'.

"At Moonterra, we're more of a hunting club than a competition club, so we want to promote our ranges as a simulated hunting scenario rather than a point-scoring one. We still have the score zones that have to be hit, but a lot of us are wanting to hit what we're aiming at in a hunting situation so we put the targets into position with that in mind.

"Our guys want the lot—shooting at different targets from different positions, uneven ground, uphill, downhill, judging distance—it tests their abilities and gives them skills they won't hone if they're shooting at a target while standing on flat ground."

### **A safe haven**

But whether the course is being set



up for graded rounds or for hunting practice, the vegetation, the contours of the land and even the weather will have to be taken into account—after the number one consideration, safety.

“When you’re setting up you might not see until you have your bases loaded that once you have groups on every target, people walking from point A to point B might have to traverse a zone that’s not safe from stray arrows.

So you have to keep safety at front and centre of your thoughts at all times. Also when you’re in forested country you have to consider that some trees might be prone to losing limbs. You can’t have people standing under a tree like that.

“Our club is situated where there is semi-forested bush. We have hills and we also have rainforest down at the creek. Another club might be working

with very open ground so their course will have a completely different feeling.

“If you’re in hilly country, you have to consider where your tracks will go. You might have found a great place to put a target, but people need to be able to get to it. You have to create a good passage for people who aren’t as able bodied as you might be.

“And then the exact placement of your target is critical. What happens if an arrow skips off the target—where could it go? Or there could be a target set just below the top of a hill. If an arrow should miss the target and go over the hill, that could be dangerous if the course continues onto the other side of the hill! Answering this kind of question can take a hell of a lot of time and effort, but the range captain absolutely must think through these scenarios.”



*Miss this shot and you’ll probably lose your arrow.*

### Make it a challenge

Sometimes the ground itself makes for a challenge and sometimes it’s the evil—sorry, interesting—placement of the targets that creates the level of difficulty.

“Different localities have vastly different topographical situations. Charleville in southwest Queensland has flatter ranges so you might have some straight shooting lanes because

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though the forest where you can't get a good view for distance judgement."

Plus, 3D is a different animal again (pardon the pun)—and not only because the targets have to be put out and collected every time. Unlike vinyl and paper rounds that are attached to butts, a 3D animal has nothing behind it unless there is a hill, a dirt bank or butts have been put out especially to catch the misses.

Every club makes its own decision about the number of ranges it can realistically carry and maintain.

"Obviously it depends a bit on land size. We have four ABA ranges," he said.

"Smaller clubs might have two. But it's dependent on the size of membership as well as the size of the

club grounds, because field ranges are high maintenance."

"With ranges in the bush, you have to be prepared for the dynamics of the environment. The bush grows, trees fall down, creeks flood. There might be bushfires or logging by Forestry workers, and you have to account for these kinds of things when you're deciding on your course."

### **It's a hard job, but someone has to do it**

The best way to become a range captain is to ease into the job ... and that means not waiting until the current range captain is ready to retire! As a helper, you learn on the job so that the safety guidelines become second

nature and you can soak in some of the tricks of the trade as you're doing your bit to put out targets, prepare shooting lanes and do peg measurements.

Even if being a range captain isn't your aim, being part of the organisational brains behind the shoot is a reward in itself. When you know how much work has gone into the job, you appreciate it all the more while you're out on the range flinging arrows.

Is there a dark side from the range captain's perspective?

"It's rewarding when you get a lot of people coming off the ranges and they're saying, 'Wow, that was hard but it was great,' because you know you've challenged them. Your placement of each target has it made the course

## **The best range captain isn't a person; it's a team.**

*So says the range captain for Lakeside Bowmen in Brisbane, Peter Van Der Molen.*

“

Lakeside is a pretty big club. We're very lucky because when we have a working bee, we have about 20 people turn up. And I'm very fortunate in my assistant, deputy range captain Peter Stefanini.

To be range captain, you need to know more than the health and safety aspects of setting out ranges. You must have a working knowledge across a number of disciplines and bow types. You have to know ABA, IFAA, 3D—and in our case at Lakeside, trad shooting—and understand the difference between shooting a string bow and a compound.

We're on council land and we're lucky to have a good landlord. Still, we have our challenges. It's definitely not a flat piece of land! You can't get a vehicle in everywhere and part of the range has a creek. Every time it rains that part of the range floods. And after that we get mosquitoes!

The grounds are close to a road in one spot so we can't use that area, but in general we're lucky that we don't have to worry about upsetting neighbours and we're never going to be built in. With some clubs it's a different story. One club in our Branch is next to a school.

We host the Jules Shield, which is a trad shoot. It's very different from the other shoots and not all clubs do it. I do a lot of trad shooting myself so I know the ins and outs.

I'd also like to branch out and have an Olympic range put in so paralympic archers could train here. We'd need a 70m area with a concrete pad on one end and the amenities block would have to be upgraded.

How much time you put into a job like this depends on how much free time you have and how keen you are. I live close by; that makes it easier. When you stick up your hand to be range captain, you have to know that it's a big job.

*Top: A dodo at Lakeside hides behind a tree trunk. Image provided by Sue Wallace*

*Middle: Who put that tree there? Bottom: A challenging shot for tall archers.*

*Images provided by Jeanette Dowd, Renegade Bowmen*





testing without being unsafe or impossible,” Ralph said.

“Truthfully, though, it’s a bitch when people come off the course and only have bad things to say. It’s a lot of hard work by a lot of people—sometimes it’s a lot of work by very few people—and you wouldn’t have field archery at all if those people weren’t prepared to do the job.”

So next time you come off a range which has been set out with great attention to detail and the target placements have stretched your archery skills to the max or even totally confounded you, remember to compliment the range captain and his team. They’ve worked bloody hard to make your day’s shooting so enjoyable. Or challenging. Or whatever.



*Heavy winds and rain can cause havoc with target butts if they have not been secured. Here, a butt has rolled down the hill into the gully. It will take a fair bit of manpower to reposition the butt as it is quite heavy.*

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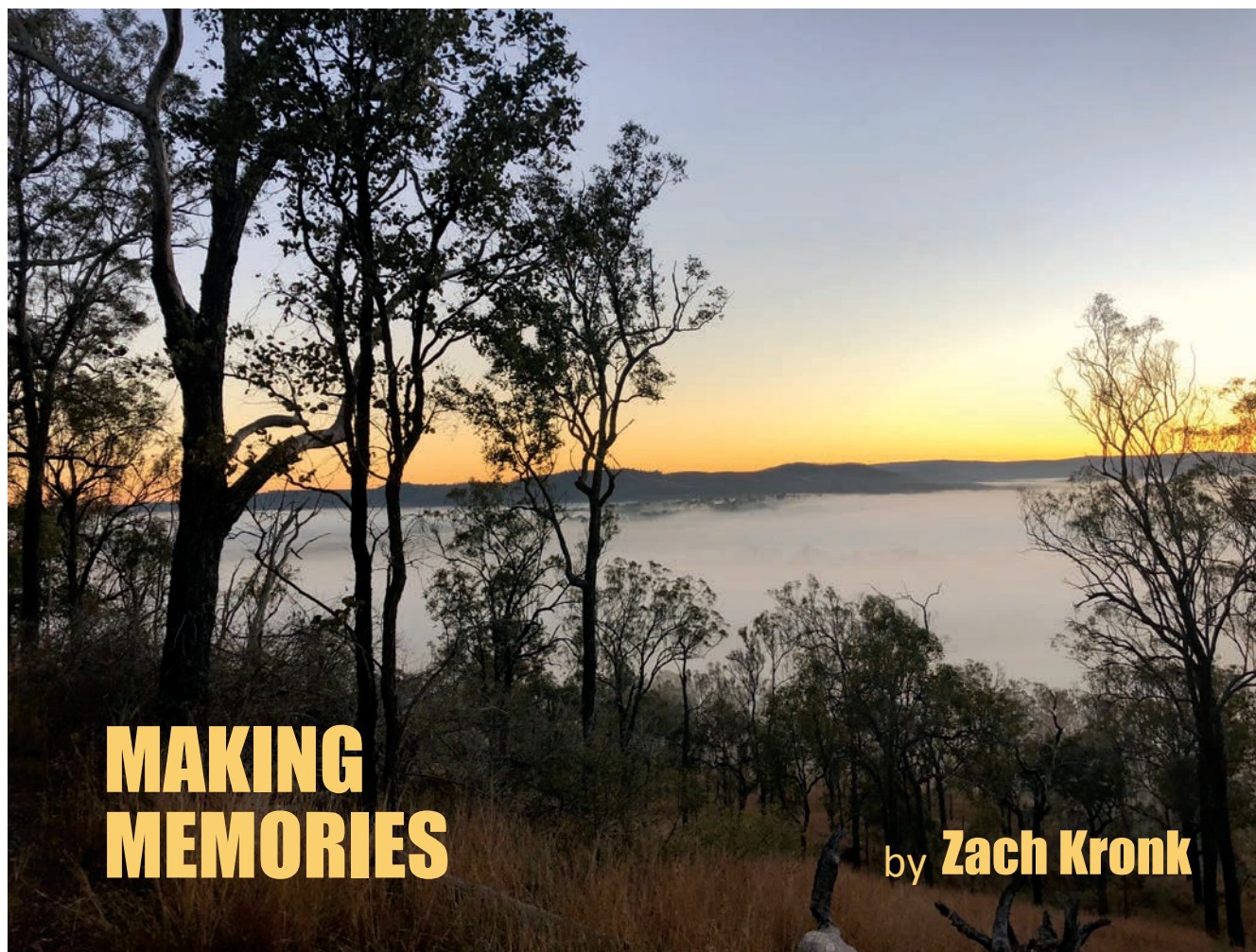
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# MAKING MEMORIES

by **Zach Kronk**

It was 2020 and I was impatient for the new bowhunting year to arrive. After quite a long break from the bow and then picking it up again, I was keen as anyone could be. It felt like a new love and something I couldn't stop thinking about. Plans were made and my main goal was to secure myself a worthy red stag. Everything else or any other hunts would be a bonus.

My first hunt of the year was in late February. We headed to a block I'd been lucky enough to have hunted on for over a year and it has good numbers of red deer. This first trip was organised as a bit of a scouting trip, however the bows would definitely be brought along in case an opportunity came our way!

Being in the bush, especially in the hills, is my happy place for sure. A place where you can just take in your surroundings and learn about what's

right in front of you - the sound of the birds, the way the wind changes at certain parts of the day and just being observant to all of the animal tracks around, whether they come from the game you're chasing or not. I've always been one to walk wherever I can and leave the car behind, I just love the sounds of the bush.

This particular scouting trip started out well, glassing a few small mobs of hinds and young spikers. After hunting this particular block the year before, we knew of a few areas where we thought deer would hang out. There was one area we had glassed for a fair while only to walk down into a gully and have a mature stag jump out from behind us. No need to say that was mistake number 1! From the gully we were now in I could make out a hind on the next ridge over and thought this would be a great stalk to calm

the nerves in the hope that a shot at a stag would eventuate in the weeks to come.

I've bowhunted on and off for years and in my experience some days you're just 'on' and everything goes to plan and the shot breaks. On other days it seems like, even with the best thought out plan, you're 'off' and it's a grind. An added complication is always the possibility of the bowhunter's worst nightmare, the wind.

Well, today I was 'on' and with a strong directional wind I was at 35yd—relatively easy. I peered over a lantana bush to confirm where the hind was and could quite easily make it to 25yd to set up for my shot. I was in position, bow drawn and feeling a little shaky. I remembered to engage my back muscles and everything became steady. The shot broke and the hind didn't make it 30yd. It was a



great start to the bowhunting season and my confidence built. I was stoked!

The rest of the weekend went well and I felt confident for the weekends ahead.

Well, the weekends came and went and although there were plenty of great memories and close calls, I still ended up without my dream-worthy stag. To add fuel to the fire, you could say that it was a bit of a wait until the 2021 season came around. Being as eager as ever to hit the hills, I put plans in place to kick off the season.

Our first 2021 trip proved to be a little quiet, however it was early days and the slow start wasn't going to deter me a bit.

By the second trip, I was still as enthusiastic as ever. We started walking some new country, glassing as we went and seeing no sign or deer.

I couldn't help myself, and decided to go to a favourite spot where a lot of deer had been sighted the year before. As we reached the spot of choice we were pleased to see plenty of sign, evidence of bedding areas and rub trees. Trying to skirt these areas so that minimal scent would be left, it was decided that we would check out a nearby dam. Making my way slowly but surely up to this dam, I was hit with a surge of adrenaline when I spotted an unawares young 4x4. I immediately hit the ground bins up and was taking in his beauty. It seemed as if he had a spring in his step this morning because as he reached the top of the dam bank he did a bit of a buck and a jump and to my disappointment decided to bound off with not a care in the world. As I made my way up to the dam, as always I decided to stay out wide and

use my bins to look at the recent sign and wasn't surprised that I could make out plenty of different sized tracks ... pigs and deer.

The sun was starting to get rather high at this stage and so I found myself a wide tree to sit under to have a bite. The country was looking good this time of year and the waist-high grass meant that if a deer did decide to show up I would have a good chance of staying undetected. Only minutes had passed when I started to hear something odd. Straight in front of me, three stags came running up towards me—a double 3, 4 and 5. That surge of adrenaline hit again and it was game time. I nocked an arrow and watched as they came closer. As in most cases, the mature stag was at the rear.

The 3x3 and 4x4 were almost at 30yd from me and it was all happening



*A great start to the first season.*



pretty quickly—and then the double 5 stopped dead. He had hit my scent where I had just skirted this dam. The other deer stopped also and looked behind, sensing there was something wrong. With no clear shot, all I could do was wait to see what unfolded. The 5x5 was sure something wasn't right and backed up a little. He smelt the air, half shied off over the hill ... and was gone. The 4x4 and 3x3 followed the 5x5, and that was that.

I thought to myself, "Well, that was pretty cool," rested my bow and continued eating.

Not 20 seconds later I heard the same noise coming from where the deer had just vanished and like before they were coming in fast. At this time, I didn't know what deer was what! I saw that there was only one approaching the dam. With the grass being as long as it was, I only had one shooting lane where I would be undetected so as he made his way through this window I let loose. For the second time that morning, there was a buck and a jump and 20yd later it was all over. As the shot broke and the commotion of the deer jumping into the water sounded, his 4x4 mate started making his way up the same pad. As he approached he knew something wasn't quite right and skirted the dam for the next five minutes, trying to work out why his mate was lying motionless next to the dam. As time went on, like his bigger smarter mate had done before, he went over the hill and out of sight.

Taking in what had just happened I was rapt - second hunt into the new season and I had my first stag on the ground. It wasn't the biggest stag around but was certainly a trophy in my eyes. Plenty of pics later and with the meat loaded into our packs, it was back to camp for us. The remainder of the weekend proved worthwhile, as we spotted good numbers of hinds and areas to be coming back to in weeks to come. I was warmed up and keen to see what the rest of the season had in store.



*An exciting moment ... the first stag on the ground.*

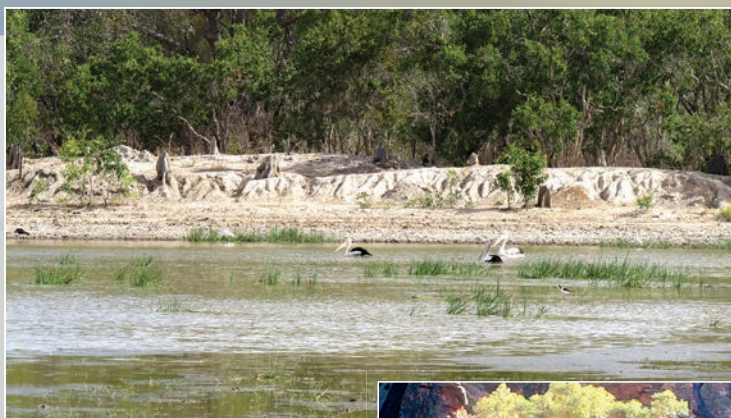


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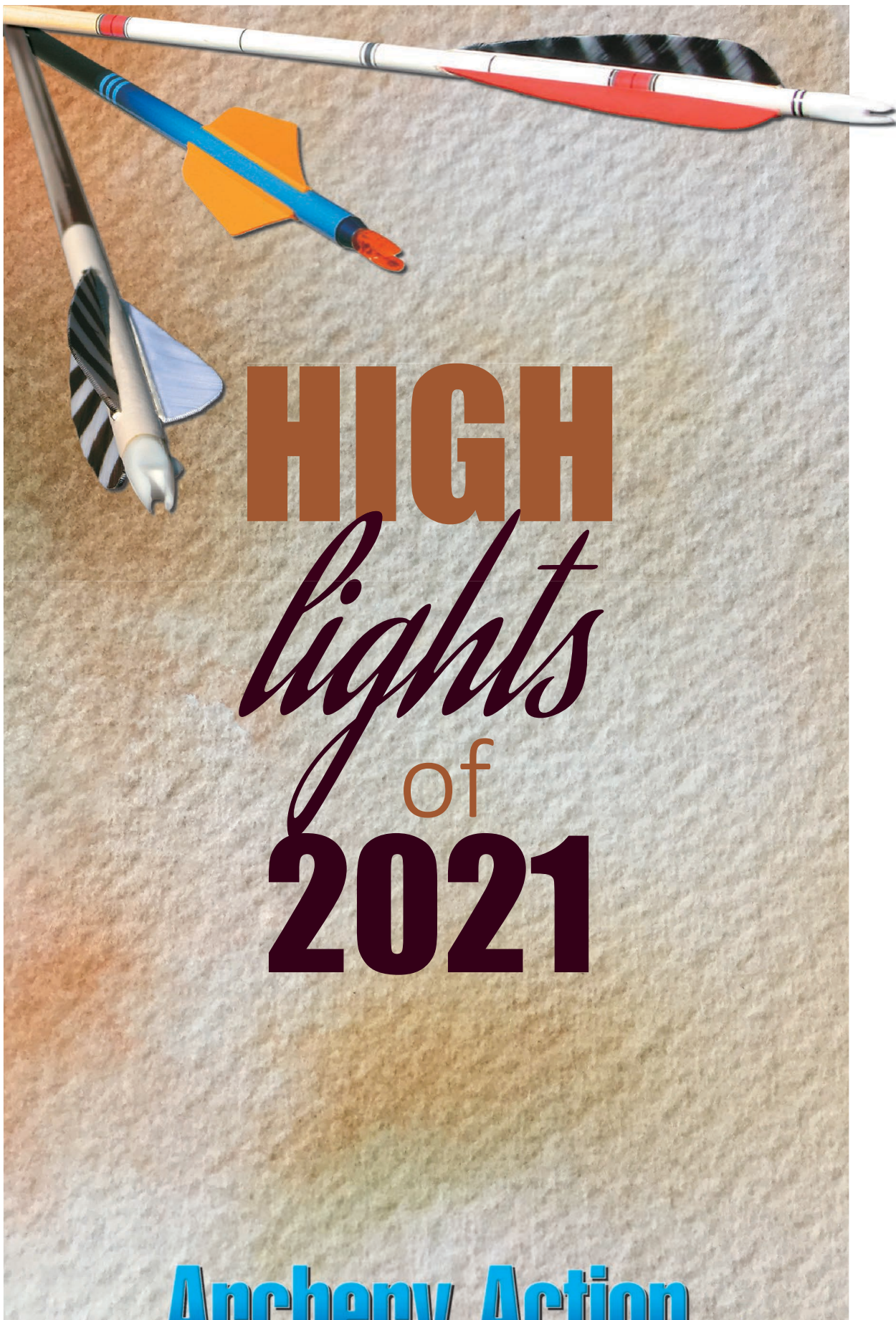
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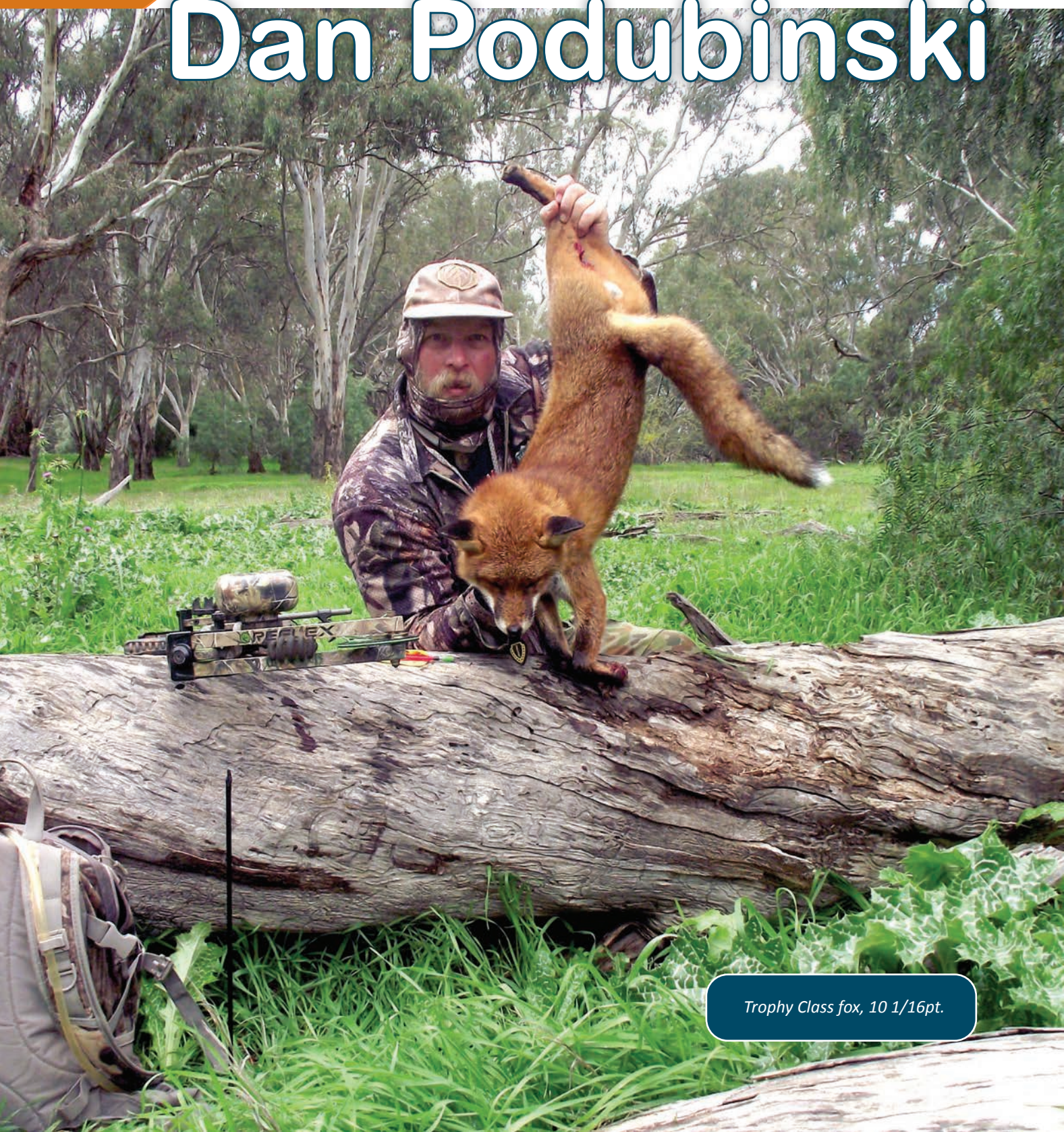
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EDITOR  
INTERVIEW  
**JENEL HUNT**

TROPHY BOWHUNTERS OF AUSTRALIA

# Bowhunter of the Year Dan Podubinski



*Trophy Class fox, 10 1/16pt.*



*In 2020, Dan Podubinski took the most measurable species within TBA—including four Record Class animals and 10 Trophy Class animals—to win this year's prestigious Bowhunter of the Year Award.*

Dan Podubinski probably wouldn't tell you this himself, but his results speak for themselves: He is—without doubt—a smoocher extraordinaire.

And before you scratch your head and ask out loud, “A what?”, I’m talking about his ability to pucker up and kiss-call for foxes.

Dan, who hails from Jindera in New South Wales, has been named the TBA Bowhunter of the Year, and what a year it was to get hunting's top nod. The award, which is one of the finest and most sought after achievements in ABA hunting circles, recognises the best bowhunting claims by any one hunter in the previous year

COVID restrictions put a stop to many ‘away’ hunting trips, but Dan's ability to smooch is probably what got him over the line, as he took 14 foxes along with many other species.

It's definitely not society air kisses we're talking about here. It's an amazing mix of sounds he has perfected over the years that, without a doubt, sound like a little animal in

trouble. And this particular form of lip service draws the foxes like bears to honey.

“To start with, I thought you *had* to use a whistle to get a fox to come in. I didn't know a lot about it, but I'd go out into a paddock and try to whistle up a fox. I didn't have much luck,” he said.

“One day I didn't have a whistle with me and I'd spooked two foxes at a creekbed, so I tried the smooching sound and it worked. And once I really learned how to smooch, they started to come in hot.

“I think one of the advantages of smooching is that the sound changes a little every time. I could smooch up a certain way today and tomorrow I won't exactly replicate it because I might have drier lips or they're not in quite the same position. The foxes come in because it's a real sound. If a fox has been whistled before, it won't come in to the whistle again past about 70m. It'll just sit and watch and look around, but with smooching you can get it to come all the way in.

The technique is unbelievable—they come in hard and fast, and they're close. It's exciting.”

In fact, his favourite hunt for all of last year was a fox that he ‘smooched in’—and it wasn't the Record Class fox that won him a national place in the Best of Species list either. It was the thrill of having his 10-year-old son with him for the experience.

“We spooked two foxes up the creek and eventually got one of them; a game award fox. The size of the animal wasn't the main thing—it was more about the memory and the shared experience. Mostly it's pretty quick to get a fox to come in once you know where they hang out, but that one was a lot of sitting and waiting. A good time, though. Plus, the skin is in the freezer to make into a rug.

“Actually, my son and I do a fair bit of hunting together. He tags along for the walk, takes photos—he enjoys it. He's happy to watch and whistle in the foxes and just loves the close encounter. He's learning to engage with the species and wants to head

*Trophy Class fox, 9 10/16pt.*







*Record Class fox, 10 6/16pt.*

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down the TBA award system path one day. He's seen my brag vest and he wants some of the badges so it's on the cards that he'll get a compound one day soon."

For himself, Dan is a Hoyt shooter but in recent times he has tried other brands and liked them too.

"I shoot a different set-up for bowhunting and competition. My hunting bow is a Reflex, which once upon a time was made by Hoyt but it's a 2009 model and they're no longer available. For competition—FITA, ABA or IFAA—I shoot Men's A Grade Freestyle Unlimited with a Hoyt Carbon Defiant Turbo. So, I'm a compound shooter ... but my kids all shoot recurves."

Dan is a family man. He and his wife have three children. In the early days, they had three under the age of two. Dan just says that although it was a pretty hectic time, it "got it out of the way quick". They have a daughter, 12, who used to go bowhunting with her Dad but doesn't now and 10-year old twins, a girl and a boy.

They might not all have inherited the hunting bug, but they do all eat meat—the kind that is taken in the wild and dressed in the field

Dan's interest in hunting has encompassed both rifle shooting and bowhunting, and he sees it like this:

"If I'm in a hurry and I need some meat for the freezer, I'll take the rifle.



If I'm out for enjoyment and want to take a nice trophy, I prefer a bowshot job. I like the challenge and prefer to take a good trophy animal with the bow. The rifle just doesn't have the same appeal."

Dan is an out-and-out meat eater—and all the edible animals that he shoots go on the table.

"I was always a meat hunter. I used to go out with my brother, who was a trophy hunter. As time progressed and I've evolved through the TBA process in the game claiming process, that's driven me to the trophy side of things, but in saying that, all those animals have been put in the freezer. The horns or antlers are a bonus to filling up the freezer.

"The majority of the meat we eat is game meat; it's our staple. We eat everything at our house. I love goat hunting and rabbit hunting is something I've always done and still do—I used to get a bit of fun poked at me because I enjoy it so much, but they're great target animals. Rabbits are great to hunt and we all like eating the meat as well. We have a KFC-style rabbit recipe that the kids love. They smash those nuggets

down so quick I hardly get any!

"And when the missus serves up another game meat dish with a fancy French name, the kids think it's fun."

I reckon even a non-game-meat-eating person would try rabbit bits covered in a salt-and-vinegar-chip crumb then fried until the shell is hard and crunchy, with delicious moist meat inside.

The way Dan talks about it not only makes you salivate over the meals he describes, it makes sense in the bigger picture.

"I'm a bit old school and I'm pretty blunt, but I've never been to a barbecue and told a vegan that I like killing stuff," he said.

Sensitivity to other people's feelings aside, his respect for the animal itself is deep and abiding.

"It's a humane death, whether you use a rifle or a bow. The animal is unaware, and I prefer it that way. I'm getting fresh organic meat rather than meat from a stressed-out animal that has gone through the knocking docks. People think you're just killing things, but it's really not the same. I've seen it grazing, I've seen its behaviour and I know what it was doing in the

moments before its death.

"It's sort of hard to explain, but it generates respect for the animal that has given up its life so you can have meat on the table. I'm not sure you get that when you buy meat in a tidy little pack at the supermarket.

"It's a back-to-nature experience. There's something calming about being out in the bush. There's a sort of connection with the land ... almost a spiritual thing."

For Dan, it's part of the fabric of his entire life.

"I started rabbit trapping when I was really young—I used to sell the skins on the way to school. Then I progressed to rifle shooting. I did some dogging then went back to rifle shooting and then around 2009 two of my brothers had compound bows and one of my brother's friends was selling a bow so I bought it. It sat in the cupboard for a while because I didn't know anything about archery, but after moving I found a local archery club in Albury and started shooting targets at the local club.

"Then I decided I wanted to hunt and it progressed from there. I wasn't a serious bowhunter in the beginning.

*Trophy Class fox, 9 5/16pt.*







Trophy Class fox, 9 3/16pt.

I'd take it out once or twice a year on a really big trip then the bow would sit in the cupboard again. It wasn't until 2016 when I shot my first fox—which got me into TBA—that I grew more serious about it. Now I use it all the time."

He has been a member of Twin City Bowmen (an independent club) since 2011 and is also a member of Buffalo Bowmen in Mertleford, Victoria.

In his mid-40s, Dan works in road construction so he's used to spending his days in the sun and being close

to 180-degree asphalt. He also has worked in a foundry, so he knows hot. That means when he's out bush in 40-degree temperatures it doesn't bother him or make him change his normal hunting style.

"I'm not a sit-and-wait hunter. I've



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made the odd hide in the bush and I've been successful, but it's not my strength. I need to get up and move around and make it happen. I don't care if it's 40 degrees in the shade, I'd rather walk and stalk," he said.

So even on a melting summer day out west, if he's there on a goat hunt he'll be hoofing it, not sitting in a hide.

"I have to travel for billies. Even then I have to do my homework to find a good Trophy Class one. They're not around in the numbers they were, say, 20 years ago.

"For deer, I mostly go into Victoria—but there wasn't much chance for that in 2020.

"Most of my hunts are pretty close to home. We have a healthy population of rabbits within a couple of minutes of home, and foxes are about a 50-minute drive away.

"I'm away a bit for work, but when I'm home I like to hunt most

weekends. I get up really early and go when the family's still in bed. When I get back, they've only been up for a couple of hours. It works well. I get my hunt in, and I don't miss out on being with my family."

It was no accident that Dan made it into TBA's top echelon, the Master Bowhunter Award, for last year's hunting. He set out with that goal in mind, although he never really thought he'd be win the coveted Bowhunter of the Year title.

"We have a lot of foxes within an hour of home—and there wasn't much chance to travel for hunting because of COVID—so if I was going to get to Master Bowhunter I was going to have to do it by racking up a lot of my points with Trophy Class foxes," he said.

But while the TBA claim system means a lot to him and is thrilled to have received the Bowhunter of the Year award, he always remembers

the true value of hunting.

"Last year the landowner (where I hunt foxes) lost \$3000 worth of lambs, so he's glad I'm there helping to thin out the foxes. For edible animals, I get the meat. I used to do a lot of leather tanning many years ago and I still tan the odd skin for knife sheaths, hip quivers or rugs. I try to go through the whole process—the trophy is just a bonus."

There's always something more to aim for—and Dan says there are more in the TBA's recognised 18 species that he has yet to take.

"That's one goal—to get all 18 TBA species and then to go further afield and take some species in New Zealand and possibly go on to hunt in America or Canada. In the meantime, I don't have to go out of the country but I do have to travel for my biggest short-term goal—a buffalo!"

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### TUSKER TROPHY OF THE MONTH

**Best Trophy Taken**

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**Tyler Atkinson, Ballarat Bowhunters, Fox, 10 3/16 pts, Record Class**



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**Chris Baty, Geelong Trophy Bowhunters, Feral Goat, 102 3/8 pts, Trophy Class**

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*TBA Best of Species fox.*



“

Last year I took 14 foxes, all within a 50-minute drive of home. The fox in this photograph was the one that measured Best of Species—10 11/16pt. I was out rabbit hunting and it was going to be a quick hunt because I didn't have a lot of time. But I saw a fox looking at me and ready to run so I sent an arrow its way. I thought it was a poor shot because the arrow went into its neck. The fox ran and I tried to follow it up, but the gully system split three ways and by the time I went to look for it I couldn't find it.

The next day I went back out there. It was really hot. I was standing on top of the gully but it wasn't until I stepped out on a shelf and looked down that I saw a fox tail. It was very humid and the fox's body had already started to melt. I wasn't even sure I'd take a photo because he was really stinky and I didn't want to go too close. I turned away to leave, but for some reason went back and had a better look. The average fox skull is about six inches but I thought this one was heaps longer than that. I put my middle finger and thumb to his head and thought, hey, that's pretty big. Maybe I will take it. So I got the head, cleaned up the skull and was

blown away. He was a cracking fox—amazing to think I'd nearly left him.

By hunting standards, that was a pretty ordinary hunt. But the most unusual was when I was walking along one of the local creeks where I knew there were often some really good foxes—you know, the sort of place that when a dog fox runs out, if he keeps running and doesn't look back you know it's a good one!

Across the creek was a nice peppercorn tree and a flat grassy area. Foxes like sitting under peppercorn trees or even in them so it was a good spot to do some smooching. I smooched for a good 10 minutes, but nothing was happening.

I was ready to go, but for some reason I looked to my right. There was a fallen gum tree, lying high up across the creek, and lying right in the middle of it was a fox.

My heart started pumping, because he looked like a good fox. The grass was wet and I wanted to stalk in, so I took off my shoes. I could hear the zips on my bumbag jingling, so I unclipped it and fumbled a bit and it fell to the ground. I thought, jeez, he's going to hear me! I was standing there, my feet saturated, heart pounding. And he was still lying

there, facing away from me. Asleep!

I slipped in an arrow, and he woke up quickly and ran off across the log to where the peppercorn tree was on the other side, near a little beach. He was just looking around and I thought, I gotcha, I gotcha! He was there for probably 10 minutes. I could see blood starting, then he just ran off and went under the peppercorn tree. I could just see him, so I thought I'd let him go and I'd put my wet feet and socks into my boots before I tried to follow him.

I was a bit scared going across that downed tree. It was pretty high across the creek, but the only way I was going to find my fox was to follow him. He was expired by the time I got across to him.

I was amazed. You don't usually come across a fox making a silly mistake like that, sleeping out in the open. He'd obviously been trying to be smart by positioning himself in the middle of the log so nothing could get him.

I was pretty happy with that hunt. I wasn't carrying my rangefinder and I'd instinctively sighted the distance pretty well considering there was a lot of dead ground with the gully and the creek between us.

”



“

I was out rabbit hunting on this particular day. Once I'd done my normal routine of following the big gully systems, I came up out of the gully to a clear, flat area where I sometimes do some broadhead shooting. There's an old abandoned house there and it's always worth having a look around. There are old

chook pens along the back of the house with chicken wire netting, a heap of corrugated iron and doors off the house, an old tree—maybe a plum—and some blackberry bushes.

Just near the old chook pen, I saw the cat sunning itself. It saw me at the same moment as I saw it, and I was lucky enough to get a shot off.

That's sometimes how it goes. You're looking for something else—in my case, rabbits—and you find something unexpected. But you have to be out looking in the first place.

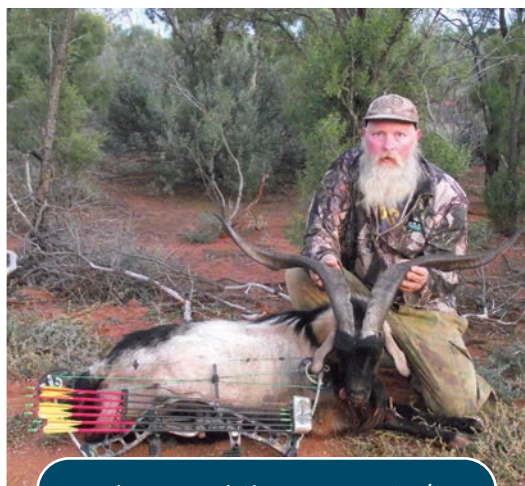
It's good to get a cat. They're the apex predator. They just hunt, hunt, hunt our birds and native animals—not just for food but for fun.

”

*Trophy class feral cat, 7 1/16pt.*







*Another Record Class goat, 116 4/8pt.*



*TBA Best of Species goat—Record class, 121 5/8pt.*

“

I did a reasonable amount of travelling to get my goat and I had to do a fair bit of homework to work out where to go to get a good one. I arrived at the property about mid-afternoon one day in July and set up camp. I'd been on the phone to one of the workers and asked him where he'd seen goats. He gave me an idea about where to look and said there might be a couple of good ones amongst them. Also, the owner flies over the property now and then so they pointed me in the right direction.

When I started walking, I saw goats and heard goats, so I started stalking through the scrub. I was probably only 20m into my stalk when a couple of nannies started

feeding in my direction. I panicked a bit and sat down, and luckily they started to feed in another direction. I could hear a billy smashing his horns against a tree, and when he presented an opportunity I set the 20-pin on his chest and took the shot. He would have been 35in to 37in across.

But he ran off. I thought, uh oh, what's happened here? I waited a minute and saw him running with the rest of the mob. I walked to where he'd been and couldn't find any blood. Then I found the back part of my arrow. There'd been a branch between me and the goat, and the arrow had never even made it all the way to the goat.

I was very disheartened at that

stage but I kept walking and walking. I walked perhaps another 3km then saw some more goats—a nanny and a couple of kids. I was out in the open so I just squatted and sat there and waited. Then a big billy came out and presented a shot. Right, here we go! I took the shot.

It was getting late by then. I couldn't get a vehicle in there so I retrieved my arrow, propped the goat up, walked back to the vehicle, came back and put a tarp over him so he wouldn't get a frost on him overnight. By then it was dark, so I had my photo session with the goat the following morning. He went just under 40in.

It had been a disheartening start but all's well that ends well!

”



“

It was November, I think, when I took the fallow. The young bloke and I had been out in March, before COVID, hoping to find some tracks where deer had been walking. It was just coming in to the start of the rut and we wanted to see if we could find some scrapes and do some homework on where the stags might be cruising around.

Then there was COVID and the bushfires as well, so it wasn't until nearly the end of the year that I got back there and I had to go to an area further up from where I'd normally go because my usual spot was totally killed by the bushfires.

I saw a tail flick up before I saw the deer, then I saw another. In total there were four does there. Two looked fairly young, one was half grown and there was a larger doe.

I sat and waited and waited. Then one of the deer spotted me and I thought it was all over. But it kept just watching me. Then another started looking around and I thought she had spotted me too, but she turned and presented a shot so I drew my bow even though I thought she was looking at me and might balk. But as I drew back, the thought in my mind was something my brother always said to me, "If

you don't take the shot, you've already missed".

That was my first kill of species and it was only game—non-measurable size—but it was my fourth measurable species for the year. And it was at that stage that I thought I might actually be in the running for the Bowhunter of the Year because the foxes had given me my Master Bowhunter points.

I've taken plenty of deer with a rifle but for all sorts of reasons when I've gone out to bowhunt a deer I haven't come home with one. I was just fortunate that particular day, and it all worked for me.

”



*Fallow deer, game.*





## *Colour and pageantry at Australian-Tibetan Archery Competition*

**A**fter missing out on their annual celebration and archery event last year due to the dreaded COVID-19, Tibetan members of Boolaroo Bowmen were able to bounce back this year with an even bigger and better event than in previous years.

The grounds at Boolaroo Bowmen were awash with colour and pageantry for the 2021 Australian-Tibetan Archery Competition. The day was specifically chosen as it marks the 14th Dalai Lama's 86th birthday anniversary, which is a significant date in the Tibetan community.

Archery is the national sport of Tibet. In ancient times, bows and arrows were the weapons of choice used against foes or for hunting. Since the adoption of Buddhist practices centuries ago, the Tibetan nation has refrained from taking lives or causing the suffering of other beings. As a result, archery became a sport that recruited shooting





Words and pictures

Stephen Heusz

talent and promoted settling of disputes through sporting competition.

Competitors came from Newcastle, Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the ACT to take part in the day, which began with a Sacred Wood smoking ritual and was followed by singing and dancing presentations by members of the Tibetan School of Newcastle.

The day also featured excellent traditional food and ceremonies befitting this important cultural event, with special guests from the Tibetan community. Dignitaries present included Representative of H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, Kungoe Dhonjoe Karma Sangay Lak; Current Upcoming Tibetan Parliament Member, Mr Dorang Tenzin Phuntsok; Secretary of Tibetan Community of Australia, Mr Gotsang Nigan and the Vice-President of Tibetan Community of Sydney Mr Migmar Tsering.







Following the formalities, a number of archery events were held, including district, group, and individual archery competitions.

All of the archery events involved shooting barebow over 85m. Compound, recurve and historic bows were used with carbon, aluminium or even timber arrows. One of our Australian members of Boolaroo Bowmen, John, was presented with a traditional Tibetan costume so that he could compete with the Newcastle Tibetan team.

Whilst the focus may have been on the competition, friendly rivalry involving laughter and good-natured jibes were the order of the





day. Shooting styles were interpretive rather than formal. As long as the arrow made it as far as the target, all was good. It was a bonus to actually hit the target. Scoring a point resulted in much celebration and cheering.

Members of Boolaroo Bowmen worked hard behind the scenes to make this happen for our Tibetan members and we were amply rewarded when we witnessed the success of the day. It has been our pleasure and honour to be involved in this event and allow fellow archers to enjoy their sport in their own particular way.

Next year's event is already in the planning and looks to be even bigger and better.





# A week in Tibooburra

... as told by

**Debbie Larkings**  
**Janelle Jones**  
**Rob Messer**



## Debbie's story ...

**W**e met up with our friends Rob and Janelle (we started calling them Ned and Mavis on that trip) at Nyngan in outback New South Wales on the way to a week's hunting in Tibooburra.

The week wasn't what we hoped it would be for hunting but it was a fantastic week. After meeting up

with Ned and Mavis, we travelled as far as 150km east of Tibooburra then camped for the night on the side of the road. We went to bed early because we had uninvited guests—moszies. They almost drove us mad. If ABA counted moszies as game, we would hold the world record for most kill of species! While we talked around the

camp before heading for bed, a car went by slowly and pulled up further up the road. Well, by the end of the night, Mavis had the car driver an axe murderer. "I was pleased I woke up in one piece," she said the next morning. I think Mavis watches too many horror movies!

Anyway, we were up early and

*Graeme and Debbie at the Tibooburra property.*



headed off to the station 80km north of Tibooburra. We had to go through Tibooburra, so we had a look around and decided to have an early lunch. We all had hamburgers. They were \$15 each but mine was the most beautiful hamburger I've ever had.

Driving to the station, Graeme got caught out—he hit a bad bit on the road and we got a little airborne. After that, Graeme had to put up with being called Dick after a certain racing car driver.

Amid a big duststorm at 1.30pm, we arrived at the station owned by Rachael and Bodie and their two sons Ethan and Edward. It's a 130,000 acre station running cattle and sheep.

The hospitality from the family was wonderful. We all talked for a while, then Bodie and Ethan showed us our sleeping quarters. Ethan is just 12 years old but going from his knowledge of the station, you would think he was older. He told us about the property and a few historic stories about the station. I was very impressed with Ethan. Also as a welcome present, Ethan had cooked us yummy chocolate chip cookies.

After we unpacked, we went for a little drive. After a while, we noticed some goats. It was decided that Dick would do the first stalk. There were about 12 goats out in the open. They were very switched on, so Dick had no luck. Back in the vehicle, we continued. To our amazement, we came across a beautiful old shearing shed over 100 years old. We found out later that when the owners built the shearing shed, they carted all the wood from 30 miles away—a huge job in those days. Inside, the wool table was made out of sticks.

We drove around a bit more but had no luck. We decided to head back to our quarters for some tucker and BS. (Apparently you've got to tell a few far-fetched stories on these trips.)

The next day, it was decided Ned

and Mavis would go in their vehicle one way and Dick and I would go on our quad. By the way, if you're wondering why there's no nickname for me, they say it's because *Archery Action* wouldn't be allowed to print it.

Graeme and I ... that is, Dick and I ... saw nothing except great country and we had a great time on the quad. As we were riding around we saw heaps of budgies, zebra finches, wedgetailed eagles and other types of birds that we couldn't identify. We also saw lots of birds' nests.

Meanwhile, Ned and Mavis had better luck and saw 10 goats but the goats were too vigilant and soon disappeared. The four of us met back at the quarters for lunch then went our separate ways again. Dick and I saw nothing but Ned and Mavis saw a razorback. Mavis was too scared to get out of the vehicle but Ned was brave and got out for a stalk. But Razorback saw Ned, he took fright and ran for his life. (Razorback was about 30cm tall.)

We all met back at the quarters, had tea, a few cold ones and went to bed listening to the rain. It rained all night so there was no hunting the next day. Dick and I went for a quad ride but we didn't go far as it was too wet. It was a little disappointing that it rained but we had a fantastic time stirring each other and telling stories. (It was this day that Ned and Mavis got their nicknames and I received my not-to-be-shared one.) Times like these when you're having fun with your mates are unforgettable.

The next day, Bodie took us around for the day. We saw a group of about five billies. Dick had a stalk but they were in the open and they wouldn't keep still. The ground was sloppy and boggy. Dick did have a shot but it was very hard. After the stalk, it was time to go back and it rained for the entire return trip.

We borrowed a small TV and DVD player and we watched hunting

movies, ate dinner and had a few cold ones before bed.

Dick and I had no luck for the rest of the week. The goats were hyper-aware and we couldn't take a trick. Still, all four of us had a great time. Our hosts were wonderful; thank you for your hospitality. We got Ethan and his cousin Sophie to make more cookies for us and we paid them for the cookies. They were so excited they thought they might set up a cookie stall on the side of the road—clearly

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our future entrepreneurs! Now Ned and Mavis are going to tell their part of the story—Mavis first.

### Janelle's story ...

We were thrilled when our good friends Deb and Graeme asked if we would like to go on a hunting trip with them. Of course, we accepted with much excitement as it had been a long time between hunts for us. After arrangements had been made, we eagerly packed and were on our way.

We met Deb and Graeme at our meeting place then travelled for the entire day, camping on the roadside in the middle of nowhere for our first night. The mozzies were as thick as fog but it was an enjoyable night catching up with the gossip, having lots of laughs and anticipating what was to come.

We set off early the next day. The landscape was harsh after the long drought and I was wondering if this was the right time to visit the area, but as we came closer to the property the landscape changed again into a burst of greenery, thick with flowering native shrubs and flocks of budgies. The area had been lucky enough to receive 40ml of rain a couple of weeks prior and things looked promising.

We were greeted by our hosts, shown our accommodation and spoilt with mouthwatering cookies made by the owners' two young boys. We settled in and got all our gear ready for the days to come.

The next few days flew by. We had a few exciting stalks and saw plenty of signs of goats. Rob spotted a scrawny pig with a hip problem (the pig looked about 20 years old!) and took chase but unfortunately, even with all its disabilities it disappeared into thin air. The rain set in which certainly slowed us down in the 4WD, but we were extremely lucky to be offered the use of another more suitable vehicle by

the owner. We were most grateful for his very generous offer.

The end of our trip was fast approaching. We had seen some game during the past few days but had been unable to get close, so we were determined to spend as much time as possible out hunting as our time on the property drew to a close. Rob and I set off early and in no time at all spotted a small number of goats. We started our stalk but thanks to a wind change the goats quickly realised we were approaching and they bolted. Following their tracks on the top of a huge sand ridge for almost a kilometre and glassing the area thoroughly, we decided it was futile to continue so headed back to the vehicle.

On our way we heard Deb and Graeme approaching on their quad. We decided it was time for a little payback for the many pranks that had been bestowed upon us recently, and

put our camouflage skills to the test, hiding right next to the track before bursting out just at the right moment. It certainly took them by surprise—they almost fell off their quad!

They had not seen too much in their travels so after a short laugh and chat we parted ways. We headed in the direction that they had come from then turned off to an area that we had not hunted as yet.

Bingo. There they were. A small herd of about six goats about 3km away. We hastily geared up and started our stalk. We had plenty of head height cover for about a third of the distance so managed that quickly as the wind was in our favour. Suddenly there was very little cover and the going got tougher.

I pulled my gators up over my knees for protection as by then we were on all fours one behind the other. I led for a while then Rob took the lead. With hands full of burrs and



*Janelle and Rob with their borrowed ATV, in front of the early shearing shed.*



cover getting shorter and fewer, we slowly crept closer, stopping several times to check the situation. The heat was almost unbearable by then and there were many skeletons of rotting animals that had not survived the drought. We both chose the goat we hoped to have a shot at and kept going.

Rob signalled to stop suddenly so we both froze. Close by was a cheeky young billy. He seemed a little wary and knew something wasn't quite right but didn't make a fuss. He settled down, watching in our direction intently so we could not move for ages.

Suddenly the wind picked up and the billy stood tall while our camo hats waved at him in the breeze. He signalled to the mob and with much sneezing and confusion about 26 goats got up and charged off. We were shocked at how many were actually there that we hadn't known about. We kept our chosen game in

sight and when we were able, took our shots. Both arrows fell just short of our targets.

After about a 1km on hands and knees, prickles, decaying animals and searing heat we were a bit deflated, but at the same time realised how lucky we were to be in the great outback doing what we love to do, with great buddies and lovely hosts. We walked back to the vehicle discussing the episode.

Travelling many more kilometres around the property without seeing any more game, we decided to have a break and explore an old homestead and an early shearing shed that was amazingly still standing. It had been built by the owner's great grandfather and would have seen much shearing activity during its heyday. The owners hope to restore it to its former glory one day.

While I wandered around taking photos of the homestead and the birdlife, Rob decided he would

do some fossicking with his gold detector. Suddenly I heard him shout, "I've found something!" The detector was going berserk when waved over a promising gold-coloured rock. He moved the rock away and waved the detector over the rock again but to his dismay heard no sound at all. Looking puzzled he waved the detector over the area where the rock had been and again the detector screamed. Excitedly digging into the ground, he unearthed an old rusted axehead. Oh well, no riches discovered but an item of history had been found. Leaving all the found items where they belonged, we hopped into the vehicle once more and got back to the business of hunting.

We spent an hour or two scouting about for game, appreciating the beautiful property that we were privileged to stay at and discussing the hardship of the recent drought and its impact on the hard-working owners of this little piece of paradise.







*The historic wool table made of sticks.*

Late that afternoon, Rob had another chance at a stalk.

## Rob continues the tale ...

Continuing our journey back to camp, I spotted a couple of white dots in the far distance. Stopping the ATV and looking through the binoculars, I confirmed there were five goats. Janelle decided to stay put so I faced the ATV in the direction of the goats. We decided that when I waved my bright orange hat, Janelle would come and get me. She didn't have her binoculars so would have to improvise and use her camera lens instead.

I travelled at a fast pace down the hill across a flat to where there was more cover. I constantly checked that the goats were still there. After what seemed ages, I looked back and realised I was only halfway there. I almost called it quits as I thought I might run out of daylight, but after this morning's upsetting result I was pumped to continue.

Having plenty of good cover now, I kept going and finally got to within 60m of the goats. There were five billies, with the biggest being about 32 inches. A light brown billy with black

shoulders and legs took my eye so I decided he was the one to go for.

I stalked in closer and four of the billies including the one I was interested in walked down to the water while one remained feeding. I continued a further 20m. Suddenly the goat that was feeding raced flat out

down to his mates at the water's edge and spooked them. They regrouped and headed past me at about 40m. I drew back on the goat I wanted, released and hit him slightly high in the shoulder.

The group continued moving on without a fuss. Glassing them again, I could see blood on the offside of the goat I'd hit. The exit wound was lower than the entry so I thought I might be lucky and be able to retrieve this goat.

Still moving away from me, one of the goats stopped and lay down whilst the others headed into some thicker cover. I thought that was a little weird but realised he wasn't looking too good so I moved closer and took another shot. Walking towards the goat I realised there was a lot of blood. My arrow had gone straight through the first goat and hit this one in an artery on one of his back legs. Having dispatched this goat, I went after the goat I first hit.

There was a lot of blood on the



*The goat's skin.*





*Rob's goat.*

trail I was following so I was confident I would find him but the sun was sinking fast so I took my orange hat off and waved it hoping Janelle would see me and returned to skin the goat. I could only just see the ATV through my binoculars.

I set the goat up for some photos, doing a rush job as I was going to take this skin. I looked back towards Janelle and realised she hadn't moved. I

waved my hat again and several more times while skinning the goat. Finally, I heard the ATV approaching. Janelle was a little upset as she couldn't see me through the camera lens and wasn't sure my exact location, but all was good. She then set off on the first blood trail to see if she could find the goat while I finished the skin and packed the vehicle. Janelle returned and said she'd stalked within 15m of

a goat (but didn't have her bow with her). She couldn't find the goat I hit.

It was getting dark by this time so we set off back to camp to salt the skin. We returned in the morning and followed the blood trail of the first goat for some time. Unfortunately the trail stopped and we were unable to find it.

For Janelle, a lesson learned: she has vowed to always take her binoculars and bow wherever she goes in future!



# ABA NATIONAL SAFARI 2021



**B**eautiful warm days and pleasantly cool nights set the scene for the 2021 National Safari over the Easter long weekend at ABA Park near Mudgee.

But if the weather was ideal for shooting (with the exception of a sneaky wind at the top of the 3D hill), most competitors had to be happy with scores that were less than perfect. The range captains had struck again!

The ranges were set out by National Executive members National President Tony Hartcher, Senior Vice-President Ralph Boden, Vice-President Bowhunting Allan Driver, Director of Bowhunting Education Ray Morgan and National Score Recorder Brian Taylor, along with a couple of volunteers from Branch E.

Brian Taylor, who wore three hats over the weekend, admitted the

ranges were 'pretty hard' and that there hadn't been any perfect scores from the competitors. He decided to shoot the ranges himself even though he had a ton of official duties to do. So, how did he go?

"I had a couple of rounds from hell," he said.

It was Brian's first National Safari as National Score Recorder and he was also the Shoot Director. He had





Photo by  
TONY HARTCHER

help from National Communications Officer Alan Avent for the huge job of score recording. Brian said 130 archers competed—less than the couple of hundred they’d been hoping for but a great turnout all the same.

“We didn’t have a Safari last year because of the COVID-19 situation and even this time there were some who couldn’t come. We had no one from Western Australia or Tasmania and

only one from the Northern Territory.”

He said Tony Hartcher had run the canteen with help from Ralph Boden and a few others.

“Not everyone uses the canteen, as a lot of people have caravans and prepare their own food there. It’s a bit different from the old days of having mostly tents set up around the place. The majority have caravans and motorhomes now, a few have camper

trailers and some people stay at accommodation in Mudgee. It’s a bit more swanky these days!”

Two campfires, enclosed in decommissioned mining sieves, were lit at nights and people brought their chairs to enjoy the atmosphere.

The Easter Bunny also arrived on Sunday morning. Thanks, Adinah Courtney.

**—Jenel Hunt**





Photos this spread: TONY HARTCHER









# BEHIND THE SCENES

Photos by  
ALLAN DRIVER

## The lead-up to the event

Events like the National Safari don't just happen by magic. While the majority of the competitors rock up the day before, the competition itself requires meticulous planning and hundreds of man hours in preparation.

Some of the work for this event actually happened more than a year ago. New ranges were set up last year by members of the National Executive. COVID-19 caused the 2020 national event to be cancelled ... but last year's bad news was this year's good news. With some cutting back of undergrowth that had sprouted in the interim, the range blueprints could be used for the 2021 competition.

A number of National Executive officers, along with other ABA members who turned up to help, set off to put the targets out, do the mowing, place portaloos and the myriad other tasks needed to prepare a venue that is not a working club facility.

Some of the targets were so unwieldy they had to be strapped to the front bucket of the tractor to be transported to the range, while others were put out from the back of a ute. It took about four days for all the targets to be delivered to their places on the ranges. Slashing was also a big job.



*The arrival of the tractor ... this was an essential piece of equipment for the preparation of the grounds and transport of the larger targets to the ranges.*



*Putting out some of the signage.*



*The smaller 3D targets were taken out by ute.*





*Some of the targets were so big they were quite a challenge to transport out to the range.*



*One of the big 3D targets.*



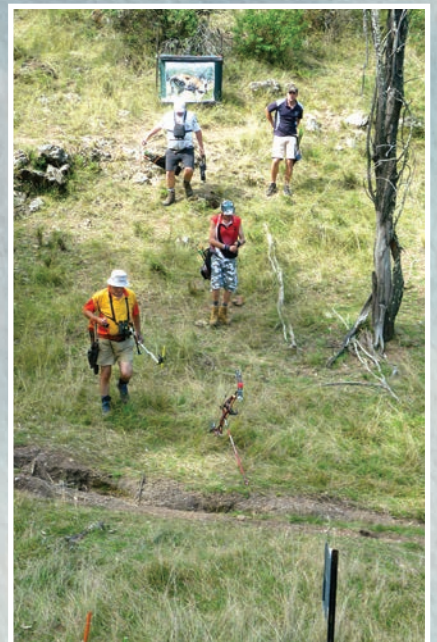
*Delivering a comfort stop.*



*Some of the country was hilly.*



***The next National Safari is planned for Wide Bay, Queensland during the 2022 Easter break.***



*All the hard work paid off. Competitors had a great experience.*



# The changing landscape of hunting ...



by GRAEME DUFF



*When you've been in a certain situation for a long time, you can't help but feel as though it will always be that way. Then—seemingly overnight—everything changes. Well, sometimes hunting's like that.*

**W**e've had obstacles that have made us at times question ourselves and seriously wonder if it's really worth it to go hunting. Drought that goes on year after year, the shock of wet weather, disease and death of feral game, lockdowns that keep us at home ...

Still, as mature-aged people, Helen and I know that change is inevitable. So despite the obstacles, we attempt to embrace the challenges. We count our blessings that lockdowns have (up until now) been minimal for us in comparison to our southern counterparts. We celebrate that the most devastating drought in living memory has come to an end and we are ever so grateful to receive good rain. This in turn promises to bring things back into balance for the primary producers who have endured so much.

As for disease and death in our feral populations, last year I estimated that the fox population in our general hunting area had been decimated to the tune of 75 per cent or thereabouts. Despite having hunted at a reduced level this year, my findings substantiate this claim. With respect to the much reduced frequency of hunting, that is attributed to rain events which are seemingly too numerous to mention. What a change! It only seems a short time ago we couldn't get a single fall of beneficial rain. There is no way I am

complaining, because seeing livestock doing it tough over the entire area which we hunt was very depressing.

Now we have the opposite. And while property owners are more than willing to grant us permission to hunt feral game, we have (on their recommendation) cancelled intended bowhunts due to the large volumes of water flowing down gullies, creeks and sometimes rivers too.

Some of our prime hunting areas have relatively flat ground, making travelling treacherous. Respect for landowners is of paramount importance to us, so we prefer not to take our 4WD and quad bike into wet paddocks where we might get bogged or leave unsightly vehicle tracks which are visible for some considerable time.

Helen and I have had to be patient but have seized the opportunity to hunt when conditions are favourable. Of late, this has resulted in very infrequent hunting, but we've made the best of it and enjoyed our time in the great outdoors. Apart from encountering very lush long green grass the likes of which we've seldom seen before, observing nature at its best has been thoroughly rewarding.

Our first hunt this year saw Helen and me carefully stalking a pig which was at times obscured by long grass. There was only one avenue of approach, which took us along the shallow side of a dam where there

was pin-reed about 30cm high. The advantage of moving slowly meant that both of us came within 5m of a buff-banded rail. This colourful (and usually very twitchy) waterbird wasn't unduly startled by us and gently waded out from us in the shallow water before flying off to pick at vegetation on the dam bank. Sometimes these encounters allow you to get a photo, but not this time.

Moving further around the dam, I drew to within 8m of the sow as she was feeding. She was despatched fairly quickly but we had to flatten the grass down so a reasonable photo could be taken (*facing page*).

A memorable hunt we had in April was on a very calm and cloudy day. We were interested to see if there was a trophy billy in a mob that was slowly coming out of a rocky, heavily timbered mountain. Through our binoculars, we could see maybe 30 goats very slowly coming out of the steep country at a considerable distance from us.

These goats will not tolerate anything that looks or sounds like a quad bike. Having been targetted by people who want to round up and sell as many as possible, these animals are on high alert. Hoping the almost non-existent wind would not give our approach away, we left the Quadrunner about 2km away from the goats.

The walk was fairly solid, as from where we started our approach the



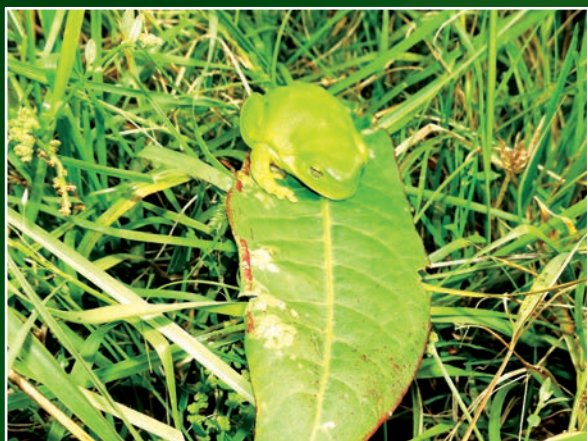
ground was all uphill. After a number of stops (so I could catch my breath), we made it to a scrubby outcrop of rock to the southern side of where we anticipated the group would feed on their way down the wide, lush gully system. This gully was situated by a very long steep spur which was well

vegetated with Port Jackson fig trees, box trees and a lot of large granite rocks and ledges.

Having settled in this scrubby outcrop, we glassed the goats as they meandered down the big gully system. Helen and I thought a billy with a brown skin and what looked

like longish V-shaped horns might go Trophy Class.

Only after the entire mob of maybe 60 goats (many more than our original estimate) had passed by at 300m, we decided to come down out of our hide and hopefully follow up on them without being seen.



## One of the pleasures of hunting ... photographing the wild side

*Observing native wildlife is certainly good therapy for anyone who enjoys life in the great outdoors. We were having a break when under a gum tree we looked up and saw a couple of musk lorikeets on a branch. They tolerated us for long enough that Helen had a chance to take a photo. They may have had a nest in a hollow nearby.*

*On a hunt during one of the warmer months, we encountered a green tree frog on a large leaf of dockweed. It was too good an opportunity to miss for a green-on-green image. The same can be said of a bearded dragon that was lying perfectly still on the ground in the hope that we didn't notice it.*

*Echidnas are one of our favourite animals to quietly approach and photograph. One has to approach them very quietly as any vibration on the ground will make them dig in for protection. A pair of echidnas that were probably approaching their breeding season provided us both with a number of photos. There is a great deal of enjoyment to be derived from wildlife photography, albeit in an amateur capacity. Unfortunately, to be able to take quality photos of the many species of birds I know and see would require more sophisticated photographic equipment than I own, or would wish to carry when bowhunting.*



Having walked to almost where the goats had passed, Helen said, "Look, there's another mob coming down the mountain." We both quickly glassed this new mob and I said to Helen, "There's a really good one in this mob."

Purely at a guess, I would say there were as many goats in this mob as the one that had passed through 20 minutes before. The problem was that the goats were walking down into a very slight breeze and we were in a bad position should they pick up our scent. The best decision we could come up with was to go back to our scrubby outcrop, sit it out and hope that the new mob followed the same path as the first mob.

On getting back up to our original observation point, the first thing I had to do was catch my breath. About another 20 minutes passed and this mob came down, luckily not exactly where we had been earlier.

We know what even a slight breeze can do to wreck a hunt so we watched as they slowly went past. Fortunately, none of them picked up our scent and when we thought they were in slightly scrubby ground we slowly left our position. Just prior to this we were of the opinion the good goat we had glassed would be of better quality than the brown billy we'd observed earlier.

We had only just left our position and walked maybe 30m when Helen said, "Stop, there's a white nanny goat looking at us."

We froze for quite some time and the switched-on nanny ran to catch up with the tail end of the mob. This concerned me, as a goat that runs with some urgency usually has a domino effect on the other goats and before you know it, they're all running.

That's about where we lost sight of the mob. Helen and I walked down the southern edge of the gully and hoped we would see at least some of the second mob, including the billy that had looked quite good.

This long and high spur had another gully running off it and Helen

could hear the bleating of some of the younger goats. A little disappointed, we decided to climb a spur that was an offshoot of the main ridge. This was steep. I told Helen I'd go up to a dead tree I could see at the top of the spur and have a look. I felt sure the goat I wanted would be there. With a quick look through my binoculars, I spotted him. He was some 130m down in the grassy gully feeding by himself.

Helen stayed back about 30m at a good vantage point while I carefully stalked down to a large gum tree with a huge fallen branch between the goat and me. The breeze was still practically non-existent so I used my smoke-in-a-bottle to check the airflow direction. Having made it to the big branch that had fallen from the tree, I was able to use a section of it as a seat—and I needed to sit down as getting there had been somewhat fatiguing.

There were two young white nanny goats closer to me than the billy and I had to be careful not to alert them. Sitting on the log, strategically placed so another limb on it was above my head slightly, was of great help in concealing me.

Many times I leaned left or right to see if the big billy was coming my way. He was coming and feeding as he went ... but painfully slowly. At the pace he was coming, I thought it would never eventuate.

Things started to go wrong, I thought, when one of the nannies decided she was going to head around the big gum tree and then to the log where I was sitting. This was going to be game over. She did see me, gave a quick snort and ran directly at right angles to the track I'd reckoned the billy might take (if he ever made it at all). Here, luck went my way. She ran about 20m without disturbing the other white nanny between the big tree and the billy goat.

Eventually, after what could have been 40 minutes, the billy ever so slowly came up to the big gum tree and I couldn't see him at all. Had I got up

and moved from my seated position, I was looking at failure for sure.

Again, luck came my way as he came to the right side of the big gum tree and paused to scratch his rump with one of his long horns. I seized the opportunity and stood up slowly, coming to full draw with my Darton Apache barebow. A 15m shot saw the wooden shaft, tipped with a Tusker Delta broadhead, pass through both lungs. He expired within seconds and it didn't appear as though any of the other goats some distance away noticed or really cared.

Helen's vantage point was a real good one as she witnessed the entire unfolding of the hunt. After taking photos and removing the head, I was well pleased with the measurement of 110 2/8pt.

It had been some years since I had taken a feral goat of that quality. The previous memorable goat hunt was when I took what I considered to be a very bowhunter-wise old billy back in August 2005. He had horns measuring 115 2/8pt. We had seen this goat on five occasions on a mountain far bigger and steeper than the one I've just described. He too was taken with my Darton Apache barebow. I know people think of me as a fox hunter, but I always jump at the chance to take other recognised game including pigs, feral cats, rabbits, hares and the occasional deer.

In June this year I took a reasonable dog fox. As mentioned previously, the fox population is nowhere near what it was prior to the drought. Hot dry conditions caused the death of the majority of foxes in our area due to mange.

This hunt in June was on a new property in our area but the owner warned us to be extremely careful as the topsoil was absolutely saturated due to the wetter than usual winter. On stepping out of the 4WD it was abundantly clear that the low-lying areas were not good places to be walking as cattle tracks all individually



held water. Our best move was to go up into the grassy hills where a fox would most likely camp away from the wet lowlands. This initially was a good move as just prior to my selecting a large box tree from which to whistle, Helen spotted a fox some distance down the hill. It was on the move and had obviously seen us before Helen saw it. Therefore no amount of whistling would entice the wised-up fox back so we decided to push on.

Having hunted properties around the newly acquired one over the years theoretically meant there should be no shortage of foxes. Many stands and attempts were made to bring a fox in, but to no avail.

About midday, at a stand in an area where I felt certain there'd be a fox, I

had yet another attempt. At about the time I was becoming convinced this stand was going to be as fruitless as the 10 or so previous stands, a vixen slowly materialised. She came down over a series of steep banks (made from previous earthmoving jobs years ago) then froze in front of me at about 25m. No amount of enticement worked and she turned and ran back in the direction from which she'd come. This type of behaviour has been very prevalent this year as they have been very touchy. Similar behaviour patterns have been seen regarding rabbits when their numbers are severely depleted. I guess this is nature's way of ensuring the survival of the given species when the breeding stock is only small.

Later in the afternoon, after many

more attempts at whistling for a fox had produced nothing, I told Helen I'd go down to the creek running through the property and have one more try. I selected a dead apple-box tree to stand by and commenced whistling.

About eight minutes passed and I thought I was just blowing my fox whistle for the fun of it. I took the arrow off my bowstring and put it back in my hip quiver. Having taken no more than three steps away from my stand, I spotted a dog fox slowly coming down the bank on the other side of the creek. Quickly I moved back to my stand and gave a very faint whistle in the hope he could find a place to cross. Due to the flow of the water, crossing the creek might be impossible for him.

In front of me was the creek bank, which was about an 8m drop to the water. Here I momentarily lost sight of the fox. I had to anticipate where he might come from over the bank—if at all. As I was at full draw, he luckily appeared exactly where I had hoped he would. At a reasonable walk he came to me front-on then turned slightly to my left, giving me a perfect opportunity at 7m.

The Tusker Aztec did its job and the fox turned and ran back over the bank of the creek from where he'd come, crossed the creek and attempted to go back on the precise track along which he had come. I was astounded that he made it that far. He rolled sideways down the grassy bank on the other side of the creek and expired. He would later measure 10 3/16pt.



Now ... and then

*This year's goat measured 110 2/8pt. The 2005 fellow (right) was 115 2/8pt.*



Later that evening as it was getting very overcast and cold I did whistle up a dog fox for Helen but it came from about 50m to our stand in a very hesitant manner. This fox used knee-high grass to approach us and about

20m away from us he decided to leave despite the fact that he had neither seen nor winded us.

Due to the ongoing wet weather, we've only been out hunting once since that day and found what few foxes we

saw to be very cautious indeed.

We're now at the foxes' normal shutdown period (and we're also in our own 'shutdown'!) so when that has finished hopefully we'll go for another hunt for feral goats or foxes.



*This fox was a fine fellow ... much healthier than many seen in recent times.*



*After 40 years ...*

# It still lives within

**WAYNE ATKINSON**



**T**ravel restrictions had eased in Victoria, Christmas was done and dusted and we were looking forward with hope that we could all get back into shooting a few arrows and getting in some bush time.

The new year was just around the corner, heralding the start of one of my favourite bowhunting pastimes—fox whistling.

My fascination for the old red dog started as a young fellow not quite into my teens. My old uncle (who I guess wasn't that old, now that I look back), had regaled me with stories of sneaking along the steep-sided gullies of the local creeks then squealing through the old standard of the day, a button whistle, and these so-called

cunning, elusive foxes seeming to come running to your feet in a suicidal fashion in search of an easy meal.

I still vividly remember my first encounter with one called into range. I'd got home from school and eagerly waited for my uncle to roll past and pick me up as we'd arranged, and off we went in the old HG Holden ute ... which again wasn't that old when I look back.

We arrived at the bottom of a big gully. The flat farm grassland rolled over into the gully proper with a creek through the bottom. It was lightly timbered but full of bracken fern and blackberry clumps. I was instructed that this was as good as it got for the old fox. Off we went, dressed in the

standard of the day—blue jeans and a flannelette shirt in a dullish colour. No camo in those days, and game still got taken. Amazing, eh?

Unc set me up about 20ft to the left of where he was going to whistle from, poked two crackers in his old side-by-side shotgun, put the safety catch on and said, "I'll get over there and whistle; if one pokes his head out of that bracken in front of us, give it to him."

With that, he stepped off and got against a tree and started blowing. I was a bit nervous at this stage. The thoughts running through my head were along the lines of ... these things come at you hard: are they angry?, do they want to chew on a piece of you?





After a couple of minutes of high-pitched squealing and whimpering created on the button whistle, it happened. Out of nowhere a sleek, slender, highly sheened fox materialised—a dog fox in its prime. The white of its chest and jaw looked sharp, crisp and clean, contrasting with the deep ginger red of its body. It was just standing there staring intently at the source of the sounds.

I was mesmerised, taken aback by how it had appeared so silently, the excitement and adrenaline of being so close to one of these critters I'd heard so much about and had longed to see.

And just like that it was gone. I hadn't even got the safety off. I looked at my uncle and he was laughing. He

said if I could have seen my face I'd have witnessed eyes like dinner plates and a mouth frozen wide open.

Forty-plus years later, he's in his late 80s, and he still talks about that moment. Whenever we catch up at family functions, he's always so happy to say "Remember that first fox?" and proceeds to tell everyone the story of my wide-eyed wonder (and distinct lack of action).

But now that's a clear but distant memory, hundreds of foxes ago. I shot a lot with rifle and spotlight when the skin trade was at a high in the 1980s and 90s. I also have quite a few under my belt with the bow.

On this particular day in the final days of 2020, it was a middle-aged

man with aching joints and greying hair waiting in a cool pre-dawn to be picked up by number-two son. I had the same feeling of anticipation and excitement as when I'd waited to be picked up after school 40 years previously. I guess it never goes away.

The boy wonder soon arrived and we set off for a creek we know that's not far out of town and generally good for getting a couple in to the whistle before noon.

With the travel mug of coffee barely finished, the young fella eased the ute into a side cut beside the old bridge as the cocky went over it ... not that I would trust that bridge to hold up my new tractor!

There wasn't a breath of wind as



we set off downstream. The area had experienced a good spring but even so we were surprised at the growth. We were soon wet to the crotch in the thick grass and heavy dew.

At our first stand we tucked back against the thick gorse-line with me out the front in the shooting position and Ty a bit back on the whistle. This was going to be interesting. If a fox came in through this long grass it would be like watching an old movie with the torpedoes coming through the water. Alas, after five minutes of his best efforts no customers appeared so it was off to the next stand.

The next position was an old favourite of mine so Junior graciously offered to call again from 20yd behind, with me being out the front tucked into the centre of a smallish clump of gorse in a natural U shape. With two squirts of the whistle it was on! I saw a young fox bounding in, a little harder to my right than would be ideal but I reckoned it should come around the gorse and present a close shot in front of me.

Great in theory! What went down from that point forward was actually a bit comical. As I stood there ready, I could see the fox through the gorse. He was coming along the edge of it and my expectation was that he would come straight out in the opening of the U shape I was backed into.

Bow was slowly raised, pressure on the string and I was starting a slow draw in anticipation. At three-quarter draw, I paused. Where was he? Holding, holding ... nothing. Thinking he'd paused at the point of the U shape only 8ft or 10ft from me, I gently let down. I'd been standing there wound up like a coil spring waiting, then the old typewriter legs hit in, as often happens to me with the bit of a rush I get from these critters. I could hear Tyler, he was trying every trick up his sleeve to coax the fox so I knew he could still see it, so I assumed it was still propped there just in front of

me. The Mexican standoff continued for three or four minutes then I could hear the whistling stop, followed by our all-clear signal.

On talking with Ty about what happened, I discovered that the fox had propped as I'd thought virtually in front of me, then went back around behind me and to the other side of the gorse clump then proceeded to sit and stare at the whistle, directly between Ty and me, not offering Ty a safe shot. Then the fox lost interest and sauntered off. It was a bit of bad luck, but that's the way it goes. You can't get them all, nor would you want to.

Next up were the much-anticipated flats, these big flats along the creek, that run back to the hillsides that then flatten out onto pasture lands. These flats, a maze of gorse and blackberry clumps, had a few rabbits and were usually good for a couple of sightings of foxes. This area, however, was to be a disappointment as we soon saw evidence that the farmer was working to reclaim the fertile ground. The majority of the once productive area for us was now long grass and the ground was littered with the mulch from noxious plants that had been slashed. Bugger.

We continued over a kilometre of featureless flats to where a nice side gully ran in from the west, with a shallow gutter in the base of it where water only ran after heavy rain or during a wet winter. The whole bottom of the area was blanketed in spiny rushes and was an ideal haunt for our quarry. I pointed to a good shooting stand in the shade and Ty headed for that while I dropped into the shade of a large yellowbox tree, lining my body up against the trunk to break up my outline.

Not straight away but within quick time a fox broke cover and was trotting in at a three-quarter trot straight for me. At about 15yd he started to slow, and you could see its ears stiffen as it attempted to identify

the exact location and source of the noise. PPPFFFTTTT, is all I heard, and I saw the white fletching of Ty's arrow virtually part the hair on the fox's back. The fox jumped to my left as the arrow clattered into the rushes and ground debris to my right then paused to stare at the spot. Here's my chance, I thought as I tried to ease the recurve up into shooting position, however my movement was spotted by the now fully alert critter and all we could do was watch the white tip of its tail disappear into the rushes. I walked with Ty to try to retrieve the errant arrow. As we were looking for it he laughed, getting a bit of a buzz out of doing a lot more with the longbow lately and how the misses don't hurt as much these days.

That was as far downstream as we had permission to be so we started the long walk back to the bridge, with a couple of muffed shots at rabbits on the way. We arrived back at the bridge and with the breeze picking up in the downstream direction we decided that it wasn't too late or hot so we'd have two quick stands upstream before calling it a morning.

Upstream the walls of the creek gully became quite steep and we ended up calling from quite a distance above the creek with its blackberry and gorse-lined banks. The first stand looked the goods and I spent five minutes longer calling than I normally would in the hope of getting Ty another opportunity with the longbow. Alas I drew a blank, with only a dry mouth and the need of a drink of water for my efforts.

I was about ready to call it a day as the late morning was warming right up and the next stand would be a bit of a scramble along the steep gully side. However the boy, with younger legs, said "One more," so off we went (I didn't need any real persuading).

After 10 minutes side-hilling to where a draw runs down the gully side, Ty nestled in on his knees backed up in the shade of a low scrubby



bluegum sucker while I got into a position standing 10yd further down the steep bank and a little to his right up against some dry eucalypt deadfall.

Ty started on the call, giving it his all to imitate a bird or small critter in distress. When the broken rhythm and pitches had been played for five or so minutes, I was starting to think the day was over ... then in that magical manner there was a mature dog fox seated on his hind legs at the edge of the gorse line 80yd below, his white chest radiant against the lush green of the gorse. It didn't look like he was going to break cover to Ty's serenade of sounds, so Ty switched tactics and started the old mouth squeak, which sometimes is enough to coax these sorts of close customers to make that final commitment to come in for the kill.

It worked, and the fox was up and coming full tilt, covering the steep gully side quickly. He raced past my level on the hillside, intent on the source of the sounds, hitting the chocks at about three yards in front of Ty, pausing for a second, then began retreating back down the hill at a very slow trot, his head still turned trying to work out what was not quite right back up there. Moving in a slow fishhook downhill, he paused about 12yd below me.

With my bow arm already up, I picked the spot, slowly drew to anchor and one was in its way. That telling thwack, pop and snarl told of a good hit, and quickly the writhing blur of ginger and white stilled on the ground in front of us.

So we finished the morning's hunt, deemed successful by some who must always take an animal. Successful to others for time spent outdoors, for time spent with family or friends, for the chance of an encounter and opportunity at your quarry. Or for the chance to recall an afternoon more than four decades earlier that had sown the seed that still lives strong within.



*Fascination for the 'old red dog' started more than 40 years ago and is still going strong.*



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