

THE JUNIOR Shooter

AN INTRODUCTION FOR JUNIOR SHOOTERS & HUNTERS



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Editorial



Bob Green
SSAA National President

Welcome to Issue 9 of *The Junior Shooter*. First up in this issue, SSAA Queensland junior member Riley Philips talks about her experiences, trials and successes in long-range shooting competition and offers some advice to others interested in taking up the challenge.

Like most of our junior members, Riley was introduced to the shooting sports by a family member - in her case, her grandfather - and she has since passed the torch on and is encouraging her sister to get involved too. The shooting sports are certainly an activity where the whole family can have a go and have fun!

We also have two family-orientated hunting stories. The first is from Joseph Sorrentino, who heads to the Central Tablelands in New South Wales to hunt fallow stags with his dad, while the second story is from Queensland hunter Matt Fox, who takes to the field with his dad and a guide to secure a big stag and several wild boars.

Finally, in this issue, we are taking the opportunity to showcase the achievements of a few of our junior members in our new Letters section and are also putting out the call for more of your stories, advice, tips or recipes for inclusion in future issues of *The Junior Shooter*. So, if you've got something to share, don't keep it to yourself - contact us today and let us know! ●

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Long-range shooting and how to make it work for you

by Riley Philips

Since I began shooting in 2008, I have tried many different types of target shooting and I've slowly made the transition towards shooting longer distances. In 2010, I began to feel like I was improving enough that I could aim to shoot in a major Long Range competition the following year. In August 2011, I made this a reality; at the age of 16, I was the youngest in the field of women shooters to compete in the U25 Ladies Division F Class Standard at the QRA Queens Shoot.

When you talk about long-range shooting to people, they think of any distance between 100 and 1000m or yards. Shooting those distances is easier said than done and when you try to shoot the long distances, all sorts of things begin to happen. Some of these 'things' are my mindset when I shoot and how I react to the situation at hand, including: whether I am tired; if there is mirage; what the bullet's flight trajectory is; if it is a warm day; if there are cold, strong or gusty winds; and even if there are ants or flies on the range that can bite you when you are getting ready to shoot in the prone position.

For any other junior shooters who may be thinking about long-range target shooting, you need to have a good teacher/coach, a target-type (not hunting) rifle in .223, 6mm or .308 calibres and you, of course, need a real interest in shooting long distances. Two main points you need to remember is that your rifle has to be capable of reaching targets consistently out to 1000m/ yards, and that an experienced shooter should be your coach. My coach, mentor and shooting mate is my Grandpop, Brian Short, who is a member of the SSAA Bundaberg Branch. And with my sister Grace currently considering whether she is going to shoot long range, I may soon have another shooting mate!



Riley goes prone for a 1000-yard competition.



Riley and her Grandpop,
Brian Short.

My shooting kit

One of the most important bits of gear I have is my notebook. I record all my scores, distances and elevation/windage settings for different bullets and everything else I can about range features, including hollows, level and steep ground and possible wind directions.

My range rifle is a scoped single-shot Omark 44 in .308-calibre fitted with a quality, heavy one in 12" twist barrel that is floated and bedded in the stock. The stock has a palm swell on the pistol grip and an adjustable butt for shoulder fit. I also use an aluminium bipod and a rice-filled butt rest, which are both allowed in the F Class Standard section of long-range shooting. My backup rifle is a Savage 10FP Tactical with an AccuTrigger. The rifle is fitted with a McMillan stock, Harris bipod and a Falcon Menace 10x42 mil-dot scope.

With Grandpop's help, I make my own bullets using a 155-grain weight Hornady A-Max or Dya HBC projectile. Both work well with a suitable load of ADI powder out to 1000 yards. I take more care in seating the bullets at the correct depth to suit the Omark 44 rifle chamber, and all bullets are stored in clearly marked plastic boxes of 50.

For winter shoots, I wear a shoulder- and elbow-padded woollen jumper; whereas in summer, I wear a shotgun vest. The shirt I wear is long-sleeved with a UV rating of 30+. Fingerless gloves are a must-have too, and give me a positive grip on the rifle and sun protection on the back of my hands. A shooting mat keeps me dry on the ground, and cap and quality earmuffs top me off. I normally wear glasses with impact lenses, so my eye protection is always on.

My gear has undergone some changes since I started to shoot three years ago. To improve rifle stability, I now use a wider footing aluminium bipod that Grandpop made for me, and the Omark has been fitted with a new 30mm tube Falcon Menace fixed 10x42 mil-dot scope with quarter clicks. While most scope cross-hairs are black lines, the cross-hairs on

the Falcon are 'skeletal' in style, which allows me to see more of my target and range conditions. I use a fixed 10x scope, as I believe mirage effect is minimal and there is less to go wrong with settings. I was using a Bushnell 25mm tube Elite 3200 fixed 10x scope previously, but the vision was restricted on ranges exceeding 800 yards. However, as a starting scope, it was great!

The process to clean my rifle has also changed, and apart from normal cleaning, I now pull a 'bore snake' through after every 12 to 15 shots, which seems to maintain accuracy.

I use a small-gauge TA&M Cauty wind calculator (often used by many shooters on Big Bore ranges), which gives me a good estimation of wind speed by allowing me to read the range flags and shows the estimated windage left or right. I also have a copy of *Introduction to Target Shooting* by the NRA for hints on mirages and aspects of long-range shooting.

All my gear is portable, so I can carry it as a kit onto the range and firing line.

My shooting outcomes

Since about 2009, I have been shooting long distances with a .308 rifle at the SSAA Bundaberg Branch range. I never had a great interest in shooting a .22 rimfire, even though I started shooting with one out to 500m and at the 2010 and 2011 Annual Precision Rifle Shoots. I have won the Juniors section and came in the first seven of all shooters in the field - I even beat Grandpop! To me, the .308 is a rifle calibre I can manage both on the range and in the field.

After shooting long-distance practice greater than 500m at the Bundaberg Burnett Rifle Range, which has distances out to 1000 yards, my first major 300- to 1000-yard competition was the Metropolitan District Rifle Association Open Prize Meet in August 2011. A couple of days later, I participated in the 121st Queens QRA and NRA Open Prize Meet (300 to 1000 yards), which is one of the biggest annual events on the Queensland Rifle Association's calendar. Both of

these shoots were held at the Duncan Range in Brisbane. I was going in the deep end here for six or seven days, but I wanted to shoot these events and Grandpop supported me all the way, mentioning that it “would be a character builder” and “at 16, an unforgettable experience”. To compete in this kind of shooting, I had to join the QRA and NRA as a ‘Junior Lady Under 25’, while also holding my SSAA membership.

Since then, I have competed at the Natives Rifle Club Brisbane Open Prize Meet out to 1000 yards; the North Arm Rifle Club (Nambour) Open Prize Meet out to 600 yards; and then, at the Maryborough Rifle Club Range at their final 2011 MRA 300-yard Shoot, where I took home a Sierra cap and a fancy MRC teaspoon.

I must mention that at North Arm, the targets were electronic and each time you shoot, the bullet hole in the target is recorded on a monitor right beside the shooting position. You could see the result of the shot instantly and make any sight corrections. That was a great way to shoot!

Grandpop has been keeping a simple percentage (out of a 100 per cent score) progress of my scores for me since I started shooting long range. From the first shoot, my scores are: MDRA 68%; Queens 62%; Natives 66% and NARC 82%. I’m getting better each time, learning as I go and listening to skilled shooters, but I also know I have a long way to go. My goal is to attain a higher percentage score each time I shoot.

What have I learned so far?

One of the best things that I have learned is the good fellowship between shooters, especially at the SSAA ranges, and the others at QRA shoots, who are always offering helpful hints on the wind and mirage conditions at specific ranges.

A discovery I have made is that there are very few juniors my age shooting long-range distances in F Class Standard (.308) SSAA and QRA competitions. I never thought it would be so, as there are many juniors shooting .22 rimfire in competition. The Precision Rifle event shot at the SSAA Bundaberg Branch is along the lines of the SSAA Combined Services discipline’s Long Range Sniper events, which are held for F Class and T Class rifles.

I have learned lots of patience and concentration in my shooting - “character building”, as Pop calls it, especially when all goes wrong at 900 and 1000 yards. I have also learned how to read the range terrain, windage and mirage better; how to endure hot and cold temperatures during the competitions; how to wear the right clothing; how to score using SSAA, QRA and NRA systems; and that shooting is not to be considered easy on any range at any distance.

The future


At 17 now, I am in my senior year at high school and have a part-time job, so between these two commitments, I will try to keep up with my shooting, as I do enjoy it and it will certainly be a good ‘getaway’ from my normal routines. They say that practice makes perfect, and I’ll need lots of practice if I want to reach my 2012 goal of 90% of the total score when shooting.

I hope to meet and encourage more juniors shooting long range in the future. My younger sister Grace is now looking at taking up long-range shooting using Pop’s Savage rifle, and as a SSAA junior member, she will soon be in line for her firearms licence. It will be great with two of us on the same range shooting long range! ●



Roll it!

Deer hunting with Dad



Joseph's stag was taken in the NSW Central Tablelands at the start of the roar.

by Joseph Sorrentino

My dad's thundering voice flooded my room at 2.59am in the morning: "Roll it! Pack the gear and get it into the car!" I woke with a start, slipped on my camo gear, gathered the essential hunting items and bolted to the car. I had been looking forward to this hunt for a couple of weeks now. We were heading for my dad's mate's property in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales. The fallow stags were just starting to roar. We were entering into the rutting season, where fallow bucks drop their guard and focus their efforts on mating with the does.

I have been experiencing the wonders of hunting ever since I was young. The experiences and adventures my dad has taken me on will be some great memories I will never forget. I want to continue this hobby as I grow older. With my first fallow deer shot when I was 13 with a .240 Weatherby Magnum, it hooked me into deer hunting like a trout on a dry fly!

It was roughly 5.40am when we rolled up to the first gate of the property. I did my usual routine: hopped out of the Hilux to lock the wheels into four-wheel drive then proceeded to open the many gates ahead. It was still dark and

foggy as we drove along the dirt road and we could barely make out what was in front of us. We looked at each other and thought 'This is not good'.

It was a 15-minute drive from the first gate to our destination where we parked the vehicle. Thankfully, as we drove though, the fog was gradually getting thinner and thinner. Within the space of about 300m, there was no fog whatsoever, just a northwesterly wind, which was not good for our plan of attack. The wind was not going the direction we wanted it to go.

I jumped out of the car to open up the last gate, which led us about 500m up the hill to where we started to get serious. The vehicle was slowly crawling up the last hill, so my dad turned off the lights just before we came over the rise. This is where the excitement always begins! My dad and I got out of the four-wheel drive slowly and silently pushing the doors shut with the palms of our hands. We started getting geared up, putting our jackets and packs on. My dad took his binos to have a glass over the valley and I got the rifles ready.

As I hung my Model 70 .243 Winchester over my shoulder and passed over the .30-06 to Dad, I asked for the intel. "Two does way, way over on the bush line," came Dad's response.

We started walking down the first valley. As we crossed the fence, we heard the almighty roar of the fallow stag. It sounded like it was just a couple of hundred metres over the hill in front of us and that's when my blood started pumping. We walked a steady pace up over the hill, and the deep croak of the fallow buck was getting louder with each step I took.

When we reached the top, there was no deer in sight, but the roar of the stag was still echoing through the valley, so we glassed the area. That's when I spotted him, directly in front of us, just on the inside of the bush line,

with nine does all looking back towards him, but making their way out into the open.

We quickly dropped our glasses and began to crawl. By this time, the wind was easing off, but still in our backs. When we got to the bottom of the gully, the deer sounded like it was right next to me! We could only just see over the next small rise to the bush line, but we were dead certain that the roaring stag was in with these does. We thought we would follow the gully around so the wind would be slightly on our side, for once.

As I leapt out of the gully, the roaring stopped. We crouched down and kept crawling, slowly making our way just onto a small rise to see the stag still trying to get lucky!

There was a large rock roughly the size of a big wombat out in the open about 50m in front of us. My dad said, "That would be your only chance, from that boulder." I flipped my bipods down and crawled directly in line with the rock, and Dad followed behind me.

Once at the boulder, I gently raised my rifle and rested it on the rock. The rock was about 120m away from the animal. Up, back, forward and down with the bolt. Then I peered through the lens of the scope and followed my stag as he was about to enter the bush again. He walked behind a big old

gum tree and there was only just a small space of 5m to shoot him before he entered the thick bush. For some reason, he stopped directly behind the tree. Eventually, he strolled out, so I took my shot and the 90-grain Nosler BT worked extremely well just behind the shoulder. The animal fell down, dead.

This hunt was one of the most exiting hunts I've been on for a while. It's a real privilege to hunt with my dad and I look forward to the hunts I will be experiencing in the future. ●



Joseph Sorrentino could not have been more pleased with his stag. Just look at those antlers too!

Sighting-in for beginners

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson

To be able to shoot your rifle effectively, it is most important that it is sighted-in. A good shooter with a well-prepared rifle will consistently hit what they are aiming at, and isn't that what we all want to achieve?

Your rifle will be fitted either with open sights or a telescopic sight. These are the two most common aiming methods. Open sights are usually made of metal and consist of a front-sight near the end of the barrel and a rear-sight usually fixed to the barrel just in front of the action. The front-sight can be a small bead or perhaps an upright blade and often has a hood over it to protect it from being damaged or put out of alignment during use. The rear-sight can be a simple arrangement using a 'V' or 'U' section cut into the metal, with the advantage that it can be adjusted for both vertical and horizontal movement. By looking down the barrel, it is a simple matter to 'sit' the front-sight into the groove in the rear-sight and aim at your target. More sophisticated versions are fitted to target-type rifles, but the principles remain the same.

If your rifle is fitted with telescopic sights, you look through the lens and where the cross-hairs meet, simply place this point on the target. With a properly sighted-in rifle, the bullet should strike at this point at a chosen distance. It is most important that your scope is mounted on the rifle in such a position that you get a full picture when looking through the lens. If the scope is too far forward or back in its mounts, you will not see a full picture. It is not difficult to make the adjustment, and you should get this done before you start. Telescopes have adjusting knobs for vertical and horizontal movement, and it is a simple matter to get them on target.

How to do it

The very best way to sight-in any rifle is to place it in sand-bag rests on a solid surface. This helps to stop any unnecessary movement when firing. Sit behind the rifle and by adjusting the rear support with your non-trigger hand, you can get your sights onto your target. For the purpose of this exercise, let's assume we have a rimfire rifle and we are going to sight it in at a distance of 50m.

Place a large target with a number of bullseyes (see photo) at this distance and choose what sort of ammunition you want to use. This choice will be determined by what you are going to shoot: target or hunting, high or low (standard) velocity, etc.

Firstly, aim at one of the bullseyes and carefully fire three shots. If you are using open sights, you will need a spotting scope to clearly see the holes. The shots will have formed a triangle and the centre of that triangle is where that rifle with that setting is sighted-in for. If it is not where you want it, then the sights will have to be adjusted - you may need to get an experienced shooter to make this adjustment for you.



A demonstration target of sighting-in with three-shot groups. A is the original setting, B shows too much adjustment, C is too far left and D is about right. E is what we are looking for!

Left-handed junior shooter Jordan Robinson sights in her rifle.



Having changed the setting, now fire another three shots and note the impact point. If it is still not quite where it should be, then make further adjustments and continue to fire three-shot groups until the shots are bracketing the aiming point.

When you are satisfied that the rifle is 'zeroed' (sighted-in), then fire a five-shot group at the bullseye. If all has gone well, congratulations, you should have a 50-point

score! No? Well, keep practising and you will get there - practice does indeed make perfect.

Remember though, if you change your ammunition, especially from high-velocity to low-velocity ammo, you will need to sight-in again, as the point of impact will change.

It's not difficult to sight-in a firearm and having the ability to hit what you aim at every time is your reward. ●

Juniors-only competition

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

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A Fox father and son hunting adventure

by Matt Fox

Our scene is set in Charters Towers, Queensland - home to one of the most beautiful and exotic deer in Australia. Here, the chital are big and plentiful. To help us on our way, my dad and I were being guided by the reliable and experienced Clark McGhie of Wild Country Adventures. It is here that our journey to a trophy stag and boar begins.

On our first day, we ventured far and wide, scouting the area for sign and trophy value. A hot and dry season had struck the landscape and the deer were travelling to the furthest corners of the property for food and water. This called for a new strategy. Walking further distances and thinking like the deer, we soon found ourselves among them. Watching and observing the deer from our vantage points, I

began to understand what I was in for. Patience and a keen eye for quality - that is the way Clark goes about finding trophy stags. He began to teach me the art of selection and I soon began to spot and identify deer faster and more accurately, watching close for long brow tines, inners and long tops. After a day of passing up many good heads due to soft velvet and recent antler damage, I began to see how different hunting chital was to red and fallow deer.

Day two brought some good fortune, as within just 10 minutes of starting our walk from the car, we had crept up on a mob of pigs. Slowly edging forward, Dad and I spread apart a safe distance and then took aim. Dad downed two sows with his first two rounds and so did I! The dogs, Choky and Axel, became a very valuable part of our hunting team,

rounding up small mobs of pigs for us to despatch. Soon, our team had a total of nine pigs for the morning. This was a great start to the adventure, but that elusive trophy boar had to wait for another day.

The landscape was unforgiving, with temperatures topping 38C and rocky slopes making our progress difficult. Obtaining a vantage point on the ridge tops, we glassed for stags. Many deer were visible, but the monster stag we were hunting was nowhere to be seen. Still, my confidence continued to grow, as I learned about the big boys taken from this area by Clark over the past seasons. I was confident that my chance would soon come.

As Clark spotted a stag worth a closer look, the howl of a wild dog caught our attention. Springing into action, we took positions with trees breaking our silhouette to the horizon. Clark howled him in, but the dog gave us the slip, following some cattle up a deep, washed-out creek and was then out of sight. The numbers of deer began to change and we saw mob after mob, every 500m, with some good-quality heads seen on the way back to the homestead, but many were still in soft velvet and too early to harvest. However, seeing these deer on sundown gave us confidence for the next morning.

Day three brought a change in fortune. Travelling to the far corner of the property, looking for a cunning old stag, we stumbled across two stags. After some thought, Clark said, "What a cracker!" On further inspection, a mature stag stood at the rear of a mob of hinds. He had 10" or more brow tines and 5" inners. Clark pointed out the stag's long tips and brow tines that curled back and upwards. His knowledge said it was a 'shooter' and as I examined it closely through the bins, it became clear this was a very fine trophy for my first chital stag.

We gathered ourselves and hatched a plan. Clark filmed the entire stalk, which can be viewed, along with other boar stalks from this trip, on his website. Crawling for about 300m and maintaining a steady unseen line, I propped and steadied myself on a fallen branch. I lined him up, lost him momentarily behind some fallen trees and behind hinds and then finally, had a clear shot. The Sako rifle barked and my stag dropped on the spot, the

130-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip hitting its heart and lungs and securing me a memory I will always remember.

Upon closer inspection, we found that the brow tines were 11 and 12" and the inners were 6 3/8" and 6 1/2", with a total height 29 1/2", for a Douglas score of around 180. After many photos and excitement all round, Clark began to skin and cape-out my stag.

The rest of the afternoon was spent fishing. I caught two large sooty grunTERS, each with dark black colorations. These fish made for a fresh and delicious dinner, and we proceeded to eat the venison taken from the stag over the rest of the week.

We saw plenty of pigs on the morning of day four, but rather than bomb them up, we decided to keep the rifles silent and wait for the granddaddy boar. We packed our bags and headed 150km south-west to a property legendary for both its numbers of pigs and size of the boars. It was hard to imagine, but the temperatures continued to rise as the wet season storms gathered in the west. The scorching weather wouldn't stop me and the boys from hunting down a big trophy boar though.

That afternoon was very slow, with dry, unforgiving conditions and we didn't see any of the numbers that were here in the past years. The only explanation we could come up with was that the dry conditions and the lack of feed had caused the mobs to fragment and travel to greener pastures.

Upon our return to the house, we did spot a pig at the end of the road, which turned out to be decent boar. Dad and I stalked in on him and got to within 50m before we downed him. We took his 3" tusks and headed for the homestead, where comfortable accommodation was waiting. That evening was spent reliving the day and going over plans for the next morning's hunt.



Matt's wild dog.



Matt and his dad Ian with the day four boar.



Matt with the day six boar.

Ian Fox with the day seven boar.

Day five started at 4.15am, with us jumping up and putting on the camo gear, scoffing some brekky and splitting to the car. Clark was on the ball and soon spotted a mob of 15 or so pigs not 1km from the house. Flying up the road and into the bush, we were soon onto them. Axel and Chocky the dogs were rounding up the mob and as we got into position, the big boars broke. The mob leader came quick at us, so I took aim and popped him through the chest and down he went. Sidling to the left, I took another boar. Soon, there was that eerie silence that immediately follows a big, close-quarter's hunt.

Seconds later, we heard the sound of a dog barking madly; Chocky had found another boar and had him running in a wide open paddock. After a short sprint, I caught up with the big boar and despatched him. Taking the jaws from both boars, we admired the 3" tusks and left in search of more.

The day got hotter and longer and the pigs became more predictable; in fact, we were able to ambush many on the dams and swamps. After taking a total of four trophy boars and more than a dozen sows and suckers, we headed for home. Among the boars was a very nice orange and white polkadot cape that we planned to mount as a memento of the trip.

On day six, we rose at 4am and were out on the main chain of water-holes by 5am, ready to get that giant granddaddy boar. On our way to the swamps though, we got a surprise, spotting a wild dog hunting beside the road. Dad

was first out of the truck and a successful shot dropped the young dog in his tracks. We moved forward, full of praise for Dad's quick action, when I spotted a movement between the saltbush trees - it was another dog! I moved swiftly to a nearby tree and took careful aim as the dog quartered away. Clark let out a howl and the dog propped for a moment. I took him between the shoulders and he dropped on the spot. Clark took their scalps and we were off after big boar once again.

We parked the car and continued on our way up the dry creek beds toward the main swamp in a low crouch, expecting pigs to break from thick scrub just metres in front of us at any moment. We were a little surprised at the lack of pig numbers, but they were scattered around, looking for sparse feed, so we had to hunt hard to be successful.

Cutting through thick vegetation and reaching a small water-hole, we came across lots of tracks criss-crossing the sandy ground, but no pigs. We were beginning to wonder if we would see any that morning, until we finally came across a mob of six or so pigs concealed beneath a thick twist of thorny bush. They were sows and suckers that we could have taken, but this morning was about the prized boar, so we decided to pass them up and hunt on.

It was not long before we came up on an old boar rooting around in the dry mud for mussel shells. We continued north along the dry creek bank, following pig tracks and

looking into every nook and cranny, hoping to find an old gnarly boar bedded down in the shade.

As we approached the large swamp, it was apparent how many pigs had been in the area. Staying concealed for at least an hour, we saw close to 100 pigs before sighting the one we were really after. We saw him from across the swamp, wallowing in the deep black soil mud. It was a good 600m away that we could see large grinders and white tusks protruding from his lower jaw - he was an impressive head.

As we moved to our vantage point around the periphery of the swamp, we had to negotiate a few unforeseen obstacles, like avoiding mobs of spooky cattle, other sows and suckers. Finally, we reached our intended position, but our animal was nowhere to be seen! Creeping low and slowly around the muddy bank, we tiptoed around lots of small pigs, but again, saw no sign of the big boar. Where had he gone?

At last, we spotted him around the swamp some 200m away, wallowing in the deep mud about 50m offshore. We lay low, attempting to stay concealed. Sliding forward, I made haste to some fallen timber, from which I set up and took aim. The pig looked to be more than 120kg and had no clue we were there. I steadied myself and then shot him with the rifle at around 180m. It was a clean shot through his breastplate and he fell without movement in the knee-deep swamp.

When I reached the water's edge, I stripped off my boots and socks and waded out to retrieve him. Dragging this monster was hard work. Eventually hitting the bank, I took a closer look at my prized boar. With one tusk reaching close to 5" from the mouth, this was an old crusty boar; I felt an almost overwhelming sense of achievement. We proceeded to take many pics of him, then caped him out and removed his jaw.

We turned to begin our two-hour walk out in the 40C heat back to the truck. This in itself was hot, hard work, but it was worth it - we had taken a very nice head, adding to the other four good boars we'd taken over the past three days and bringing our tally to almost 50 pigs for the trip. That night, we headed out again for a last flourish at whatever sows we could locate around the various dams on the property. We shot four from a mob of six, some of which had quite striking yellow, red-orange and white colorations.

On day seven, we reached our hunting destination in the dark at around 4.40am. We hit the lagoons and small wallows that ran around the big swamp and found that our luck was in, as we spotted a large boar foraging on the bank. Upon closer inspection, we saw he was not what we were after, but he was a fine specimen for the future. Moving on down the road, we came across little mobs of sows and suckers. Considering the poor season, the pigs were scrawny and in fewer numbers, meaning we had to hunt harder to locate the quality trophy animals.

We shot a small group of sows as we headed up the sandy creek and then, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a large black pig run over the hill. I gathered the dogs and set off. What I didn't realise was that I was chasing an 85kg boar with 4" tusks and 3" grinders. We spread out and the dogs did their job of locating the animal. Dad soon fired and

downed the big fella. This was the second-biggest set of tusks for the trip. It was a job well done and time for a well-deserved rest. We had a quick drink before heading back to the homestead. On our arrival, we set about boiling the jaws and removing the tusks. We had six sets, with two outstanding 4" sets and four very good 3" sets that were very likely to double in size once removed from the jaw.

This was our final day before departing back home and this afternoon would be our last hunt for the trip. We left the homestead with hopes to go out on a high and rack up a sizable total of more than 50 pigs. We got a surprise when we headed off a big boar foraging in a water-hole, so Dad and I crept up on the bank and gave him a blast. His

tusks were just less than 4" from the lip. Adding to our very impressive collection, we had now racked up seven sets of decent tusks. On our way home, we shot another 10 sows and suckers, bringing our total to more than 50 for the week.

This was the best hunting trip I have ever been a part of. In my short time as a hunter, I have had my fair share of exciting and successful hunts, but none better this experience of taking a trophy chital stag, seven trophy boars and two wild dogs. Clark McGhie is definitely the man to turn to when approaching a hunt in Australia for all manner of game, feral animals and even fishing. There is no doubt that I will return in the near future. ●



Letters

My first fox

I have been hunting for the past two years with my dad and he had always said to me that to shoot your first fox is a milestone in your hunting career.

My brothers and I went hunting with Dad in September on our friend's wheat property, west of Perth, and we had not been able to land a fox, even with the opportunities we had been given. That all changed late on the last evening though, when we spotted one running onto the wheat field. With the light on the target, I got a clean shot and a kill. I was using my Anschutz .22 Magnum.

Dad was right - it's a great feeling to finally drop one of these feral pests. I cannot wait for our next hunting trip.

Benjamin Spiden, email



Encouraging young shooters

My name is Gracie-mae Evans. I'm 14 and I live at Kalangadoo, Lake Leake, Tasmania. I have just recently been sponsored as a SSAA junior member.

I come from a family (both sides) that for many generations relied on trapping, shooting and hunting for food and money. I am very passionate about my heritage and how hard my family struggled to be where they are today. I am taught at home through the Tasmanian eSchool (formerly Distance Education Tasmania) because I am isolated.

I have written the accompanying piece of work to try to encourage young shooters like myself to join up as SSAA members, as we young people are the future of this sport. It was just published in the eSchool Students Newsletter that I help write and it is sent out to every student that is enrolled in the Tasmanian eSchool and some students that are travelling on the mainland. So, I thought I would send it to you, as I am very proud to be a part of the SSAA.

Gracie-mae Evans,
Tas



The Sporting Shooters Association Australia (S.S.A.A.)

The S.S.A.A. was established in 1948 in order to promote shooting sports and to protect firearm owners' interests. These roles are still the same today. They have more than 130,000 members.

I am a young shooter and I have just recently become a junior S.S.A.A. member; I very much enjoy going target shooting and going hunting with my Mum and my brothers. What we kill, we bring home to eat. Shooting is a big part of my life and it always will be. At least it is when you live out in the country! When I tell people that I go shooting, some are like 'What! Are you serious?!'

The S.S.A.A. supports male and female shooters. Some people underestimate the women who go shooting because they think that shooting is a 'boy's thing, not for girls!' That is totally wrong! Women can't just stand back and let all the boys have the fun!

We need to save our sport and get young people involved, it's becoming a dying sport, because the younger people of today have more rules and regulations, but we need to remember that shooting has been a way of life for centuries in all countries. The S.S.A.A. club environment is so that juniors and adults can learn about firearm safety and how to use the firearm effectively and in the best way possible.

by Gracie-mae (Gr 8)

My first two hares

I'm 13 years old and have had my shooters licence since I was 11. After a few trips to a friend's property south of Ipswich, I finally had the chance to bag myself two of the biggest hares we have seen. We have been before, but I didn't have much luck with the .22 rifle, so on this trip, I used a .410 shotgun.

The hare were in the crop of millet, having a feast on the young shoots. With Dad and my little brother and a mate spotlighting, I was able to sneak up on the first one to about 15m and took it with a good, clean shot. About two hours later, we came back through the same paddock and came across the second. With some effort and time, we were able to get a shot away from about 20m and despatched it for our dinner plates.

This was my first two hares and now I can't wait 'til the next trip. Look out, hares!

Nicholas Stephensen, Qld



Got a story?

Got a story, recipe or letter you'd like to share with your fellow junior shooters?

Then we'd love to hear about it!

We're always looking for stories from our junior members about their hunting adventures in the field, achievements on the range, tasty recipes for the home or camp kitchen, or their helpful tips or advice for other newcomers to the shooting sports.

If you're got something to share, don't keep it to yourself!

Email Associate Editor Kaye Jenkins on edit@ssaa.org.au, phone 08 8272 7100 or write to PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061.



