



## **"Preserving Australia's Heritage"**

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# ***CONSERVATION & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT (Qld)***

## **December 2019 Newsletter**

### **South East Report**

#### **Persistence pays off for a new hunter**

Moonie June 2019

I joined CWM with no shooting or hunting experience. I attended CWM skills development weekends to gain knowledge and develop my skills. For a time I was satisfied attending these quarterly activities and spending some time at the range. During this period I also started purchasing the equipment required to participate in my newly chosen recreation. It wasn't until I felt confident that I signed up for the pest management projects.

This article is about my trip to Moonie in June this year which produces several unforgettable "firsts" for me as a new hunter. This was the fourth project that I had attended. Other team members had had success on the previous trips, but not me. There did seem to be an element of luck involved at times. All projects were enjoyable and I met many people with different styles and techniques.

After arriving at the property at about 11 am, I spent the next hour unpacking and settling in to one of the rooms in the old shearer's quarters. After the mid-day project briefing and meet-n-greet, we got our gear organised and formed groups of two or three. I joined Ian and Neil and headed for one corner of the property that had some trees and prickly bush. We spread out a little and proceeded to walk through the scrub. We heard, and briefly sighted a small mob of pigs in the thick prickly bush but they departed very quickly and none were taken. Things were looking good, as this was the most activity I personally had ever seen. We then went back to camp to make plans for that evening.

I was invited to join Garry and John for an evening of thermal spotting and spotlighting. We jumped in Garry's Ute and headed over to one of the project's newer properties. After a brief chat with the owner we set out on a circuit of the property. The guys gave me the run down on how they like to do things and I did my best to integrate into their routine. We removed several cats and

foxes that night. The highlight for me was when Gary dropped the biggest boar I have seen (new hunter remember) from long range with his new 300 win mag. Although I personally didn't remove any feral animals, I was grateful for the inclusion and gained some more experience. It was a great evening and I was very appreciative of the guys for allowing me to join them.

The next morning the reports from the other guys were that there were a lot of pigs about at night. The activity was centered on a large paddock that had plenty of stubble and some grain left behind following the last harvest.

After a late breakfast we again broke into small groups and headed for different parts of the property. Was my luck going to change? This time it was Ken's and Adrian's turn to mentor the "newbie". We hunted an area of bush along the river. No pigs were seen in or around any water (what I considered to be "piggy" country). We had walked the scrub for some time with not much at all seen, when I noticed that Ken had stopped and was shuffling around as

though he was trying to shake something off his shoes. I was a little confused but resisted unnecessary radio chat. Once he had finalised his jig we moved off again. After about twenty paces a lone black boar jumped to its feet in front of me. I managed to take it cleanly and was finally on the board (my first ever pig). The guys were genuinely happy and appreciated the significance of the moment for me. Photos were taken and a mini conference was held around that boar. It was then that I learned that it was Ken's "Piggy Dance" twenty paces earlier that had changed my fortune. We eventually spread out and moved off again. My luck continued, as a short time later a small mob of pigs broke cover from under some bushes, again in my line of sight. I managed to drop two more. Both were bigger than my first. There was

had started to rain, and we knew we still had a reasonable walk ahead to get back to the car.

The light rain continued for a couple of hours. This prevented us from driving as we did not want to damage the wet roads. We spent the rest of the evening congregated around the camp fire trying to get warm while discussing all manner of topics.

The next morning again the camp fire was very popular as it was bloody cold. By mid-afternoon the tracks had dried out and we were off again. Neil was kind enough to have me tag along for the afternoon and evening in his thermal spotter equipped vehicle. We did an afternoon lap around the remnant Brigalow - Belah forest to see if anything was about. Neil spotted the first cat a long

with ease. Again it was Neil who spotted the next cat and I had the honour of removing it (my first ever cat). For the last of the daylight we sat on one of the dams and waited to see if anything turned up. A jet black cat appeared, I suspect with the intention of killing one of the many birds that were turning up for their last drink for the day. Neil removed it before it could do any more damage in the native wildlife corridor. It was very rewarding removing the three feral cats and saving the lives of potentially thousands of native birds and animals. Back to camp for a feed then out again with the thermal spotter to remove another cat from a cropping paddock.

Next morning, again there were reports of large numbers of pigs coming out to feed in the early hours of the morning in the same paddock as the first night.



A walk that day yielded plenty of sign but no feral animals. Late that night I headed out with Ian and Neil. Ian located a mob of pigs in one of the paddocks with his thermal imager and we set off on foot to get closer. We used a handheld thermal imager to keep us on course and got to within about fifty meters of the mob. Ian's thermal scope and Neil's night vision scope allowed them to pick their targets without alerting the pigs to our presence. When they were ready I lowered my scope mounted torch beam to try and find a target. The pigs started to move off when they saw the white light. Needless to say

no conference this time, as it

way down the track and took it

Ian and Neil had success but



not me. A couple of cats were also taken that night from the vehicle.

The next day we had some brief glimpses of piglets and a couple of foxes in some prickly bush country. That night (my final night for the trip) I was out again with Ian. This time I was using a rifle with a thermal scope. It was loaned to me for the night by one very generous team member. During the course of the night we stalked single pigs, pairs of pigs and some large mobs of pigs. The thermal scope was the game changer. It was very easy to take multiple pigs from one mob, as the next target was very easy to locate. This is because the scope's image is not affected by the smoke from the previous shot and the fact that the pig's heat signature is obvious. It was a very successful evening that will be hard to top. On a side note, I also picked up my first fox that night.

The next day it was time to pack up and head home. Thanks to all the CWM members who've helped along the way.

Mick

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## **Townsville Report**

### **Burdekin River Wetlands Project**

My partner Laurie noticed the invitation in the CWM newsletter posted by Randle Irvin asking if anyone was interested in a caretaker role staying at The Lodge on the Burdekin

### **River Wetlands Project.**

After communicating with Randle we found ourselves booked in for two weeks from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> August this year. After travelling from Brisbane via Townsville and Greenvale we were met at The Lodge by Helen and Brian Poulos. Over a welcoming cup of tea they gave us an introduction and induction to the project. They then took us out in the field, orientating us to the area and showing us some of the highlights.

Being a newly accredited CWM member, I accompanied Laurie on some interesting 4WD tracks around the project visiting lagoons, lakes and billabongs, all swarming with bird life such as black swans, ducks, pelicans, eagles and a variety of other bird life. We observed a large number of wild pigs during our stay as well as kangaroos, emus and even a water dragon. During our stay we visited some of the local tourist highlights in the area including the Herbert River near Princess Hills and the

escarpment with magnificent views over the area. On our shopping trip to the well appointed town of Ravenshoe, we visited Innot Hot Springs and Millstream Falls.

The Lodge is very comfortable with very good kitchen and bathroom facilities. My personal favourite was the wide and inviting front veranda overlooking a lake where you could watch the magnificent sunsets.

During our stay we had a number of CWM members attend the project. They shared their stories and showed us around. We found them all very friendly and welcoming. I came away with a deeper understanding of the commitment that the CWM members have to this unique project and beautiful environment. I respect their aim, which is to minimise the impact that feral pigs have on the area. On my daily walks around the road, I was often accompanied by two inquisitive emus. Not something that happens around the suburbs in



Brisbane! It was refreshing to experience the quiet, peace and tranquility of living at The Lodge with only the stars at night and traffic limited to one vehicle each day. I had time to think and rest away from the time consuming impact that technology has on my daily life.

Laurie and I would thoroughly recommend this experience to anyone considering attending the Burdekin River Wetlands Project.

Joan Versluis and Laurie Cash

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## **General articles, stories, tips**

### **How secure is your firearm on Projects?**

I have just watched an episode of ABC's Land Line which concerned firearm theft. Last year in Australia 1300 firearms were stolen, with over half, 700 of those being stolen in Queensland. Land Line reported that the criminal element who steal firearms, are targeting rural properties, especially areas such as sheds, out buildings and firearms that are left in vehicles.

This is our area of operations, and when a project is being conducted, a lot of people around know who we are, and why we are there. When on a project it is very easy to get complacent with how firearms are stored, especially when they are constantly being handled and used in situations such as our members do when on some projects. Long hours of walking, or riding in the back of a ute, and getting home at just before dawn when the body

and mind are tired, and only looking for a bed to sleep in can lead to an unsecured firearm.

As licensed firearm owners, each and every one of us is aware of the licensing laws and regulations and the ramifications of not complying with those laws. I have taken the following items directly from the Qld Police Web Site referring to firearms, as a reminder to our members.

### **Storage away from a secure storage facility**

Sometimes you may not have access to your normal storage facility but you are still required to store your firearm appropriately. This means storing your firearm unloaded in:

- a securely closed container with the bolt removed or with a trigger lock fitted, or
- a locked container.

The container must be either:

- out of sight in a locked room of a permanent building, or
- locked in the boot of a vehicle, or
- out of sight, locked in a vehicle that does not have a boot.

This does not replace your usual secure storage facility.

Firearms must be kept unloaded at all times unless being used. For example, the firearm must be unloaded during transport to a range, and at the range when it's not being used in actual competition.

### **Storage in or on vehicles**

As a general rule, you should not store any firearms in a vehicle. Loose firearms in a vehicle are a prime target for thieves.

In some situations, you may need to store a firearm in a vehicle, in these circumstances ensure that:

1. If the vehicle has a lockable boot, the firearm is locked in the boot; otherwise:

- (a) the firearm is locked in a metal container fixed to the vehicle; or
- (b) the firearm is in a securely closed container that is out of sight in the vehicle.

2. The metal container and anything on or attached to it, must not suggest that a firearm is inside.

3. A person in control of a firearm (whether or not the person has custody of it) must ensure that the firearm is not left in an unlocked vehicle if the vehicle is not being attended by someone licensed to possess the firearm.

Failure to properly control and secure your firearms can have far reaching implications. These can include having to report the theft, with the associated paper work and angst with the Police and relevant authorities.

A firearm incident can put a black mark against the land owner, other CWM members on the project with you, or affect your licence conditions with Weapons licensing and insurance conditions.

If a firearm is stolen due to your inattentiveness or

complacency, CWM may be bought into the spotlight for the wrong reason which could lead to the organisation losing the right to conduct their control work on a property, or complete the project.

Bob L

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## **CWM Members Gear Corner**

### **Kitting out for a basic spotlighting set up**

As one of the roster coordinators for the Moonie Project (alongside John Swift), one of the ongoing challenges we have is making sure there are enough vehicles at each base camp capable of night-time feral animal and pest control.

The nature of the Moonie Project is that we do most of our vehicle-based work at night, shooting from the vehicle, and if there aren't enough suitable vehicles on hand it can limit our effectiveness. It might also limit your opportunities to get out there and do what you came for.

The thing is you don't need to spend a small fortune equipping your vehicle to get it up and running as a useful spotlighting platform, but there are some basic pieces of kit that will improve your results.

**You don't really need a ute with a state-of-the-art firing platform on the back**

No question there are big advantages to having a ute set up with containment rails, shelves, stowage boxes, lights, shooting rests, remote-mounted spotlights and all the other gear. You have the benefit of a 360 degree view and extra elevation to get up above the tall grass, shrubs and crops, but having spent quite a bit of time bouncing around in the back of more than one of those utes, there are some disadvantages too.

I guess what I'm trying to say is you do not need to have the perfect set up to get started and you really don't have to have a ute.

When you set up to shoot out of the cabin of your vehicle you get to sit down in a comfortable seat, you get aircon in the summer and a heater in the winter and wind chill and fatigue is drastically reduced.

True you can only shoot out each side of the vehicle, but most of the time that's not a hindrance. And you don't have to worry about your expensive brass disappearing over the side never to be seen again. Vehicle cabins make great shell catchers!

**So, what are the minimum requirements?**





When it comes to using a vehicle as a shooting platform (assuming you have a suitable rifle and you know how to use it), you really only need three things: mobility, light and a stable shooting rest.

### 1) Mobility

The thing is, if you stick to the farm tracks and don't go out when it's wet, you can get around most of the Moonie Project properties in 2WD. In theory you could work out of an old 1998 Toyota Corolla. As an absolute minimum I'd recommend an off-road biased, all-wheel-drive with all-terrain tyres. This will get you 80% of the places you'd want to go – especially in dry weather and if you're an experienced driver. Ideally though, if you're starting with a factory-spec, proper 4WD or better and know how to drive it, that's all you really need. A wagon will work just fine alongside a dual cab or single cab ute if you're only going to shoot out of the cabin.

A high clearance vehicle is good – it helps with visibility – and it enables you to cross the odd grass paddock without too much fear of getting stuck in a sandy patch, sink hole or caught on a fallen log or stump.

### 2) Light

During the day of course, light is a non-issue, but at night you need illumination for two things – to see where you're going when you're driving and to clearly identify the animal/s you're targeting. When it comes to driving and spotlighting, slow and steady is the go, so you don't really need a whole lot of light to see where you're going and to avoid

obstacles. Fog lights, or even parking lights can be sufficient at times. Even low beam can offer too much warning to animals in the vicinity. (Lately, some of our members have taken to taping red cellophane over their headlights to make their vehicles less noticeable.) You really don't want your vehicle to be visible from low orbit, so less light is better. When it comes to actually identifying and shooting a target animal however, most of us are going to need some form of concentrated light (unless you can afford a thermal scope or infra-red set up). A reasonable quality handheld spotlight – like a Lightforce 170 or 240 Halogen unit will do the trick – or even an eBay cheap-and-cheerful light will get you started. At the very least you need a focusable light that will illuminate well out to 300-400 meters. (Not that you would shoot that far, but that level of light intensity really helps with identification closer in.)

I'm not going to get into which is better – LED, HID or Halogen – but Halogen is generally cheaper, it lights up quickly, and in my experience it's really good at generating eye-shine. As it always is with these things, it's horses for courses. If you can spring for a remote handle set up, that's great. They're generally a lot easier to use over an extended period of time – much less tiring – and you can get the spotlight up a bit higher to improve visibility. Mounting the light outside also reduces the clutter inside the cabin making operations safer.

If you have access to a thermal monocular/imager with some decent range (as you often will on a CWM project), you don't even really need a spotlight to

find potential targets in the area, but you will need a good quality rifle/gun torch with some decent throw if you want to take an accurate shot.

By the way, trying to scan for animals with a gun-mounted torch is doable, but I wouldn't recommend it. It's clumsy and tiring and really hard to maintain for hours at a time. Plus your torch batteries will probably conk out just when you need them.

### 3) A shooting rest

To be effective, and unless you happen to be Annie Oakley, you're really going to need a good rest to shoot from. That could be as simple as a pillow or cushion jammed in between your door mirror and the A-pillar or a section of pool noodle slit down one side and positioned on the top edge of your window glass. It doesn't have to be expensive; it just needs to be steady and comfortable to shoot from. Personally, I really like the Big Iron-style door mounted rests. They're height adjustable, and because the rest part is a bit further outside the window, they offer more stability and a better arc of fire. They work really well for right-handed shooters on the passenger side or left-handed shooters working from the driver's seat.

## To summarize

As I said at the beginning, you don't need to invest a whole lot to get started with spotlighting – assuming you have access to a vehicle with some degree of off-road capability. Those of you who have been to Moonie or any other CWM project will know we operate with a minimum two people in a team.

For a two-person spotlighting set up, assuming two right-handed shooters, all you need is the driver to act as a spotter with a light and a passenger to take the shot when you identify a target. Swapping over every so often gives everyone a rest and a fair go on the trigger. With a three-person team, you can obviously have one driver, one spotter and one shooter at a minimum. With an extra light you could easily have two spotters and possibly two shooters operating out of both sides of the vehicle.

## What's it cost?

Bare bones, with a budget handheld spotlight and a cushion or pool noodle for a rest, less than \$100. Option up to a higher quality light, with a remote handle mount and a door-mounted rest, then you're probably going to spend in the region of \$500-\$600 depending on the light mounting system. A quality gun-mounted torch with a decent throw is going to set you back \$100-\$200. All up, you can set yourself up for less than the average entry-level rifle. And having spotlighting capability can really improve your effectiveness and the enjoyment you get out of a project like Moonie.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [bennhw@bigpond.com](mailto:bennhw@bigpond.com) and I'll answer as best I can, or refer you on to a CWM member I know to be better qualified to advise you.

## PARD NV007 – Unique entry level Night Vision Device

Like many hunters these days I have watched thermal and night vision equip progress towards everyday equipment for hunters. But it's still expensive and making the investment knowing there will be a better one out next week makes it hard to decide when. If only it was all a bit cheaper...

The PARD NV007 has turned out to be a good starting solution for me. At under \$700 it provides a cheaper and

method to fit the metal sleeve onto. I had my favourite gunsmith Mick McGlinn (Tele 0421 080 347) make up a set of plastic sleeves so the device fits perfectly to each of my rifles.

Here are the pros of the PARD NVD I found:

- Once set up, it worked so well that my confidence and accuracy at head



unique device.

The PARD clips onto the eye end of your scope. That way you get the benefit of using the optic itself i.e. zoom in or out. The manufacturer suggests wrapping electrical tape around your scope as a packing

shooting went up dramatically out to about 180 m

- You get the benefit of looking through the scope optics albeit digitised onto the PARD eye piece.
- Clips on and off the rifle



scope quickly and can use on different rifles especially with the different sleeves made by Mick.

- Relatively cheap

Here are the things you need to know:

- It greatly reduces eye relief so high recoil rifles could be a problem. I only use it on low recoil rifles. To extend the eye

shape. I found lowering the scope magnification really helped

- The refresh rate on the device is too slow to follow moving targets so your target needs to be stationary.
- Not sure about using with higher

putting shots through the bullseye at 100m. It is significantly better in daylight mode than my ATN 4K.

At night the image is crisp at the moderate ranges at which we hit the pigs. I was picking up eye shine, then making out bodies at decent distances on pigs, foxes and cats. In a



relief I bought a slip-on recoil sleeve and put a bit more rubber in between the butt and the sleeve

- You will need a good quality IR torch attached to the scope with a focussed beam to light up the target at longer distance and still operate in the dark
- The NVD is a monochrome screen and target acquisition is tricky until you learn how. You pick up eye shine first then body

powered/recoiling rifles. Might give you a kick in the face.

Gary C

## A field review by CWM member Neil Schultz

The Pard worked an absolute treat! I used it with the self-contained IR illuminator and found it fine for walking up onto pigs.

I took it down to the range on the river at Moonie and in daylight mode had no problem

nutshell, I found it to be more user friendly than the ATN. The Pard doesn't have all of the fancy features like a ballistics calculator, range finder, one shot zero, etc, but I don't need that. The only feature that I use on the ATN which the Pard doesn't have is recoil activated video. I can easily learn to hit the record button on the Pard when required.

If I had bought the Pard first, I wouldn't have picked up the ATN.

Neil



## Upcoming Activity Dates

Our calendar of activity dates is now published on our web site. Please go to:

<http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/calendar/2018-calendar>

## CWM Contacts

<http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/contacts>

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