



Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (Qld) Inc.  
**Conservation and Wildlife Management Division**



**"Preserving Australia's Heritage"**

SSAA (Qld) Inc. Conservation and Wildlife Management Division  
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## ***CONSERVATION & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT (Qld)***

### **March 2022 Newsletter**

#### **South East Report**

#### **There is no substitute.**

Quick background: I'm a 66 year old, ex pom, ex Royal Navy gunner/missiles, moved to Australia Circa 20 years ago, took up recreational shooting three years ago and have reloaded exclusively ELD-X pest control rounds and fired them at paper.

I like shooting for shooting's sake, I also enjoy reloading and refining my loads but, what I've always had in mind was to see if I could be helpful with some of the problems that are seriously affecting my adoptive country.

The proliferation of feral and invasive species, the diseases they carry, the destruction they bring to the environment, the predation they bring to native species and the extra burden faced by our farmers and their stock, are all things that motivate me to step up and help.

I don't need to eat them, I have no desire to stick their heads on my wall (my wife would have

something to say about that) and, judge me if you will, I don't usually like the idea of killing things but, I do have deep and abiding motivation to remove as many of these pests as I possibly can. So I joined CWM, shot the required targets, did the courses, bought the required kit and applied for a project. I was delighted to be accepted for the February 2022 Moonie project.

I also had a little trepidation. What if I couldn't cut it? How would I feel making holes in animals and dealing with the

result? My misgivings needed real tests and real answers.

My gun was a great shooting device on the range. A Howa 1500 action, Swan fitted 22" Stainless Sendero barrel in an MDT chassis, front bipod and rear monopod - a fantastic shooter, but a tad on the heavy side. So for the trip, I put the barrel and action in a Boyd at-one laminated stock which made it a bit lighter. So far, so good.

A couple of days prior to the shoot, I took my gun to the



range and got the scope dialed in beautifully. The scope I had mounted was an ATN 4K Infra-red night scope that runs on electricrky so, when I got home I made sure that it was fully charged for the trip. While looking over the settings, I noticed that it required a firmware update and followed the manufacturer's video. This was an error. The manufacturer's script omitted any steps to take a backup - and all of my settings were tossed. I had no time to go back to the range, so headed to Moonie with a factory reset scope.

On day one, after a whistle-stop tour of the area with the property trip leader, I got to the range and attempted to get the sights right. Normally this is a really easy task with the ATN one-shot zero, but for some reason, it proved to be problematic. I got it close, but something squiffy was going on and I ran out of time to get it spot-on. When I got back to the shearing

shed and my tools, I found that an action bolt wasn't sufficiently tight, which was strange because when I changed over to the Boyd stock I had torqued them down to 50 ft/lbs. Head-scratch moment. I torqued them down again. More on that later.

For my first project shoot, three of us drove around in the evening looking for sign and likely piggy-highways. We found a spot and set up a three-gun ambush between a copse of trees and a watering hole. During the setup I was asked if I had a headlamp: "Yes," said I, "a white one". "White?!", he said, "Don't use it." Night fell. Bugger.

Then there were pigs. I raised my gun and bad things began to happen. Afterwards, it became apparent that the issue with the torqued action bolts becoming loose was as a consequence of a misalignment of the box magazine with very fine indentations in the edge of the floor-plate. This allowed a little movement. This movement released the tension on the action bolts. When rounds were inserted, the misalignment placed extra pressure on the floor-plate. When the fourth round was inserted, this put strain on the release catch.

As I raised my gun to the pigs, the release catch slipped, the floor-plate burst open and dumped all my nice shiny rounds into the dirt and Bindi. I managed to single-load a couple and get them off towards the departing pigs, but I don't think I registered a hit. They may even have been laughing. Despite my worst efforts, my companions relocated three pigs to porcine heaven.

Another error on my part was that prior to the trip, I had knocked down a structure in my garden and had to cart three trailer-loads of bricks to the dump. This resulted in a very sore back. Even in the Boyd stock, lugging the gun around various concrete-encrusted cow-hoof pock-marked paddocks with no red light, deep shadows and lumpy terrain, it was not long before my back was raging. This issue was compounded by yet another error – I thought I had packed some half-decent pain-killers. Could I find them? Yeah? No.

Moving on: the next morning, we tidied up the deceased pigs and then went on to search the adjacent woods for their buddies. This time, I took a shotgun. Twelve gauge Adler straight-pull, twenty inch barrel and as light as a feather. Although we didn't find any pigs on the out run, the light gun did allow me to make easy progress through the heavily-wooded undergrowth.

At the end of the outbound leg we did a circumnavigation of a dam. There was plenty of sign but nothing fresh. On the return leg, my compadres engaged and terminated a couple of pigs in the undergrowth. I was a way behind them on the left flank and didn't have a shot, but was happy to be there. Back at the shed I performed field-surgery on the floor-plate/magwell situation and improved the fit. It seemed better. Honest.

Over the first three days at Moonie, I had been out on about six or so trips and hadn't managed a clear shot. I was becoming self-conscious that the two teams who had allowed me to accompany them on their shoots must have been suffering from my seemingly endless list of newby-itus balls-ups – and there were plenty more than I have admitted here - so I didn't push them to take me out again. They had spent mucho dinero in fuel and ammo etc to be there, so it wouldn't have been fair to continue to handicap them. However, despite how I felt, they pro-actively sought me out and invited me on a trip specifically designed to get me on the board. Fair dinkum! We staked out another dam and sat quietly in chairs with our rifles resting on tripods. I had the

honour of being in the first firing position.

At this point I need to insert a quick note about my tripod. My tripod was a gizzit. If you are unaware of the term, it was popular amongst us royal naval lower-deckers. When someone went on draft and was packing to leave, anything they couldn't fit into their kitbag was subject to the request by interested onlookers of: Gizzit. My tripod was a gizzit. I had fortuitously been in the gun shop when a customer returned it for a replacement due to it being broken and I acquired it as a gizzit. On paper it was a rather nice carbon Night Force unit with a ball head that seemed to need only a few judicious blobs of epoxy to fix it. Prior to the shoot, I tested the repair on the Stewartdale range. It held up okay, if a little spindly.

Meanwhile, back at the dam. When I set my gun on the tripod, one of the legs splayed out a bit of a way, accompanied by an ominous creaking noise. But it settled. Whew. Deep breath. Touch nothing. It didn't look right, but I didn't dare disturb it for fear of what might happen. So, we waited and watched as the shadows slowly lengthened and the world around the dam transitioned from daylight to twilight. Over time, twilight's grainy dusk gave way to the soft buttery light of moonrise. Lovely. Throughout the changes in light, we kept very still and quiet. We maintained discipline and ignored the frequent bzzzip of mosquitoes as they sought any morsel of skin unprotected by deet. The gentle serenity was periodically broken by occasional bird-calls and the lovely sounds of a beautiful

country night. That is, until, after a couple of hours of holding our silent vigil, my hyper-extended tripod leg snapped like a twig. I managed to catch the gun, but couldn't prevent the magwell bursting open and spewing its contents into the dirt, nor could I arrest the progress of the component parts of exploding tripod as they slithered noisily down the bankside. No pigs for Johnnie. No pigs for anyone. Sad-face.

With only two nights remaining and still not yet on the board, I was taken for a solo shoot. I was driven to the dam, stood in a field in front of a loaned proper gun that rested on a loaned proper tripod. The difference in these compared to what I had been using was like chalk-and-cheese. The tripod didn't explode or fall to bits and bullets didn't spew from the gun's innards! Talk about spoiled! We did the long light/dusk/moonlight wait again, but no pigs came to the party. After that, we went in search of mobile pigs in the fields, there were a few, but none we could make contact with. Finally, on my last day, I was taken on a last-ditch 'for-goodness-sake, get this bloke on the bloody board' shoot. Success. I finally got on the board! (Details withheld as my better half might read this!)

I appreciate that for those of you who have stayed the course and made it this far, there needs to be closure. So here are the takeaways.

Firstly, Before I signed up with CWM I had studied as much as I could to prepare myself. I read magazine articles, spoke with shooters and of course attended the university of Internet. The information helped to get me to the starting

line, but what I had learned in the field was invaluable. In case you missed that word, I'll say it again. Invaluable.

Everyone who I went out with at Moonie took the time and trouble to explain things -Real, tangible things. They showed me things that included tracking, scat 101, the diurnal and nocturnal habits of the animals and tons of stuff you just don't learn at the range. Also, things like how to carry a loaded rifle safely in the field and making it safe in a car and not have your companions think you are trying to kill them. They showed me how to use a thermal monocular to identify animals at range by their shape and motion and, even how damaging grass seeds are when sucked into your car's radiator grill.

To be brutally honest, by the end of the first day I had been beating myself up so hard for having made so many rookie mistakes that I was ready to bale. I felt that the burden I represented to the rest of the team was far too much to expect others to bear. After all of my practice, preparation and study, it had largely gone too pooh. And not Winnie either, the other type. I didn't feel that I was being useful. And that is a deal-breaker for me.

However, everyone from CWM at Moonie was positive, supportive and helpful. It would have been easy for them to have ignored me, but they didn't. They did the hardest possible thing. Despite my shortfalls, they continued to include me. I had been on the cusp of giving up, but they hadn't. They backed me all the way. Everyone. *et al*. No exceptions.

Towards the end of the week, one of the guys even took me aside and confessed the embarrassing story of his first disastrous shoot. It was an epic tale of monumental and calamitous events that most people's egos would have consigned to the bin of eternal silence, but he didn't. He used his story to help me. He showed me that these things happened to other people too. It took guts and empathy to admit that to a stranger – and all for the strangers benefit. (Thanks mate, you know who you are.).

So where does that leave me? On the upside, I was pleased to discover that like all of our ancestors, while mentally and physically engaged in hunting, ancient instincts overcame any modern PC reservations I thought that I may have been harbouring. I wasn't. The consequence and aftermath of a bullet wound was simply the evidence of a successful campaign. And a successful hunt brings with it the primitive pleasure of all the hard work in the lead up coming together. We wouldn't be here if our ancestors weren't capable hunters.

On the downside, before I went to Moonie, I thought that my back would be okay. It wasn't. I had convinced myself that my gun was suitable. It wasn't. I thought that I would be effective with it. I wasn't. It was a great at the range, but, it is now sold and replaced by a Tikka T3x super light. Not a modified bench gun this time, but a lightweight, dedicated sporting gun. My ATN 4K is a great sight, but it is going to be put up for sale to provide funds

towards a thermal add-on to my day scope.

I'm looking forward to putting my name down for another project as soon as I can, and in the meantime I am working up pest-control loads for the Tikka.

A very big thanks to everyone who backed me at Moonie. Everyone. Thanks. And a huge shout-out for all of you for helping me obtain a modicum of real experience. There is no substitute.  
John Storey

## General articles, stories, tips

### **Fast Facts about Rabbits in Australia**

By  
Keith Mom  
May 9, 2014

Here are some interesting facts about rabbits in Australia

Rabbits are not native of Australia. They were introduced in 1859 by Thomas Austin.

The spread of feral Rabbits from the initial release of only 24 in 1859 was rapid and destructive.

They are an invasive species whose introduction to Australia has caused devastation of habitats and is responsible for the major decline and extinction of many native Australian animals (marsupials) such as the greater bilby and the pig-footed bandicoot.

The introduction of the rabbit has also strained the native wildlife of Australia. Rabbits have been blamed for the destruction of the eremophila plant and various species of trees. Because rabbits will feed on seedlings, many trees are never able to reproduce, leading to local extinction.



Loss of vegetation leads to soil erosion as the exposed soil is washed or blown away, removing valuable soil nutrients required for new plants to develop. This soil is typically deposited in waterways, causing siltation and destroying aquatic ecosystems.

By the 1920s, less than 70-years since its introduction, the rabbit population in Australia ballooned to an estimated 10 billion, reproducing at a rate of 18 to 30 per single female rabbit per year.

The rabbits started to migrate across Australia at a rate of 80 miles a year.

After destroying two million acres of Victoria's floral lands, they crossed the states of New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland. By 1890, rabbits were spotted even in Western Australia.

Actively competing with domestic livestock, rabbits can alter pasture composition by selectively grazing on more palatable and nutritious plants. Seven to ten rabbits eat the equivalent of one adult sheep, and, during drought periods, rabbits can totally strip a landscape bare leaving no food for sheep, cattle or native animals.

In 1901 the Western Australian Government started building the first Rabbit Proof Fence, it was finished in 1907 and at about 1,830 kilometers it was the longest Rabbit fence built.

In 1902, before the first fence was even finished, they had made their way past it, west of the fence.

Two more fences were built; the 2nd fence further west was started in 1905.

In 1950 the alarming increase of Australian Rabbit population lead to the deliberate introduction of Myxomatosis (a severe viral disease) which led a drop of around 500 million, this still left the population at about 100 million.

By 1991 the population had recovered to about 200-300 million due to genetic resistance.

In 1996 CSIRO scientists released calicivirus which turned out to be too successful because it killed too many, leaving some predators starving.

Although the rabbit population is a fraction of what it was in the early 1920s, it continues to burden the country's eco- and agricultural systems. They have lived on in Australia for over 150-years and until a perfect virus can be found, they'll probably be there for several hundred more.

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## Feral cat numbers spike in the Great Southern, leaving experts concerned

[ABC Great Southern](#)  
By [Lauren Smith](#)

Feral cats can have a devastating impact on native wildlife. *(Photo: Hugh McGregor/Arid Recovery)*

Animal conservation groups in the Great Southern region say there has been an increase in the number of feral cats affecting native wildlife in the past year.

### Key points:

- Feral cat numbers have risen with people abandoning their pets
- Native wildlife is suffering with an increase in attacks
- There's been an increase in reptiles being attacked over the summer months

Dreamers Dream Wildlife Sanctuary owner Pauline Pearce said the organization had needed to set more traps



for the destructive pest. "It's bad enough to catch a cat in a trap and have to deal with it one way or another," she said. "To try and rehabilitate the wildlife that comes in after a cat bite or a cat attack, there are so many things that can go wrong and it's very expensive to do." Ms Pearce said it was mostly birds and possums that were targeted, but that during the summer months a lot of reptiles like bobtails were brought in.

People abandoning their cat is part of the problem, she said. "We've talked to a lot of people and it seems to be easier just to let them go and dump their animals while people go travelling around Australia. "It's expensive to put cats and dogs into care while you're away on holidays, it's just a COVID problem, I think." People abandoning their cats is said to be part of the problem. ( *Andrew Cooke/Invasive Animals CRC* )

### **A difficult issue to manage**

Humane traps were used to catch the cats, Ms Pearce said. "We take them to the vets or get them checked for microchips, hopefully to rehome them or get them back to their owners. "The other option a lot of people are suggesting [is] putting baits down; now that's going to cause a lot more damage to our native wildlife and to other domesticated animals."

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions runs the Western Shield program to help manage feral cats in the Great Southern. Program coordinator Ashley Millar said they also looked after threatened and endangered species including

the western ground parrot and the Gilbert's Potoroo. The Gilbert's Potoroo is endemic to the Great Southern region. ( *photo: Dick Walker/GPAG* ). He said both animals were found in the Great Southern region and both were critically endangered.

"We're really doing whatever we can to try and protect those species and to see their populations stabilize and, ideally, recover." Mr Millar said feral animals were not the only thing these critically endangered species were up against. "Climate change is obviously a threatening process that's affected rainfall, resources and food for these animals. "Then you have also the potential increased risk of bushfires and that has the potential to take out whole populations in one go. "Those threats on top of foxes and cats [have] a compounding effect on some of our native species."

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<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-01/feral-cats-in-the-great-southern/100958714>



## **Gilbert's Potoroo, the world's rarest marsupial, has DNA mapped in major breakthrough**

By [Kyle Pauletto](#)

*.(photo: GPAG/Dick Walker)*

The DNA mapping of Australia's rarest mammal could be a major breakthrough in its chances of survival.

### **Key points:**

- Scientists say the DNA data will dramatically benefit conservation efforts.
- The potoroos are under threat from climate change and their predilection for truffles.
- As many as 20 of the last remaining potoroos were wiped out in a 2015 bushfire.

Gilbert's Potoroo is also the world's rarest marsupial, with the 100-120 left in existence all living in Western Australia's Great Southern region.

Conservation groups and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCAs) have been working hard on recovery efforts, but catastrophic fires have destroyed much of the Potoroos' habitat in recent years, bringing the species critically close to extinction.

A 2015 fire at Two People's Bay Nature Reserve killed 15 of an estimated 20 Gilbert's Potoroos living there and 90 per cent of their habitat was destroyed.

"It is critically endangered," Jackie Courtenay of the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG) said. "It is in a lot of trouble because the numbers are so low. "It's really important that the genetics are as well understood as possible."

*Help keep family & friends informed by sharing this article*

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-07/gilberts-potoroo-dna-mapping-breakthrough/100437168?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-07/gilberts-potoroo-dna-mapping-breakthrough/100437168?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

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## A Jungle out there

I have been with CWM about 5 years and participated in many exciting and far flung outings. They are at times grueling but worthwhile to contribute to and I have learned much from some good outdoors folk.

Many observations I can make and I'd like to share a few with you. QLD properties are big with paddocks slipping away to the horizon and trees just visible. Rainfall brings flood creeping from adjacent

billabongs and rivers. Timber of various sizes drifted in with the water.

After substantial rain and we've had plenty, re-growth of grass and shrub along the vehicle tracks and walking sections is prodigious. Gaiters are pretty much essential to avoid shin damage from timber, and risk of snakebite. From the vehicle, the view from the driver's seat is problematic as grass can be at bulbar height, forward vision is extremely limited.

The team leader, whose 4WD I was driving, alerted me, from the observation platform at the back, of a melon hole patch filled with water hard against the fence-line. A metre and a half height above the grass, his view on the rear platform was great. He called it and a wet encounter was avoided. Not so with objects hidden in the grass. A brick sized rock bumped harmlessly under the driver's side front and rear wheel. The 4WD, with heavy duty tyres and low speed handled that easily. Further along, an unseen ant nest perhaps ¼ metre high contacted the rear diff without

damage. Driving slowly helped, but even from the elevated rear tub, it was invisible and hazardous.

My advice, if you can't see the ground, stop and walk a few paces forward. Or have the owner drive and call the shots, so to speak.

I've driven a few of these properties. My spotting and feral control is limited by not having the tub on the Hilux set up with CWM safety bars. Many of the stalwarts have these fittings. Hours of labor and dollars are spent to be efficient and safe for the group. A big thanks to them.

CWM adventures give unlimited time to take in nature. With vast properties and a tendency for feral animals to be mostly active at night, daylight can be used for scouting, or checking a rifle's accuracy.

On more than one expedition shots have been missed at modest ranges because the equipment was not on target. For my part, if I clearly miss a few easy shots, I'll retire the rifle until I check it on a target.



Most of our venues have a target practice area. Use it and you ensure the best results.

It's really simple. Sight in your chosen calibres. You should be able to switch rifles and get point blank to 200 metres as follows.

.223 zeroed at 100 metres  
+3.56cm (1.40") at 200 metres  
bullseye

.243 zeroed at 100 metres  
+3.20cm (1.26") at 200 metres  
bullseye

.308 zeroed at 100 metres  
+5.13cm (2.02") at 200 metres  
bullseye

That's effectively point blank on all three.

With such great country to take in, setting traps for cats and catching a feed of yabbies to share with the team. Together with spotting native birds, observing emus and wallabies, it's the best volunteer work to be involved with. I hope to be contributing to CWM activities for years to come.

Paul Millist

## Ken Payne story

### Getting to know your kit.

I have gone over to the dark side and embraced thermal hunting. Out of the 10 pig's we shot on a private trip over Easter, my brother and I took 4 boars and 2 foxes with the thermal at night, but only 1 boar during the day, (the rest were a small sow and weaners).

Some say it is cheating, but there is still a lot of skill involved being able to stalk to within strike range. To read wind drift to make sure your scent doesn't give you away and generally be able to work in the dark, doing everything you would normally do in bright sunlight. At night there is less sound and therefore you need to be quieter and stealthier and when there is no moon the pigs do not seem to react to a red light. Several years ago I was hunting with Campbell and Adrian, and we were able to stalk to within 15 meters of pigs

feeding before turning on the scope mounted lights and taking all 5 of them.

One of the things my uncle drilled into us was to know your equipment by feel. I have been out with hunters who wanted to turn on a light so they could refill their magazine. You should be familiar enough with your rifle to load and unload by feel alone. Extra rounds need to be kept handy and not loose so they rattle, so do a bit of practice, close your eyes, take your magazine out, load, clip in, remove magazine and unload (For safety at home leave the bolt out). I also use a bullet belt so extra rounds are ready at hand for quick reload. My brother and others use a stock bullet sleeve.

Photo of Boar was taken next morning and yes there is a rock in his mouth, it is to keep his mouth open before the jaw muscle sets making tusk removal easier.



## 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/2022-calendar>

## CWM Contacts

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

## **Our Supporters**

The businesses listed below support us in different ways, whether it is through direct discounts to members, donations to the Christmas Shoot, or items loaned for field use.

When purchasing items from these businesses please be sure to mention you are a Conservation and Wildlife Member (CWM) for discounts where applicable.

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