



MOUNTAIN ECHO

Newsletter of Nelson Branch NZDA March 2021



Wait a minute!!....that's no goat! Jody Stow with a nice chamois that is suffering the side effects of the pre-Xmas goat control hunt in the Upper Crow

Next Club Nite Tuesday 27th April at

7.30pm Hear from an enthusiastic expert (Noksee!) on Stewart Island hunting! How, when, and where. Details at end of this Echo.

www.nzdanelson.co.nz

Contents Overview

Editorial

Obituary

Game Animal Council - Information regarding Firearms Licenses

Range Matters - inc **Easter closure**

Nelson Branch Conservation Initiatives

Roar 2021 – We Want You Back.....

Upper Crow Goat Control

Next Club Night

Tuesday 27th April @ 7.30 pm. John Noakes tells all (or mostly all!) on hunting Stewart Island – video, how and where.

Fish & Game Report

Red Deer Lodge Information

Committee Members

Editorial



The sum of the parts.....it may not always feel like it but hunting and shooting are team sports.

Collating this month's Echo reminds me how varied and interesting the activities and options are when it comes to hunting and shooting. This means it is a complex job for NZDA at both Branch and National level to keep connected and aware of all the issues that matter to the thousands of members (and the thousands more who could be).

Much that matters for us is very well reported and easily read in the National Newsletter [Here](#) sent to all and I urge you not to let it linger unopened in your inbox!

Much that matters in terms of good things (and the not so good) are discussed in clear language by our executive team – make the most of it and help your sport, whichever aspect is most important to you, by staying up with the play! Collective wisdom and collective power are key to maintaining a real presence and voice to maintain and enhance our sport(s).

Membership invoices have been sent by head office – check your email and be in to win..... there is a pool prize of cool gear for all who pay before March 31st - check: [Here](#)

Many have been sweating bullets over the potential for a ramping up of Covid and potential lockdown...talk about déjà vu! Last year, like many others, I was fully packed and ready to roll when two days out the door was slammed shut. We can but pray and play our part with Covid requirements...again, beating the bug is a team sport...

Finally, and noting more below, cannot miss the fact that it's autumn, even feels like it this morning! And that heralds more, great hunting times ahead. So, enjoy but with great care and consideration – of yourself, others around you and the environment we love and share.

Good hunting! Richard Wells

Obituary

Warren Plum provided note below following the sad passing of one of our members:

Arthur, brother of both the late Max and Ross, who were all past Nelson NZDA members, passed away this week. He was the last of the well-known culling brothers whose adventures were recalled in books by Max and Ross. Probably one of the last real old timers. Many of our older members will remember their exploits, and ability to tell a great yarn.

The three brothers were probably some of the first ultra-athletes in NZ. They did a walk /run of the Wangapeka and Heaphy tracks back around the start of 1970 to raise funds for the Crippled Children Society. They completed the trip in 41 hours 47 minutes which was real achievement. Nelson NZDA president Bill Cocker at that time accompanied them on the Heaphy track leg. They

raised about \$5000 which was quite a sum back then. Don't imagine too many of our current committee could do that these days!

While Arthur shot no stags equal to his brothers, and was not really a trophy hunter like Max, he did take one of the largest tahr ever recorded in NZ. That specimen measured 15 inches with a Douglas score of 48 back in 1955 in the Douglas river in the Karangarua.

And is still in the top ten of real wild tahr taken in NZ. He must have been incredibly self-sufficient and capable, culling that watershed on his own, which has to be one of the roughest and steepest in NZ. And at a time when there were no huts, and only the most basic of gear.

Game Animal Council Information on Firearms Licensing Processes



NZ Game Animal Council Media Statement 18 Feb 2021

NZ Game Animal Council Media Statement 18 February 2021 Game Animal Council welcomes extra effort to process firearms licenses The Game Animal Council (GAC) has welcomed a commitment from the NZ Police to put more resources towards processing outstanding firearms licenses. As of December 2020, 9800 new licence applications and 2940 licence renewals sat outstanding.

“The GAC has been concerned for some time about this mounting backlog and have been working with Police to find a solution to it. We are really pleased that they have now committed additional staff to make inroads into the backlog and ensure legitimate firearms users remain compliant with the law,” says GAC General Manager Tim Gale. “With the growing popularity of hunting over the last few years there has been an increased demand for firearms licenses.

Last year's COVID-19 lockdowns and new legislative requirements to determine a 'fit and proper person' also added significant delays to the processing of applications.” “The Government's COVID-19 response legislation extended licence expiry dates and provided short-term relief for current licence holders. However, there has been concern that those extensions could expire before the required renewals are processed.”

With autumn's 'roar' fast approaching the hunting sector is keen to make sure that people don't miss out due to the licence backlog. “The anticipation is that this year could be one of the best roar periods for a long time with more mature trophy-quality stags having survived 2020 due to last year's roar coinciding with the initial level 4 lockdown.” “I know hunters are really excited to get out there and we don't want compliance issues out of their control keeping them at home.” The GAC has been informed that uniformed Police officers will be added to the non-uniformed staff undertaking licence vetting work.

Applicants should therefore not be alarmed at being contacted and visited by Police constables in the coming months.

“To assist with the smooth processing of licence renewals going forward we also want to remind hunters to get their application in at least four months before expiry of their current licence,” says Gale. www.nzgac.org.nz

Contact: Tim Gale, General Manager Phone: 021688531 tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz

Range Matters

Please all note that **over Easter (2-5th April) the range will be closed to members** as fully engaged in the National Benchrest Shoot.

So, if you have rifles needing sighting in pre-roar get up there over **next few weekends (9-11am) - gate opening 9 am SHARP**. At least the recent rain means fire risk closures have disappeared.

Silver for Mr Smith! And a Bronze for Tony Titheridge!

At the end of Feb our very own champion Graeme Smith attended the Target Shooting NZ Outdoor Championships shoot in Christchurch (see more [Here](#)) and came a fantastic second with fellow Nelson Branch member Tony Titheridge placing third under difficult conditions.



Graeme, (second from left) squeezes off another winner.

If anybody is interested in becoming involved in this exacting but great sport (patience, art and engineering) then contact Graeme (see contacts below) – there is no one better in NZ or possibly the world to engage with!

Nelson Branch Conservation Initiatives

Four legs or six (or leaves for that matter)there's no difference for real pests!

A few weeks ago members helped dish it out to the wasps at the Wairoa Bike Park supporting other volunteers from the biking fraternity.

Vespex is lethal on wasps and most 6 legged creatures (same toxin as used in spot-on for fleas on your dog or cat)when they are in the protein phase of their life cycles which is usually autumn...feeding protein to their grubs makes them queens not soldiers so this is time to strike with protein based baits that don't attract our friends the bees and such.

Not only do wasps take much away from the biological base for beech forests for all its creatures, they are a pain in thewell eye actually, for those of us wanting to enjoy the forests.....as Mike DeGray found out up there recently. No joke and especially for those really allergic.



Problem and solution.... Ouch! I'm sure they got the culprit Mike! Carina Jackson puts a little magic blue potion in the tuckerbox for wasps.

While they were doing this work a few of the usual perpetrators were also observed lurking about; so there's room for a few more hands on hunting missions up there.



The team went in mid Feb on a Mike DeGray and DOC arranged chopper flight into the Upper Miner catchment to attack wilding pines (drill and poison). Members then had opportunity to stay up there and hunt their way out from Hackett peaks and Starveall hut after drop-off (one member took their bike!).

Seven people went on this mission and killed 700 trees and somewhere along the line 18 goats ended found themselves eradicated too.



Free chopper rides???? Yes indeed.



“Boring” but satisfying work! And in a few weeks “instant autumn” for this wilding pines



Simon Theobald looking cool and professional....and in the thick of it with a doomed Douglas

Briefly mentioned in last edition, we now have a full report from David Haynes on the goat control trip into the Crow in December further below.

More opportunities are in the pipeline but need they more support.

Participation through communication is the only way

So if interested check in with Mike DeGray (see contact at end of this Echo)

Much of what is happening is more visible on our Branch Facebook page so hook in to that <https://www.facebook.com/NelsonNzda>

Roar 2021 – We want to see you back, happy, and in one piece please!

As the autumn period approaches and the premium times for hunting reds, wapiti, fallow, chamois and tahr is also time to take stock of the risks associated with hunting. This is especially so with the added pressures of more hunters, in more isolated and challenging places, coupled with roaring, croaking rumbling bugling and grunting animals...

Last edition of Echo we described the potential benefits of getting fitness levels to some better level as a way to reduce risk of strain injuries and enjoy and enhance your hunting.

Now its time to talk about accidents that by definition are generally avoidable (they are accidents not fate) and some simple thoughts on risk reduction.

The simple stats.....

The Hunters Tale report from MSC [Here](#) has plenty of details but it's the basic statistics that matter and need to be considered for those of us heading for the hills, particularly over the next 6 months

.....

Firstly, injuries and deaths are far more likely caused by falls than anything else and with big game and alpine hunting these are the cause of 40-60% of all injuries and fatalities. While stories of injuries needing heli-evacs and fall deaths may make the news they do not get the attention accidental shootings do so can often be overlooked in importance and need for safeguarding.

There are a myriad of other hazards and recorded accidents from rivers, cooking gear/fires, "vegetation attack", axes, knives and antlers etc (you name it, it can and will hurt you).



Check with your chopper guy about safety, payloads, tape up loose lids and now no LPG!

With vehicles (ute/boat/aircraft) there are always risks and some of my worst hunting experiences risk wise have been the drive from Nelson to Haast...."silly" traffic and my mind elsewhere....

Then of course firearms, which can result in self-inflicted incidents or the accidental shootings of others.

Any injury regardless of cause, is a pity, and death a tragedy. They affect many lives and forever in worst cases.

Recently, Dr Karl Bridges gave a presentation to NZDA via video link on his findings after three years of study into hunting behaviours (see much more [Here](#)) and the issue of mis-identification of target (i.e. hunters deliberately but mistakenly shooting another person – I make the distinction from accidental discharge hitting another person). His findings as presented were very interesting, challenged some fairly long-held ideas.

His description of the measurable changes to a hunter's physiology such as dilated pupils, increased heart rate etc are no surprise and could be termed "the thrill of the hunt", the endpoint when a decision is made to shoot your quarry and perhaps distraction from "normal operating procedures" between your brain and sensory systems is large.

Regardless of the details of his analyses of data around hunter reaction times and adrenalin levels etc, what was most commendable from his work was some basic concepts of risk management that are very straightforward and, usefully, apply equally to the other sources of danger described above.



Remain aware of your surroundings, party and never think no-one else is in your area including ballot blocks

Firstly, every phase of your hunt has risks associated and needs to be considered. Then, Karl asserts that we are professionals in our sport...we know what we are doing as opposed to "rank amateurs" so we should think and conduct ourselves in that way.

Accidents don't happen to "other people" they happen to "people" so trying to focus on specific causes can make some people think that they are "in the clear". No-one is.....

Be aware. This was his single most important statement in my view, short and covers everything. Don't just stop thinking about what is happening around you due to all the obvious distractions.

So as professionals you needn't be told again by me about the 7 golden rules that cover all the risks around shooting accidents and the basics of mountain, bush and river craft.

In most health and safety situations the old Look – Think – Act is standard, Be Aware seems just as good to me!

Karl's final point was "We want you coming back in your own vehicle not the back of an ambulance or police car".....and I would add "and happier following another great hunting experience".

Hot barrels out there but take care and be aware.



2021 Roar: Prime Objective! – Southland stag

Upper Crow Goat Control Trip by David Haynes

Just prior to Christmas, Mike DeGray, our esteemed committee member, had arranged a goat cull with Ian Cox of DOC, Motueka. This would prove to be a real wilderness adventure with four of us choppering into the remote Upper Crow River in Kahurangi National Park.

Simon, Jody, Keith and I met at Nelson Helicopters, Nelson Airport, bright and early to meet with Coxy and get the lowdown on what was expected, along with radios, chargers, tracking dog collar (for Keith's dog), maps, PLBs and where mobs of animals had been spotted on an earlier flyover. As well as the usual hunting and camping gear, the benefit of flying in chopper meant we could take in fresh food and my collapsible chair, or 'the throne' as it became known.

Flying in took a couple of goes due to low cloud and mist, but Thomas Darling, our pilot, calmly recced a few saddles before an entry point was found and within minutes we landed at the bottom of a long, grassy flat, unpacked the gear and said adieu to Thomas.



Coxy told us the area has not been hunted for a long time by cullers and the discovery of a couple of barrels filled with food many years past its sell by date confirmed this. This was virgin territory accessible only to the toughest hunter as, ordinarily, the area was designated 'no-choppers'.

After setting up a tidy camp area we all split up for the first day's hunt in hot and sunny conditions, Keith and Devi (his devious dog) sidling up Blue Duck Stream, Jody and Simon looking in the gullies to the south of the main river and me choosing route one straight up the flat.

There were mobs of goats in most places - that first day we tallied twenty-nine in total, and we all discovered how wind-throw, combined with typical Kahurangi geology can make hunting this area so physically challenging. I mentioned to the others that, in hindsight, it may have been wiser to leave the easy animals for the last day as I was keen to drag out as much goat meat as possible – it is one of the most nutritionally dense, low fat, organic and free-range meats available and makes great stews, pot roasts, salami, sausages, patties and, of course, curries.

Despite being complete strangers that first evening we bonded well, chatted easily, had a few laughs and were comfortable knowing anyone who loves the outdoors and hunting is likely going to be a good b*stard, especially an NZDA member.



The second day was another bluebird day, so we did a group tramp up to the head basin. On the way we shot a few more stragglers and after a five hour bush bash reached the top clearing and were rewarded with a picture postcard view of the perfect head basin which simply screamed animals.

Alas, despite glassing for an hour, none of us spotted so much as a mouse, so we pushed further up into the basin. After quietly clambering another hundred metres we gained an even better view of the basin and there, right in front of us, was a mob of a dozen or more goats enjoying the sunshine in a small meadow-like hollow. Seconds later the scene was not unlike a Clint Eastwood western with four of

us lined up slotting goats as they scattered in all directions.

Once the air had cleared of gun smoke we had a tally which confirmed we had culled all but two goats. As per instructions we diligently recorded the number, sex and GPS location of every kill with Jody topping the leader board comfortably.



All that was left to do now was walk back to camp, a gruelling prospect given we were all hot and knackered, but with plenty of banter, blue ducks and kaka keeping us company, it was a pretty breezy saunter.

Each evening we contacted Coxy with a high-power VHF radio and reported back our tallies and gained updates on the weather situation, mindful that a large, cold and wet front was forecast to move in on the last evening.

The final day dawned, my sole pair of trousers rapidly losing the war against bush lawyer, coprosma and monkey scrub, with the bottoms all hanging in strips I was starting to look like a Morris Dancer who'd taken a wrong turn to the gig.

Whilst Keith elected to explore Blue Duck Stream further, Jody & I set out to the top of the clearing with the idea we would bush bash our way up a leading spur to the south and hence up to Hough Saddle. Simon would take another spur a couple of kilometres to the west and meet up with us. We checked watches and UHF radios and off we went.



Yesterday's slog was a walk in the park compared to climbing above the bush line today.

It was very hot, very sunny, very steep, very tight and filled with windfall.

Relentlessly pushing up we reached a bushed in knob, sidled along the top of a spur before climbing further to the bush edge to then bash through head high monkey scrub, turpentine bush and flax to finally crest the saddle.

We made several radio calls to Simon but could not raise a response, so we assumed he was still down in the bush. After a quick bite, we glassed the faces of the headwaters of the Skeet basin and saw clag rapidly moving up towards where we were sitting.

"Chamois" whispered Jody – four hundred metres away was a young chamois coming in and out of view in the alpine scrub. With the clag at our heels we had to be quick so, crouching low, we quickly raced across the opposite face, ducking into guts to periodically check the animal had not spotted us. At two hundred metres we found a rocky outcrop, Jody rested his 6.5 x55 on his backpack and carefully and calmly pulled the trigger, nailing the chamois perfectly behind the shoulder.

By now visibility was seriously reduced and rain was chilling us down so we hopped and skipped across the scrub to retrieve the animal pronto. It took ten minutes or so, but Jody spotted the chamois, a young buck with small hooks but a beautiful little animal nonetheless. After a couple of photos we took all the meat and hot footed it before the weather deteriorated further.

With visibility now down to ten metres, without a GPS it would have been extremely difficult to retrace our steps. We noticed our inbuilt compasses were leading us way off beam and having to trust the GPS (which had logged our route in) required abandoning our own strong feelings of sense of direction.

Adrenalin fuelled our slog off the saddle and back into the thick bush, with Jody executing the perfect impersonation of a bat when he slipped off a large log and ended up hanging upside down, feet trapped in the crook of the log.



Back on the flats, the weather down there dry and warm, we bumped into Simon and Keith. Simon's radio batteries had died halfway up and he had been less than ten minutes ahead of us, descending off the saddle to our leading spur whilst we were stalking the chamois. On the short and final walk back to camp we culled another few goats, bringing our collective kill to fifty and Jody's winning score of twenty seven. Simon remembered my penchant for goat meat so had kindly brought back a heap of meat from animals he had shot earlier that day.

Our final evening was a mix of joy knowing we were going back to our loved ones, hot showers and a beer or two and melancholy that the adventure was nearly over, albeit the place stank a bit by now with Simon christening the valley 'the offal pit'.

After hanging the goat and chamois meat in bags to protect from the hordes of blowflies we radioed Coxy and scheduled a call for seven the next morning, had a mug of plum wine each and hit the scratcher.

The final morning dawned with rain and a thick clag masking any views of the valley or basin. It did not look good for a chopper coming in. We relayed conditions to Coxy and set up an 8 o'clock radio schedule hoping conditions would improve. Given we were four days away from Christmas with the forecast showing heavy rain for the next week I was anticipating having to chop down a wilding pine as we'd be having Christmas right there in the Upper Crow.

The radio cackled into life at 7:30 with Coxy saying be ready in fifteen minutes as the chopper should be able to duck in under the clouds and pull us out. A mad kick bollock scramble as we stuffed wet gear into rucksacks, rifles into bags and carried the gear to the landing spot. As soon as we heard the distant chop-chop-chop of the rotors, Simon guided Thomas, the pilot, in with a dedicated VHF radio.

With Keith's dog packed in the cargo pod and the rucksacks and all gear on board we ducked under the cloud, out above the Skeet Saddle and back into sunshine. After three days of hunting and sweating, in the confines of the chopper it became rapidly apparent that we were somewhat

ripe and it was a testament to Thomas that he maintained his altitude, composure and consciousness.

Thank you to all who made this such a brilliant and unique experience – Coxy, Mike DeGray, Aaron Shields and my fellow hunters, Simon, Jody, Keith and his dog.

Next Club Nite Tuesday 27th April at 7.30pm

No club nite in March due to important hunting to be done!!

Come along at the end of April and hear from Noksee (John Noakes). A relentless hunter whose life is ruined by having to be a fencer too (though I suspect he's pretty good at it), Noksee ranges far and wide on wallabies and tahr and all but he loves Stewart Island to bits!

He will have cool video, and advice on how to plan and hunt this great area for the elusive white-tail - a rare experience with the benefits of interesting wildlife (kiwi and sea lions!) and chance for a fish if equipped to do so! Great adventures to be had.



Photo Credit: Southland NZDA

Thanks to Mike Darling for presenting to members last month. More to come from Mike and his team.....

- **FACILITATED UPLAND GAME HUNTING:** Game bird hunters will now have access to part of Tasman Pine Forests Ltd estate in order to hunt quail for the coming season. 8 catchment sized blocks have been set aside for hunters on weekend days throughout the game season, with hunters applying to Fish & Game for a block and permit, and hunters having the day to hunt their chosen block. This is mostly in the fire affected area from the Pigeon Valley fire in 2019. We are also working with One Forty One forest management company to obtain other hunting blocks for the coming season.
- **MOTUROA/RABBIT ISLAND HUNTS GIVEN APPROVAL:** After a 4 year trial period, the popular Rabbit Island upland game hunts have been given the go ahead for another six years (the remaining term of the current Rabbit Island Management Plan). Fish & Game will run three hunts on the Eastern end of Moturoa for the coming season.
- **FISH RELEASES:** A release of 100 salmon and 20 double digit brown trout into Lake Argyle.
- **NATIVE FISH MONITORING:** Staff have been in the Branch/Leatham carrying out annual electric fish surveys for native fish and trout. 15 main-stem and tributary sites are surveyed each year.
- **GAME BIRD TREND COUNTS:** Paradise shelduck and swan trend counts have been completed by fixed wing plane and on foot at known moult sites. In Tasman the population of shelduck was significantly higher than other years which should provide some good hunting this coming season.



Red Deer Lodge

Information on costs and bookings of the Red Deer Lodge at Lake Rotoiti

Contact for Accom: info@starnaudholidaycottages.co.nz
Use the website at www.starnaudholidaycottages.co.nz

Remember to advise you are a Nelson member.



2021 Committee

President: Greg Couper terminatorproducts@xtra.co.nz

Vice President: Richard Wells richardw@nzdanelson.co.nz

Secretary: Warren Plum plumstone@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer: Aaron Shields aarons@nzdanelson.co.nz

Members: Bill O'Leary, Graeme Smith, Graeme Ching, Mike DeGray, Neill Cliffe, John Noakes, Mike Grant, David Haynes, Carina Jackson, Mark MacDonald.

Range Committee:

Convener: Graeme Ching, graeme-doreen@xtra.co.nz

Members: Graeme Smith, Graeme Ching, Bill O'Leary

Hazard or Incident Reporting: website email (nelson.nzda@gmail.com) or contact member of Range Committee

Access, Rules and Safety: see website [Range Info](#) and check your emails for updates or changes to range opening times.

Branch Hunts and Activities:

Convener: Mike DeGray miked@nzdanelson.co.nz

Hunts Courses:

Website: [Hunts Training Courses](#)

Convener: Bill O'Leary b.f.oleary@xtra.co.nz

Members: Lawson Davey, Alistair Ching

New members:

email nelsonnzda@gmail.com or go to our webpage [Membership](#)

The Mountain Echo:

Bill O'Leary and Richard Wells