

Hunting can be easy

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Hunting does not always have to involve miles of heart breaking pack carrying to remote locations to be successful. There are times when luck favours the brave, but other times when it's pure jammy the way things turn out. The old scout motto of being prepared is always true with hunting. Never be far from your rifle as opportunities can often be just around the corner. If you happen to end up in a remote spot don't even go to the toilet or collect water without taking your rifle with you. That doesn't mean that you up and shoot without due consideration, it means that with the rifle available you have the option to shoot. Never use your last bullet for meat unless you are starving, that once in a life time trophy may just be over the next log. Shooting deer from bed or camp is great but that is not what I'm talking about today.

Some hunting can be had quiet close to so called civilisation. Take for example a recent trip down south when I was staying at Tahr Lodge which is next door, so to speak to the illustrious Hermitage at Mt Cook village. I was mainly on a climbing trip but took the rifle as you do, just in case. The weather had been very bad with huge amounts of rain falling everyday. Needing a little exercise I headed off for a quick walk on to the Mueller Range behind all the tourist buses. Dropping back down the very high use Sealy Tarns track (due to the weather no one else was about) I noticed through the driving rain several tahr grazing two hundred metres away. Not having practised my lassoing skills lately I left them undisturbed. With the weather still very wet, but not windy I returned the next day and located the mob of bulls in a gully not far from where I'd seen them. Shooting two for meat I then sat down to relax and take in the view. Straight below me was the Kea point lookout, slightly to my right an hours walk back to the Lodge, numerous buses and camper vans. A little more to my right was the Hermitage in all its glory. On a fine day the South Face of Aoraki and the East face of Sefton would have dominated the view, but on a fine day hundreds of tourist would have been clambering about and the tahr may have being elsewhere.

Another time Don and I had been up the Clyde River for two weeks chasing tahr. As we came out a day early we drove up through the Lewis Pass for a wee hunt maybe. Spending the night on the porch of Palmer Lodge we awoke to cold southerlies and sleet showers. Parking the ute in the Pass car park beside the tourist nature walk we headed off in different directions. An hour later I was looking down at the ute while I waited for the buck Chamois to cool. It had been grazing in a shelter hollow just above the bush line. Don also found a good amount of stag sign, worthy of another visit.

If you live or visit Stewart Island then there is always a chance of encountering a Whitetail deer near town or even in the vege patch. Nearer to home are the Sambar, a ten minute drive from home can put you amongst fresh sign in a number of locations. As I work in the pine forests I don't get a lot of enjoyment from hunting in that environment. However Sambar are a heart stopping animal to hunt and accordingly I put in for a ballot. I was lucky to get a ballot and arranged with a farmer I know to use his access. Saturday morning dully arrived with strong winds and passing showers. (Notice a common theme with the weather) Being very busy that week I hadn't being able to check out the block. The first hour was spent in a dead zone, (no sign), then I found some young pines and promptly located fresh sign. An hour later I had my Sambar spiker, (excellent meat). Unfortunately when I came back with my trailer and a friend we had to drag it thirty metres. Home for morning tea and on with the usual weekend jobs.

With spring upon us it reminds me when I took a friend up to the Ruahines. We camped in a road end hut and headed off up near by side creeks at first light. Ten minutes up my creek were three red hinds on a slip. Shooting one had the desired result. Unfortunately I had to wait around all day for my friend to return.

I guess some of this relates back to a time when I was at school and a mate and I hitch hiked our way up the West Coast. On a very wet day we meet a bloke in the main street of Fox with a chamois over his shoulder. He mentioned that he'd shot it just up the back of town. Back in Wellington during the 1970's no one got excited when you hopped on a train and then headed up Lambton Quay and Willis Street with your trusty rifle over your shoulder. Despite several attempts during wet weather I never spotted any worthy game. Which goes to show that not every rainy day has a silver lining.