

The Big Game Edition

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AIRGUN HUNTING

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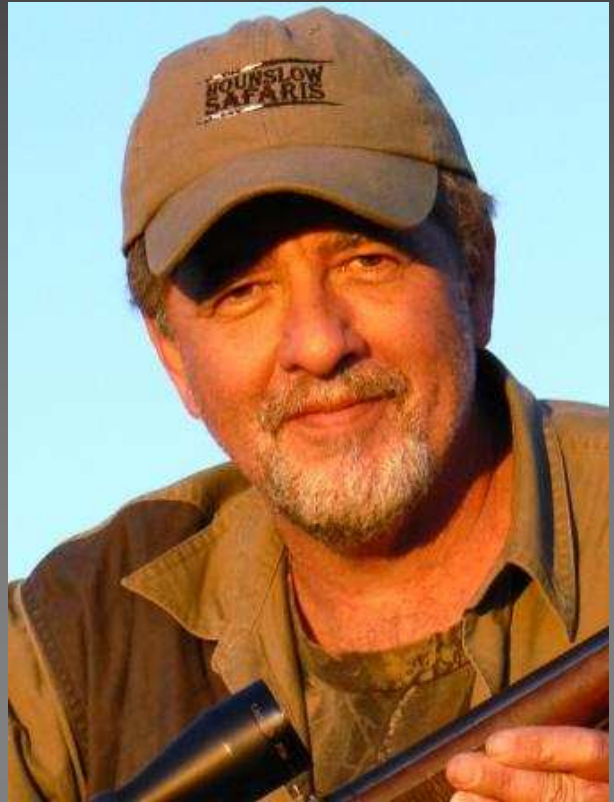
This Ezine is produced for airgun hunters around the world to share their experience and knowledge with fellow sportsmen. This Quarterly E-publication is free to all, but if you'd like to support the effort the best way to do so is by contributing your stories, hunting/shooting hints and reviews! The next edition will focus on pest control applications of the airgun, and we hope to see many new contributors!



Editors Corner

The first edition of the Airgun Hunter Quarterly appears to have resonated with the airgunning community. There were over nine thousand copies downloaded. Readers from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia picked it up for a read. I believe that as more hunters, airgunners, and shooting enthusiasts find out about AHQ, the distribution will continue to increase.

The writers that contributed their time and energy to making this ezine a reality are guys that have a commitment to the sport and have spent time in the field and at the range honing their skills. My hope is that as we move ahead more of our readers will also become contributors!



The “theme” of last quarters ezine was small game hunting, and this edition will find us spending some time at the other end of the spectrum. The use of airguns to hunt larger game (in airgun terms anything from raccoons to hogs) has a rich history. This history reaches back over three hundred years, and is currently experiencing a renaissance here in North America. The use of airguns to hunt larger game is not a stunt and it is ethical, but places a number of new constraints and challenges on the hunter which our authors will discuss.

We'll not focus exclusively on big game however; small game and pest control is the primary quarry of most airgun hunters around the world. AHQ will never stray too far from this core application, and there will be a lot to interest the traditional airgun hunter in this volume as well.

And finally, I want to thank all the readers for supporting this effort. Your feedback and suggestions for ensuring our ongoing success is appreciated.

Well We're off and running! The readers have been very supportive and we anticipate continuing success!

The Mailbox

Q Hi Jim, I am new to airgunning and just came across your website. I had no idea that you could use airgun for real hunting, especially the big game stuff you guys are taking. What gun would you recommend for me to hunt feral pigs down in South Texas?
Jeff M (email)

A Jeff, there are not a lot of guns out there to choose from, but more than there were just a few years ago. The gun that all big game airgunners want in their rack is one of the Quackenbush rifles in .308, .457, .50 caliber. These are the hardest hitting guns on the market, and there are at least a couple gun smiths such as Bob Dean (AKA Big Bore Bob) that specialize in tweaking them to their fullest potential. The only downside is that you'll have to wait a long time to get the gun once your order is accepted. There are some other guns that will get you started, though they don't have the native power of the DAQs. The Korean big bores, the Dragonslayer, 909, and new Sumatra 9mm are all pretty powerful circa 200 fpe guns that are more than capable of taking feral hogs, and there are tuners coming on the scene that can tweak the power up on the guns as well.

Jim

Q Hello Jim, I think the hunts that guys like you and Randy Mitchell do are great. I'd like to try a big game hunting trip, but don't know how I'd go about setting it up. I've hunted squirrels and rabbits but nothing bigger. Can you tell me how to get started?
Steve H. (email)

A Steve, I think that since you've never hunted big game before, it might be a good idea to hunt with a more experienced airgun hunter. You didn't say where you live, but Eric Henderson leads big bore airgun hunts for feral hogs, rams and exotics in Texas. He can often find great bargains in excellent hunting areas, and supply you with a gun. It's a great way to get started.

Jim

Q After seeing his website, I'd like to ask Randy Mitchell what is the most difficult animal he's hunted with an airgun, and what gun did he use? Has he ever used an air pistol? And if so, what type of gun did he use.

A Scott, I'm tempted to say that some of the most difficult hunting that I've done was in Africa. But to be quite honest, I would have to say that the common grey squirrel, hunted with an air pistol, is among the most challenging that I have personally done. The air gun I used was a Crosman 2240 that was converted into a PCP by Walter Glover of Canada, with some parts from Dennis Quackenbush. It has a very small reservoir, so 8-10 shots was the max.

Now when I say hunt, I don't mean shooting one off the bird feeder. I mean going out into the woods and stalking within range, or waiting patiently for that close shot that is required for handgun hunting with an air pistol. I consider that some of the most challenging hunting I've done.

Randy



Scoping Your Air Gun

An important component of an airgun hunting rig is a quality scope, as this permits you to realize the intrinsic accuracy of the rifle. There are several reasons to consider scoping an air rifle. Magnification, the ability to enhance the target in conditions of low lighting, and fast sight acquisition are all key factors. We can use iron sights on muzzleloaders to take a deer-sized animal at 50 yards, but to put a pellet in the small kill zone of a squirrel at 50 yards in early morning light takes some help!

There are a variety of scopes available for every type of gun and shooting, but the airgunner has special needs. Scopes designed specifically for airguns have become widely available in the last few years, offering good to great optical quality over a wide range of price points. Before we look at the options, let's discuss some of the unique requirements for airgun scopes. The right scope depends on what type of airgun you use; spring piston airguns have a reputation for being scope eaters, especially the big magnum springers. It may come as a surprise to those unfamiliar with airguns, but even a scope built to go on a magnum centerfire can soon be rattled to uselessness by a small caliber spring piston air rifle. This is because of the direction of the recoil generated when the spring driven piston slams home, causing a strong bidirectional force to be exerted. Heavy magnum firearm scopes are not designed to stand up to this type of recoil, and the internal mechanisms can be jolted out of alignment. This causes the point of impact to shift around rendering the scope unusable.

When buying a scope for a springer, make sure you find one rated for this type of gun or you may be in the market for a replacement sooner than expected!

Another precaution to consider when attaching a scope to a springer is the selection of the right mounts; on a heavy recoiling springer a one piece mount makes sense as the scope is less likely to "walk" back on the dovetails than a conventional two piece set of rings. The bidirectional jolt of the spring piston can cause the mount to slip rearward which in turn shifts the point of impact. The greater surface area of the one piece mount grips a larger contact area and is less likely to shift position once it has been tightened down. However, the rings in the one piece mounts are fixed in a static position that gives far less flexibility as to which scopes will fit, and compact scope models in particular are often not accommodated by the one piece designs. A work around when a two piece mount is utilized on a rifle with substantial recoil is to place a scope stop on the dovetail behind the rearmost ring. A scope stop is a small brace resembling the lower half of a mount that is clamped onto the dovetail, many models have a pin that drops into an indentation on the rail preventing any rearward shift in position.

Pre-charged pneumatics are almost recoilless, so a standard firearm scope will hold up without problems. But then you run into the second issue: most airgun shooting occurs in the 20 to 50 yard range, and most firearm scopes have their parallax correction set at much greater distances. Airgun hunters tend to shoot smaller targets at closer ranges, conditions where the effect of

parallax distortion is much more distinctive and apparent. For this reason many airgun scope makers design in an adjustable parallax correction on their scopes. The shooter looks through the scope and turns the forward or side mounted objective control until the target becomes sharp. At that point, the parallax error has been reduced for that particular target at a given range.

There are several manufacturers that currently have airgun specific offerings on the market; including Tasco, Leupold, BSA, Nikko Stirling and Leapers. Regardless of which you choose, there are certain features that are absolutely necessary in a scope destined to ride on the hunting air rifle, and others that may be desired based on your shooting style and intended use. As mentioned, the scope must be designed to stand up to the forces exerted by a spring piston airgun if that is the platform you'll be mounting it on. The parallax correction must either be set for the ranges at which airguns are used, or allow the shooter to make adjustments when required. Many of the scopes I use can be adjusted from 7 yards to infinity and I find this to be just about the perfect range of control, but be aware it adds one more adjustment parameter to deal with in the field.

Since a common use of airguns is to hunt pest and small game, often taking place in low light conditions, the scope must offer excellent light transmission properties. Many of the airgun scopes being offered today are equipped with illuminated crosshairs, which are quite useful in placing a shot when hunting in low light. In the hours of near darkness at either end of the day, it is a

common occurrence to have the outline of your quarry seen in the scope while not being able to determine where the crosshairs overlay it. An illuminated red or green crosshair glowing over the outline makes the difference between a shoot-no shoot decision in this situation.

For much of the quarry hunted with airguns, the targeted kill zones tend to be quite small and a variable magnification is a useful feature, in my opinion 3-9x is the best option in most cases. I would advise caution when considering a very high power magnification for field work, because unless you have a rock steady rest the crosshairs at 16x magnification tend to shake like you're in the middle of a magnitude 6 earthquake! On the other hand, for lower powered gun that will be used primarily for close in pest control a compelling argument can be made for a fixed 4x magnification scope. This provides adequate magnification, makes shooting accurately inside of dark buildings like a barn or a feed shed easier, and removes the need to give even passing consideration to the magnification setting when preparing to squeeze the trigger.

Another feature seen on new scope models coming from various manufacturers is the Mil-dot, which are a series of dots aligned vertically and horizontally (usually at one mil from dot center to dot center) along the crosshair. These mil dots can be used to range find if the hunter knows the right formula to apply and the size of their target, but this is somewhat complicated to work out when hunting. I use a laser range finder as it is quicker, easier, and more accurate. But when sighting in my gun I work out which mildot to use at 20, 40, and 60 yards and use the

The Bontrager QB 78 PCP Conversion

Turning the ever popular QB-78 into a PCP Hunter!

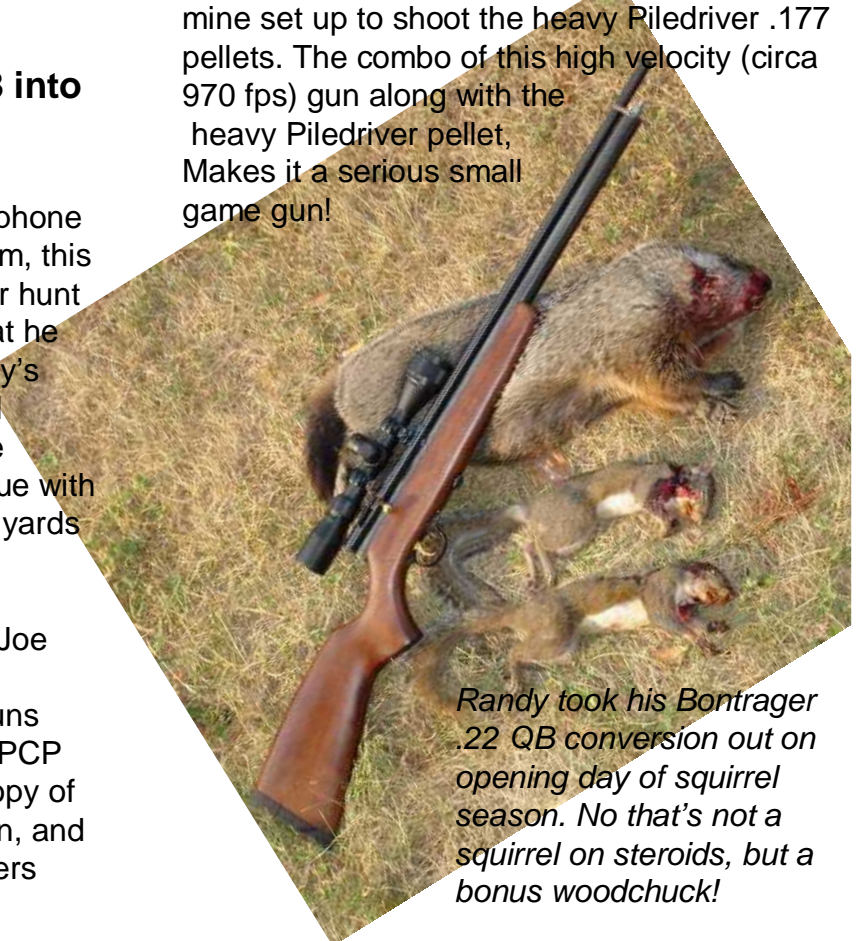
A few months ago I was talking on the phone with Randy Mitchell and he said "hey Jim, this guy sent me a write up on a recent deer hunt with his airgun, and the cool thing is that he built the gun himself"! I went onto Randy's website and had a look at the story and pictures of the gun. This home built rifle looked a bit crude, but you couldn't argue with the results; a .32 caliber projectile at 75 yards rolled a nice doe with a one shot kill!

The builder of this gun is a guy named Joe Bontrager, and a while back he started posting over on the Adventures in Airguns hunting forum. Joe also spoke about a PCP conversion of the QB-78 CO2 gun (a copy of the Crosman 160) he'd been working on, and started posting some impressive numbers and interesting pictures of his creation.

While not primarily a CO2 guy, I have always liked these inexpensive Chinese guns. The conversion keeps the receiver, barrel, trigger assembly and stock of the QB, and replaces the CO2 chamber with a HPA reservoir capped with a universal foster fitting and a heavy duty high volume valve of Joes design. He offered to build a couple of guns for Randy and I if we supplied the raw materials, so the good Reverend went down to Compassecoco, purchased a couple of new QB 78s, and shipped them off. A couple weeks later we got our guns; a .22 for Randy and a .177 for me.

You'll be seeing more about these guns in future editions of Airgun Hunting Quarterly, and while I don't know if Joe will continue to build them as a hobby or go into limited production, I'm really enjoying the one I was

lucky enough to get my hands on! I have mine set up to shoot the heavy Piledriver .177 pellets. The combo of this high velocity (circa 970 fps) gun along with the heavy Piledriver pellet, Makes it a serious small game gun!



Randy took his Bontrager .22 QB conversion out on opening day of squirrel season. No that's not a squirrel on steroids, but a bonus woodchuck!

If you like the popular QB 78 for plinking, you'll really be impressed with the PCP conversion for hunting.

Continued Scoping Airguns

mil-dot and laser range finder en concert to determine shot placement in the field.

When you get ready to purchase a scope for your air rifle I'd suggest you consider the platform and the intended use, then go online for a look around. While you may find an airgun rated scope at your local gun shop, the selection will most probably be limited. However, a virtual trip to the online airgun shop will open up a number of possibilities, and I am willing to bet one will be exactly what you are looking for.

REGULATORY ISSUES

BAD NEWS FOR AIRGUNNERS IN SCOTLAND

A BAN on airguns in Scotland has moved a step closer after the UK government agreed to consider controversial plans to outlaw the weapons north of the Border. Firearms law is controlled by Westminster, but UK Justice Secretary Jack Straw told First Minister Alex Salmond at a meeting last week that he would look at Scotland-only reform.

If approved, airguns could only be possessed in Scotland by holders of a licence, including farmers who need to shoot pests and members of registered shooting clubs.

Any new law could be introduced as early as next year and, as well as banning new sales of airguns, would force the surrender of the estimated 500,000 weapons in Scottish homes.

Since 1999, 1,154 Scots have been injured in airgun incidents, and three have been killed. In March 2005, two-year-old Andrew Morton was shot and killed by an airgun as he and his brother went to see a fire engine near their house in Easterhouse in Glasgow.

At their meeting on Friday in Bute House, Straw advised Salmond that he would "give careful consideration" to any plans which Scottish ministers prepared for a ban on airguns.

Last year, new UK-wide laws came into force which raised the age limit for buying an airgun to 18 and made it an offence to fire an airgun "recklessly" from private property, regardless of whether anyone was hurt.

However, both SNP and Labour MSPs have said that these proposals did not go far enough, and former First Minister Jack McConnell had raised the opportunity of Scotland having its own tougher laws against the guns.

A source close to Salmond said: "The First Minister and new Justice Secretary had a very productive meeting, during which the issue of action to tackle the scourge of air weapons was discussed.

"The Scottish government believe that we need firearms legislation to deal with this extremely serious problem in Scotland. Options for a possible way forward were raised, and received a sympathetic response."

The source added that it would be now be a matter for the Scottish justice secretary, Kenny MacAskill, and his department to follow up the Salmond-Straw meeting with detailed proposals.

He added it was too early to say whether gun owners who handed in weapons after any ban would receive compensation, and what would be the precise wording of any exemptions to the ban.

He said: "You will need a licence and a very good reason to own a gun - for example, being a farmer needing to keep pests down, or being in a gun club where the weapons are kept there. But we're still at a very early stage as far as the precise details are concerned."

SNP sources claim Straw is keen to see how an airgun ban works in Scotland because he is minded to do the same thing south of the Border.

A spokesman for Jack Straw said: "We appreciate the concerns and the importance which ministers in Scotland attach to this issue. We will look very closely at any proposals which the Scottish Executive put to us."

Under the new proposals, all but the lowest-powered guns would be removed from shelves. Courts and police define a gun too weak to be covered by any airgun ban as being capable of firing a conventional .22 pellet no faster than 377 feet per second.

Under the current law, an airgun, which anyone over 18 can buy without a licence, should be capable of firing a pellet no more than 612 feet per second.

Any trader selling air weapons has to be registered and approved by the police as a registered firearms dealer and must log the name and address of buyers.

While police insiders gave a cautious welcome to the plans, gun enthusiasts claimed they would do nothing for crime while penalizing legitimate gun users.

A police insider said: "It would be a lot of work to take all these guns off the streets, but we do know they are a problem. The question is: will we have the extra bodies to administer this?"

A senior member of the National Smallbore Rifle Association, who asked not to be named, criticized the ban. He said: "There are already perfectly good laws which forbid misuse of these weapons and I can't see how a ban will stop criminals using airguns."

"The current handguns ban certainly doesn't stop criminals using guns. The only guns which will be handed in under any new ban will be those belonging to law-abiding members of the community who shoot as a legitimate sport."

Last year a sheriff called for a ban on airguns following the trial of a 24-year-old who shot his girlfriend in the head with one.

John McLean had pointed the gun at his girlfriend's head and pulled the trigger, not realising that it was loaded.

A pellet lodged itself in the woman's head and had to be removed by hospital staff, who then told the police.

This article was recently picked up off the web. There has been a vocal dialog on the UK Forums discussing this ban which will only impact responsible and law abiding citizens. This is an example of what can go wrong when lawmakers are ignorant or motivated by their own political agenda, and the constituents they are supposed to represent live under a system where their voices are simply ignored. How long before the rest of the UK goes down the same path? It is ironic that in a country where some of the finest airguns are manufactured, the citizens will not be allowed to own them.

... **Editors**

Air Gun Hunting Issues with State Government

Randy Mitchell

I noticed this year (2007) that the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources elected to make a change in the laws that govern what air gun is legal for use in taking small game. This year the change prohibits the use of .177 caliber for squirrel and rabbit hunting, which of course made me wonder what the justification for such a change really was.

I called the Main Office in Frankfort and spoke to one of the biologists who was in on the decision making. I also spoke to one of the leading officers in the Law Enforcement division as well. I learned that there was some internal debate concerning the need to make such a change to begin with, but that the change was eventually done in an effort to diffuse future issues in regards to explaining to a judge or jury why air guns of .177 caliber were being used for small game hunting when the majority of .177 caliber air guns on the market were more or less considered youth models meant for target shooting by youngsters. Apparently, the Game Department is worried about legal challenges in the future from animal-rights activists.

Now let me say right from the start that I received excellent help from the individuals I spoke with, and that they aren't necessarily anti-air gun. But the decision they made came about because they had no way, from their point of view, of determining in the field what .177 air guns were of sufficient power to take small game, and which ones weren't.

Having used air guns exclusively for all my hunting over the last 5 years, I immediately saw that there were some alternatives that could aid law enforcement wardens with this issue, and I sought clarification on how to go about placing the issue in front of the Commission that makes such decisions. In Kentucky, and it may be similar in other states, a 30-day advance notice must be given that an individual wishes to speak to the Commission concerning rule changes. So I immediately dropped two letters into the mail, one to the Commissioner's Office, and another to my local Commission representative. I hope to hear from both individuals that I will be able to address the Commission at the next meeting concerning the use of .177 caliber air guns in small game hunting. I have several ideas that might make the use of a .177 air gun of appropriate power immediately identifiable, which would address the issue of how the field agents and wardens are to enforce the law they have taken an oath to uphold.

The secret to getting an issue in front of the powers-that-be is to conduct your self in a professional, non-confrontational manner, with an emphasis on understanding the train of thought that led the law to be changed in the first place. Once you understand the reasoning behind the change, you have the ability to address the concerns that led to that change in such a way that serious consideration can be given to reversing an ill-advised law which may have simply been enacted based on a lack of information.

Robert Hamilton's Favorite Hunting Air Rifle:

There is no one best gun for all reasons. It is better to view one's hunting airguns like the game of golf. Golf has long, short and medium range needs. Golfers thus get an assortment of golf clubs and select the one best meeting the needs of the present situation.

Airgun hunters should be similar. A serious hunter should have multiple airguns even if he hunts only a single species. There should be a primary and a backup airgun along on every hunt.

And that is just for hunters who hunt only one species, say squirrels. As a farm pest hunter, my targets run from tiny English sparrow to crow size. But due to the less wary nature of farm pests being more used to human activity, shot opportunities tend to be at shorter ranges than on public hunting lands. Shorter shot distances allow a less powerful airgun.

Thus if I had only one airgun for all my farm pest hunting, it would be my .177 caliber Beeman R7 breakbarrel springer which shoots 8.4 gr JSB Exact 4.52mm round head pellets about 590 fps. I am pleased with the Swift 4-12x 40mm A.O. scope I have on it. This Swift scope covers the useful range of magnification that works best for me on the farms. I settled on a Mac-1 custom drooped, medium height, one piece BKL mount, which has proven to be less apt to let a bump knock the scope off zero due to the precision fit and area of the scope grooves gripped by this mount. The leather carry sling is a must to let the hands be free for other tasks such as using binoculars, range finder, etc.

Airgun Hunting Issues Continued

Several states have made recent changes to their game laws, with Missouri being one of the most recent to allow bigbore air guns to be used during deer season. Ken Cox was instrumental in seeing that particular change in the state of Missouri. Robert Hamilton spent a good bit of time himself in getting California to change some of its laws so that turkey can now be hunted with a .20 caliber or larger air gun.

As the issue progresses through the stages that I hope it will, I will be adding updates to this concern so that future laws concerning air guns can be addressed by others in their locale. As firearm laws continually tighten, I believe that the use of air guns will be a growing concern and not a backburner issue any longer. So keep abreast of your hunting laws, and work to change them in such a way that confirms the ethical use of air guns as a hunting tool.

But while the R7 is the "one gun for all" choice, it is far from the best choice in all hunting. For example, in open lands ground squirrel hunting, where ranges are longer, I favor more power such as my Beeman R9 or AirArms TX200 Mk3.

As a general rule of thumb for selecting a hunting airgun, get the airgun that does the job but is neither underkill nor overkill. Nobody hunts cottontail rabbits with a .30-06.

Robert Hamilton

Update on Missouri Deer Hunting

Ken Cox worked with the Missouri Department of Conservation to have airgun put on the books as a legal method of take for deer in the Show Me State.

Ken Cox has been working diligently for the last several months to get airguns into the Missouri hunting regulations. This regulation has just been passed and large bore airguns are now a legal method of take for white tail deer. I believe that validating our big bore airguns and gaining legal status not only provides more opportunity to use them (for what they were designed to do), but further gives justification for their very existence. Good work and congratulations on this success.

Editors

From online post By Ken Cox:

My quest to legalize air guns for hunting deer in Missouri started on April 26, 2007. On that morning I drove to Jefferson City Missouri with a good friend Mike Dierkes, two DAQ rifles, a carbon fiber tank, a hand pump, and a power point presentation put together with the help of my children.

The room was filled with several Missouri Department of Conservation officials all anxious to see my proposal to allow air guns for deer hunting.

After a 25 minute presentation to the departments Regulations Committee the initial looks of skepticism quickly faded to curiosity, and then definite interest in my proposal.

Without the pictures from numerous websites and the two DAQ rifles I don't think I would have been as successful. A big thanks to Dennis Quackenbush, Eric Henderson, Randy Mitchell, Jim Chapman, Stephan Boles, and many others.

For the next several months I stayed in contact with the Conservation Department and actually helped write the amendment to the Wildlife Code. Many thanks go out to the Missouri Department of Conservation. I was always impressed with the professionalism they displayed throughout the entire process. The Missouri Department of Conservation is definitely a first class organization that I am very proud of. A special thanks to John Smith, Dennis Hancock, Bill Kohne and the Regulations Committee.

On Tuesday, August 7, 2007 the Regulation Committee approved the proposal, and on Friday, August 10, 2007 it was finally approved by the Conservation Commission.

The approved amendment reads as follows:

Title 3--DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Division 10--Conservation Commission
Chapter 7--Wildlife Code: Hunting:
Seasons, Methods, Limits

3 CSR 10-7.431 Deer Hunting Seasons:
General Provisions. The Commission
proposes to amend section (5).

PURPOSE: This amendment adds certain large caliber, high compression air-powered guns to the legal methods for hunting deer.



My Favorite Hunting Airgun

Randy Mitchell

Over the past 4 or 5 years I've shot several different guns at game. And one that I keep coming back to is a tried-and-true BSA Supersport. I am on my second 'Sport, and this one contains a gasram for its powerplant. However, the spring-piston version is just as likeable.

I enjoy this gun for a number of reasons. It is wonderful to carry, and the stock is not too bulky for my average-sized hands to hold on to for extended periods of time. The trigger is very nice, and the accuracy the gun affords is right up there with the best of them. It is a very attractive gun as well, with clean lines that appeal to the eye. My Supersports have both been in .22 caliber as I prefer that caliber for most of my squirrel hunting. It shoots many different pellets accurately, but I usually use JSB Exacts or Crosman Premiers in this particular gun. I hope one day to add a .177 and a .25 to my collection.

(5) Deer Hunting Methods.

(A) Archery: longbows, recurve bows and compound bows.

(B) Muzzleloader: muzzleloading or cap-and-ball firearms, .40 caliber or larger, not capable of being loaded from the breech.

(C) Any legal method: archer and muzzleloader methods; crossbows; shotguns; handguns; or rifles firing centerfire ammunition; and air-powered guns, .40 caliber or larger, charged only from an external high compression power source (external hand pump, air tank, or air compressor).

(D) Prohibited, in use or possession:

1. Methods restricted by local ordinance:
2. Self-loading firearms with capacity of more than eleven (11) cartridges in magazine and chamber combined.
3. Ammunition propelling more than one (1) projectile at a single discharge, such as buckshot.
4. Full hard metal case projectiles.
5. Fully automatic firearms.
6. Electronic calls or electronically activated calls.

JUSTIFICATION: Large bore air rifles, powered by compressed air, are available on the market and are suitable for hunting deer. This amendment adds certain large caliber, high compression air-powered guns to the legal methods for hunting deer. Muzzleloading rifles are limited to .40 caliber or larger, and allowing large bore air rifles of .40 caliber or larger will provide consistency with muzzleloading regulations.

Date proposed change will become effective: March 1, 2008.

Dennis Quackenbush Airguns

D&Q



.308, .457, and .50 Caliber Rifles



Dennis Quackenbush Airguns are the choice of big game hunters that want the best in a powerful big bore PCP design. From Bison, whitetail deer and feral hog in North America to Impala and Kudu in South Africa, these guns have done it all!

<http://www.quackenbushairguns.com>

Traveling with Airguns

One traveling airgunner hits the wall with TSA

Erik Berger

As I drove to the airport, I began to feel uneasy about bringing my Airforce Condor on the flight to Iowa. I expected TSA to mistake my gun for an actual firearm. After all, the unconventional looks of this air rifle make it more akin to an assault weapon in appearance than your childhood Crosman 2100. But I reassured myself that firearms and other more explosive materials are allowed on the plane, so I should have no problem. Besides, I did my homework and TSA specifically shows that compressed air guns are allowed as check-in luggage only. (<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm#6>) I checked in at the airline kiosk and informed the service representative that I was Iowa bound and checking in an air rifle, at which point she instructed me to take my gun to the TSA handlers for check-in approval.

I walked the gun back to a female TSA agent and placed it on the table for her to inspect. I left the gun completely assembled because I was hoping that she would not recognize the tank as a separate assembly and question it. But that was precisely what she did. I explained to her the air source was the canister that makes up the stock of the gun. Unsure of what to think of this gun, she called in the resident "expert" for a second opinion as she continued to focus her attention to the attached reservoir.

When the second agent arrived I was in the midst of explaining what type of gun I had to the first officer as he began to eye the air tank as well. He asked about the contents of the tank and if it was empty. I explained

that I left a little bit of air in (200 psi) the canister to demonstrate that it was empty by draining the rest of the air and removing the valve stem. I took the canister off of the gun and placed a dime in the bottom of the hand pump attachment as I screwed in the tank. The remaining air left with a soft hiss and then I removed the valve stem to show that the pressure was zero and nothing was in the tank.

The "expert" TSA agent said that despite being empty of air, he still needed to visibly see all the way into the bottom of the tank. I told him that was not possible because the tank is not supposed to be opened by the consumer, only by the manufacturer. He informed me that unless he was able to look into the bottom of the tank, that I was not going to be able to take my gun. I politely reminded him that the TSA web specifically allows for compressed air guns to be taken as checked baggage so long as they were empty. I asked why potential more dangerous materials like hair spray and gun powder were allowed to be checked in with no problem but I was not allowed to take my empty cylinder? That didn't help. He sternly countered by saying that I have a compressed gas cylinder and that unless he was able to see into the tank, it was not going.

Needless to say I was angry but I was also up against the clock and now in danger of completely missing my flight. So, I had to call my wife and have her drive back to the airport to pick up the cylinder while I checked in the remaining part of my gun. The following week she shipped the tank 2nd day air to my Iowa destination.

As soon as I had access to a computer in Iowa, I revisited the TSA website and found that the site specifically states:

Compressed gas cylinders are allowed in checked baggage or as a carry-on ONLY if the regulator valve is completely disconnected from the cylinder and the cylinder is no longer sealed (i.e. the cylinder has an open end). The cylinder must have an opening to allow for a visual inspection inside.

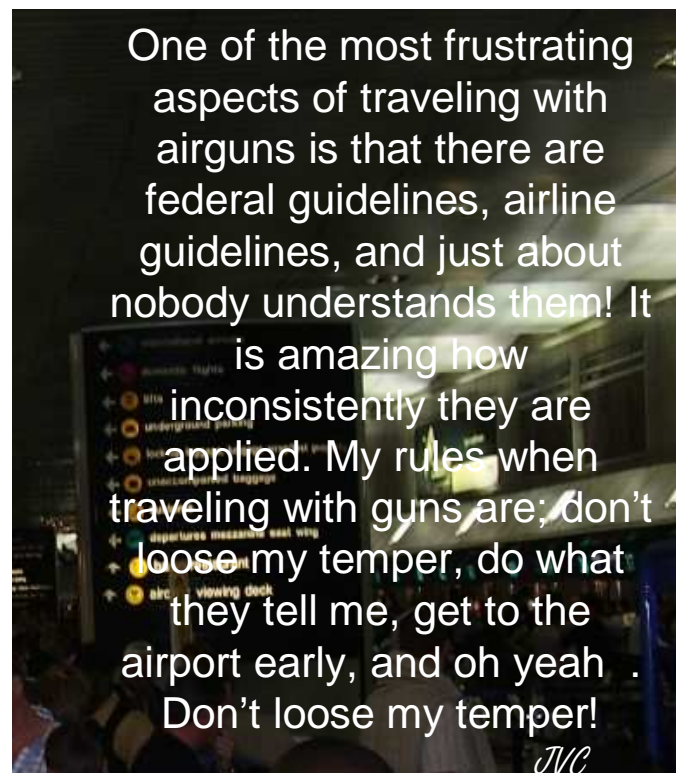
Our Security Officers will NOT remove the seal or regulator valve from the cylinder at the checkpoint. If the cylinder is sealed (i.e. the regulator valve is still attached), the cylinder is prohibited and not permitted through the security checkpoint, regardless of the reading on the pressure gauge indicator. Our Security Officers must visibly ensure that the cylinder is completely empty and that there are no prohibited items inside.

Please note: Many of the seals/regulators used in paintball are not designed to be removed from their cylinder by the end user. The seal/regulator should only be removed and reinstalled by a factory trained technician. Passengers considering air travel with a compressed air or CO2 system would be advised to contact its manufacturer for guidance in locating a qualified technician, or to consider shipping the system to their destination via a parcel service.

Sporting Goods – Scuba tanks are not allowed on commercial airlines for safety reasons. Ship scuba tanks or consider renting a tank at your destination. It seems that the “expert” TSA agent

wanted to be a hard-nose despite my efforts to demonstrate that the gun was empty. Perhaps that was my mistake. But when both agents were alerted to the tank I thought I could calm their fears by my demonstration.

As a fellow air gunner, I really don't have a way around the problem. Perhaps PCP's that have the tank permanently fixed underneath the barrel like the Evanix AR6 would be less suspicious and therefore easier to check in. It seems that it comes down to the type of agent you run across whether or not your gun will make it to your final destination in one piece. My suggestion is to seriously consider shipping the canister or complete gun to your final destination and bypassing TSA all together. Thanks Osma!!



THE HISTORY OF BIGBORE AIRGUN HUNTING

RANDY MITCHELL

Bigbore airguns have been around for a lot longer than most modern shooters realize. It is no surprise that airgun shooters and hunters are more informed about the use of bigbore airguns due to the interest we all share in the hobby, but try and convince a firearm enthusiast that bigbore airguns are viable arms for the taking of game and you'll be met with some incredulous attitudes. However, historical facts are just that.....facts. And the more you know about the history of your hobby, the better off you are in sharing your love of this hobby. When you look at the examples in museums and in the personal collections of noted collectors, you find some very fine examples that go quite a ways back in history. According to Dr. Robert Beeman, one of the earliest examples of a bellows-powered gun dates back to 1590 or so, and King Henry IV of France had one of the first known pump-up pneumatics around 1600. If you go back 300 years or so, Dr. Beeman notes that some of the most powerful and elite arms of the time were airguns, though they were rare and uncommon even then.

From what I've been able to glean from reading on the internet and from books in print, hunting with airguns was common enough that it was mentioned in sporting books of the time. For example, "Sport in the Alps" by Baillie-Grohman, mentions hunting red deer in Germany during the 17th century. The Landgrave of Hessen, Louis VIII (1691-1768) is reported to have preferred airguns for hunting, and once brought down a 22-point stag that weighed

480 pounds in Battenberg. Another reference is made to Colonel Thornton and his Sporting Tour of France in 1802 in which he took deer with an airgun. Then of course, there is the famous American expedition, the Voyage of Discovery by Lewis and Clark, and from their journals they describe the taking of deer with an airgun, that event taking place in 1804-1806.

If you jump ahead in time, you will find that blackpowder guns eventually reached the point where they were reliable enough to replace the use of airguns by the well-to-do and nobility. The craftsmanship and cost of large bore airguns began to count against them, and firearms became preeminent. The upkeep of a powerful airgun was more intense than that of a black powder firearm, and as in many areas of life, manufacturers cater to the lowest common denominator for mass production.

In so far as modern bigbore airgun hunting is concerned, that is, hunting large game such as deer after WWII, one of the most often cited examples is a man by the name of Allen Dicke who made a series of at least five different airguns, each an improvement on the previous one, that shot a .44 or a .510 caliber round. Some of the guns had the pump integral with the gun, while others he made removed the pump altogether, such as the one he made for Jack Sullivan. Allen built his guns in the early-to-mid 1980's, and is reportedly the first modern airgun hunter to take a whitetail deer, as well as other animals

BIGBORE AIRGUNS HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A LOT LONGER THAN MOST MODERN SHOOTERS REALIZE. BUT TRY AND CONVINCE A FIREARM ENTHUSIAST THAT BIGBORE AIRGUNS ARE VIABLE ARMS FOR THE TAKING OF GAME

such as Corsican rams, with a modern airgun.

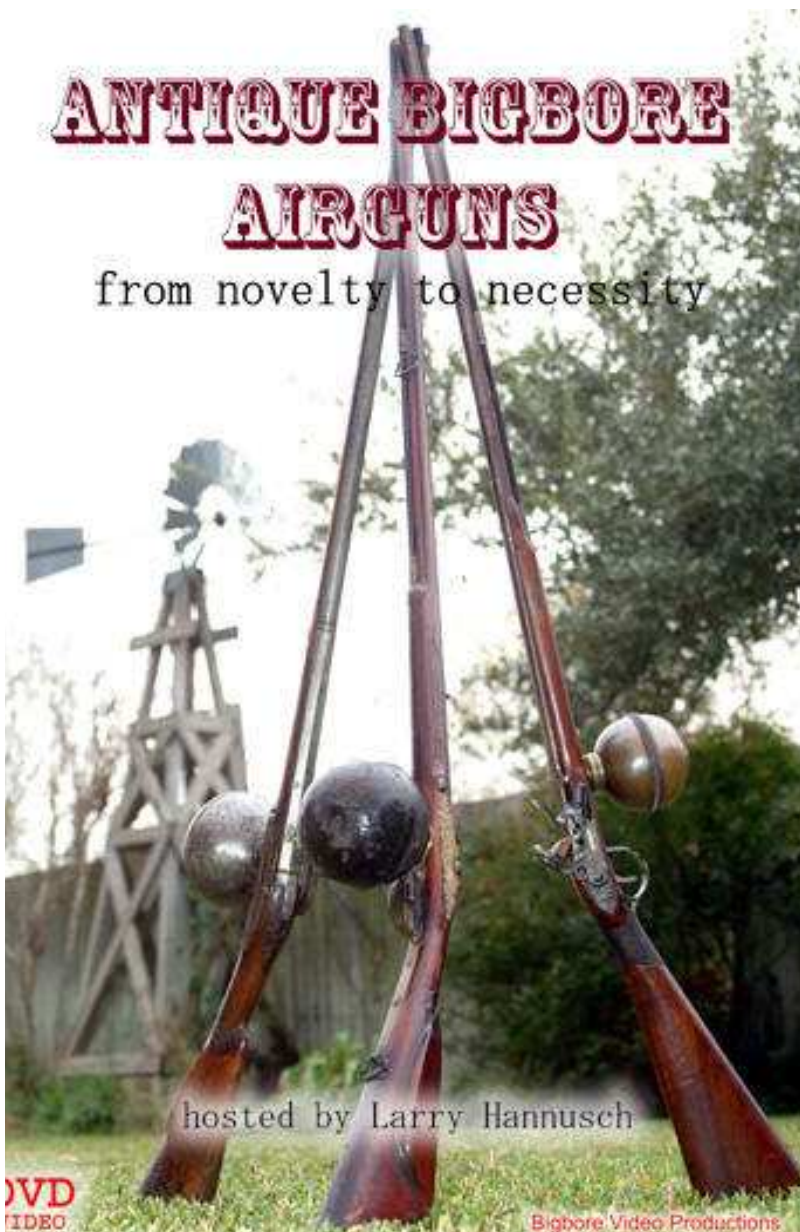
Gary Barnes and Dennis Quackenbush both make modern airguns of suitable power to take large game. I have personal experience with Quackenbush's airguns in several different hunting situations on two different continents, and have shot one of Barnes' guns at an airgun meet. These guns are quite powerful enough for big game hunting, and it is my fond hope that the states that don't currently allow airguns for big game hunting will open their eyes to the historical precedent set by many a hunter for the last 300 years!

When you get to looking at the various type of game taken by big bore airguns, you begin to see the validity and effectiveness that these guns, in the right hands, can provide to the airgun hunter. From coyote to American bison, animals of all sizes and shapes have been taken with bigbore airguns. Airguns will never replace firearms in the heart of the average hunter, but they do provide a unique experience quite unlike any other when pursuing game in the great outdoors.

Some items that may help you in learning more about bigbore airguns would be the following books and videos:

Air Guns by Eldon G. Wolff (published by the Milwaukee Public Museum)
Antique Bigbore Airguns (DVD) hosted by Larry Hannusch, available from Eric Henderson at

www.bigboreairguns.com



Warthogs and Big Bore Airguns

Jim Chapman

I first traveled to South Africa over a decade ago, and I recall it as a stressful trip because I was meeting my future in-laws and preparing for my wedding a few days later. Since that first trip I have visited frequently, and it has come to feel like a second home to me. A couple of the animals that I've always associated with this beautiful country are not the big five critters you'd expect, but rather the lowly guinea fowl and warthog. Guinea fowl because in many parts of the country, regardless of whether you're in a rural area or in town, they are everywhere. Warthogs for some reason have always conjured up pictures in my mind's eye of the rolling savannas.

When planning my first hunt, the professional hunters I booked with seemed a bit amused that kudu and bushbuck (both a passion for many Eastern Cape hunters) took a back seat to getting one of these ugly hogs. The fact that I was an inveterate hog hunter anyway only added fuel to the fire!

Since that time I have taken several warthogs, big and small, with firearms and airguns. I have had some great results, and some not so great ones. But still, seeing that stiff legged gate with tails held high, gets my hunting instinct going in a major way!

The first pig I shot came after a long morning pounding the veld on foot. We hadn't seen much, and were going to sit for a short break. The PH took a few steps forward and looked into a wash cutting

through the hills, and dropped down signaling me to be quiet and move forward. As I moved up too where he was standing, I saw a truly huge hog grazing the hillside 50 yards down. I slowly cocked the DAQ .50 and took aim offhand, no time to set up the sticks. All I could see through the scope was the enormous ivory, bigger than any I'd seen on the walls of the lodge. Forcing myself to concentrate on the shot, I put the crosshair up the front leg and stoke the trigger. The gun barked and the pig simply dropped where it stood and didn't move.

We all stood there amazed, these pigs have a reputation for carrying a lot of lead. We were high fiving and whooping it up, when to my dismay the thing hauled itself up and took off up the opposite hillside.



The PH threw up his 30-06 and hit twice, first with a body shot and then one to the hind quarters. I also hit him again just as he disappeared into the brush, I could not believe it! We spent three hours tracking through the back country following the blood trail, with the little terrier tracking dog working his heart out, but we could not recover the monster pig. I was devastated to say the least. That same afternoon as we were driving back to camp when we spotted a small herd. One of the pigs was a nice sized boar, and still doubting myself and wondering about my gun we jumped of the truck and started a stalk, using the sparse scattering of larger bushes to shield our approach. Slipping around the side of the small tree, we saw that we'd worked our way towards each other, and the group was only sixty or so yards away. Staying inside of the shadow line, I laid my rifle on



the sticks and prepared for the shot. After about ten minutes they had worked pretty close, one of the sows getting too close. I thought she was going to bust us, but was pleased to see the big guy step out into a picture perfect quartering shot. I was so nervous that the crosshair seemed to be floating around in a crazy eight fashion. But I got myself under control and squeezed off the shot. The boar squealed and took off. Oh no not again I thought, as we moved to follow up. But there he was, piled up at about sixty yards away. I put another shot into him just to be sure.

On that trip I shot four warthogs, but never saw anything approaching the size of the first one, and that will stick in my craw for years to come. I hate to loose any animal and have only had it happen a couple of times after many years in the field, the fact that he might have been the warthog of a lifetime makes it that much harder.

I learned another lesson the hard way on another hunt sometime later. I was hunting with friend and PH Rob Dell and we'd glassed a good hog. We stalked for a few hundred yards before dropping into a gully. We followed this eroded gash through the veld another hundred yards before crawling out. We could hear the pigs foraging as we peeked out from behind a tree. The lead pig was looking straight at me from forty yards, I snapped the gun to my shoulder and lined up right between the eyes. The light was such that we could follow the 320 grain bullet as it smacked the big sow right between the eyes. She let out a hellacious squeal and took off as if on fire with her family on her heels. Rob handed me his 30-06 and as we watched the group moving to the top of the adjacent hill I shot her right between the shoulders

breaking the spine. Walking up and administering the coup de grace, we saw that the airgun fired bullet had indeed hit her right between the eyes, but because of the thick skull and sloping forehead had bounced off. Rob said “ yeah, seen that happen with the big magnums as well, that’s why head shoots suck” , if not the exact words the meaning is correct.

On my last safari I had the disadvantage of having broken my ankle four weeks before the trip. I had the cast cut off before I left and replaced it with a softcast, reckoning I’d lace my high boots up tight in the field. I did my best, but could not hike very far. On a couple of days my leg swelled up to a point that it looked like I had my foot stuck inside a basketball. When it was particularly bad I hunted from one of the blinds set up by a water hole. On one such outing I’d brought my falcon with the intention of shooting some guinea fowl or perhaps a couple pigeons, and my DAQ .457 to have a go at one of the marauding baboons they sneak in out of the hills.

Rob told me to take a warthog if one came in, he wanted to thin out the numbers a bit. And sure enough I’d been on stand for about an hour when I peeked out to see four wart hogs swooping in, with tails held high. Now I’ll admit right here, I have trouble gauging the size of warthog unless the tusk are very big, I just don’t see enough of them in context. None of these had much ivory, but so I picked out the biggest and fired. He ran about twenty yards and dropped, and I was quite chuffed with my performance. Climbing down I hiked over, and I swear the last groundhog I shot was bigger. I sat there glumly, knowing I was not going to hear the end of

this. And I didn’t, at dinner that night I had several request to tell all about my warthog, and comments such as “I heard that was quite the pig you shot”. What I spotted as tusk was the tuft of hair that these pigs have that grow right along where you’d expect to see the ivory. I knew that but was still fooled into seeing what I wanted. I did not cover myself in gory on that day.

At any rate; hunting warthogs is still at the top of my list. Every year when I go out to hunt SA I target new and different species, but every year warthog remain on my list. I took away some excellent knowledge from each hunt; always reload immediately and wait to make sure my shot was effective, I don’t take head shots (at ground level anyway), and I have gotten much better at estimating the size (no more toy warthog jokes, thank you very much). I have learned as much or more from my three less than stellar experiences than from all the typical (and preferable) one shot kills.

Warthogs are tough, wary, with a great sense of smell, hearing, and better eyesight than most wild porkers. They represent an excellent challenge for the airgun hunter!



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Longrange Airgun Silhouette Shooters Organization

There has been a growing interest in long range airgun shooting. With this in mind, I have created this organization for those interested in the sport of long range air gun hunting. This is designed to resemble a hunting situation.

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www.bigboreairguns.com

Big Game Bird Hunts for Airgunners

Perspective defines our reality, and in the context of airgun hunting there are many animals could be considered “big game” which wouldn’t meet that definition if you were out in the field with a powder burner. The big birds that I’ve pursued with airguns are such quarry, comprised of two species; turkey in North America, and guinea fowl in South Africa.

Using an airgun to take this feathered quarry makes it “Big Game Airgunning” in our books. Whether Turkey in North America or Guinea fowl in south Africa, these wary and fast moving birds offer up a real challenge!

Jim Chapman



What both of these big birds have in common is that they are exceedingly wary in the wild state. I was once told that if an acorn falls in the forest; the deer hears it, the bear smells it, and the turkey sees it. This incredible eyesight (their hearing’s not so bad either) is something both of these birds have in common. As a matter of fact I think the guinea fowl is more difficult to hunt because they travel in large flocks

Which means you always have many sets of eyes on lookout as you try to creep into range for a head or neck shot.

Turkey are hunted in the same manner with airguns as with shotgun. Setting up and calling is the most productive method, and is a science and an art form in itself. I have to confess that this is not my strong suit, but I am lucky to have several hunting buddies that are truly talented callers. I can stay hidden with gun on bipod waiting for a big tom to approach. A head or neck shot will drop them in their tracks.

You need to check the regulations where you hunt to see if airguns are allowed. I would suggest at least a .25 caliber at 20 or more fpe, though California has set the lower limit at .20 caliber air rifles.



I also have found the large bore airguns very effective for big bird hunting, with the added advantage of expanding the potential target areas. I've used the DAQ .308 and .457 rifles, and the Dragonslayer .50 for guinea fowl out to 100 yards, and don't have a worry taking body shots with these guns.

My favorite airgun for hunting guinea fowl in fact, is the Dragonslayer .50 caliber shooting roundball. This combo is dead accurate and absolutely anchors these large spotted fowl with a body shot.

The methods I've use for guinea fowl are to either drive and glass, or find a frequently traveled path from roosting to feeding areas and set up an ambush. Either approach is better if the hunter is in full camo, as the slightest motion detected will result in an explosion of birds in a quail



like flush. I can tell you it gets the blood pumping when 30 or 40 of these birds take off at once! To give an example of how well the impagala (Xhosa name) can see; we had a blind that had been constructed from hay bales and left standing weeks before our hunt. It was situated on a route where the birds would sneak in from the veld to move across the pasture feeding amongst the grazing sheep. Randy Mitchell, Andrew Myers and I were sitting in the fully enclosed hay blind watching as a flock of thirty or so birds came in towards us. While they were still about 150 yards away, I slowly slid the barrel of my DAQ .25 through the small shooting window to get ready for the shot And got busted cold! We sat there watching as the birds took off in the opposite direction, ending our hunt for the day.

I find hunting either of these birds, which live a world apart, amongst the most challenging animals you can hunt with an airgun. And I think the airgun is one of the most satisfying ways to take these birds. I've taken both species with traditional scatterguns, on the wing in the case of guineas. But the requirement to deliver the pellet with surgical precision to the head or neck (with the smaller caliber guns) ensures that hunter has done his job in both field craft and marksmanship.

The “Mini” Antelope

Hunting South Africa's Smallest Plains Game With an Airgun

Jim Chapman

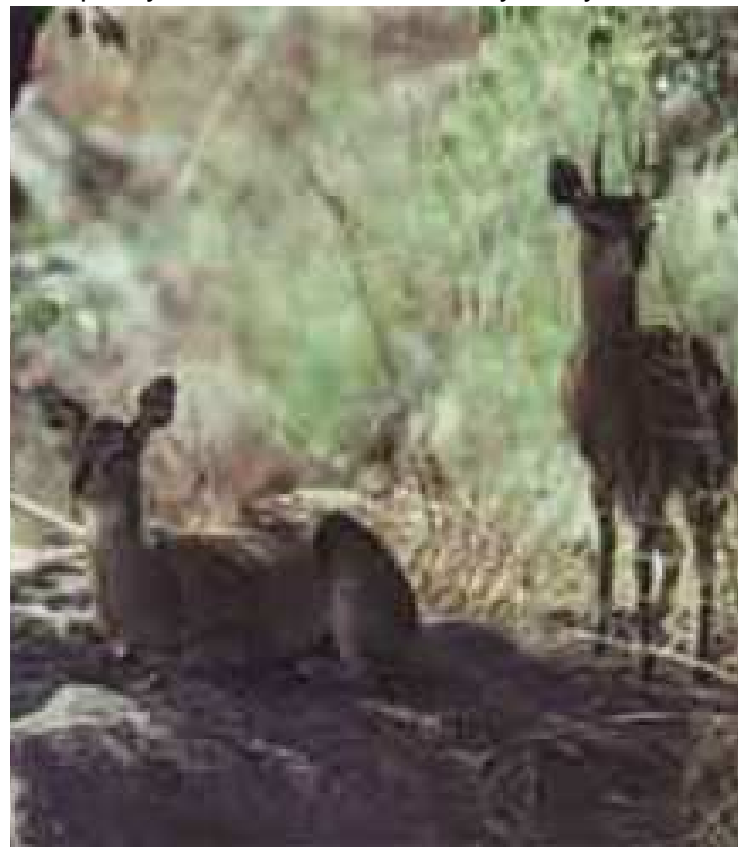
Most hunters, when they think of Africa think of either the classic big five, or the large plains game such as wildebeest, gemsbok, kudu, impala, zebra and the like.

While I admit I often daydream about hunting the big five and do hunt the typical plains game, I am also fascinated by the small antelope that can be found there. In the area I hunt on the Eastern Cape there are three species, the duiker, the steenbok, and the grysbok. All three are small, wary, and either nocturnal or crepuscular. As a matter of fact, you may well find duiker and steenbok throughout the day and they are often kicked up while stalking other animals. The grysbok however, which is found along the costal areas will only be found at night.

The common, or grey, Duiker is a small, shy antelope. The males have short spiked horns, 5” and you’re getting into a trophy animal. The name duiker refers to the animals habit of taking off at high speed in a series of diving jumps when alarmed. Adult males stand 500mm at the shoulders and females are about 20mm higher. Males weigh about 30 – 40 pounds, and females tend to be slightly larger.

They are mainly active in late afternoon and into the night with other peak feeding periods in the early morning hours. Both males and females are territorial , and are probably one of the most common antelope in much of the Cape region

We have obtained special permits to hunt with airguns, and the duiker and steenbok are perfectly suited for .308 caliber guns on up. My two favorite guns for the small antelope are the Dragonslayer .50 and the DAQ .308. The Dragonslayer shooting round ball is dead accurate and has plenty of power. One early morning my PH and I were hiking along a kloof (a mountain with a gulley along the bottom) glassing, and spotted a duiker laying under a bush at a couple hundred yards. We slowly and quietly stalked to about seventy five yards





monkeys and a flock of guinea fowl come in for a drink. But at dusk I'd seen no warthogs and decided to pack up and hike back to the ranch a couple miles away. Turning around, I caught a subtle movement. Waiting and watching a nice steenbok materialized out of the bush and started down the trail. At about fifty yards he held up and tested the wind. He was aligned head on to me, presenting a nice frontal shot. Placing the crosshair right in the middle of his chest, I took the shot. The 120 grain cast soft lead bullet hit right on target. The buck jumped straight up in the air and collapsed, falling to what later turned out to be a direct heart shot.

There's no doubt the large antelope of Africa are worthy of daydreams, but the smaller duiker and steenbok are in the same class when it comes to challenge and excitement!

and slipped around a tree that had shielded my approach. The little ram must have heard our approach or sensed something wasn't quite right. He was now standing partly covered by the branches. I slowly mounted my rifle on the shooting sticks we'd carried along, and waited for him to step out hoping I'd have an opportunity for a shot before he spooked.

After waiting about five minutes he stepped out giving me a clear broadside. At that instant I squeezed the trigger and watched hoofs flip straight up into the air, with hardly a twitch. When we walked up he was done, and we were really pleased to see the five and a half inch spiked horns. The round ball had punctured the lungs and smashed though the off side shoulder, flattening out like a pancake.

On another hunt I was in a blind up in the trees over a waterhole with a Quackenbush .308 hoping to get a warthog. I'd moved into position and been sitting quietly for a couple of hours; and had seen a troop of



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THE .457 HOLLOWPOINT CAST BULLET

Eric Henderson cast a supply of hollowpoint bullets for Jim to take to South Africa. These puppies really do the job.

On my last safari I carried the Quackenbush .457 Dennis built for our 2006 African outing. On that trip we'd used a variety of solid bullets cast from hard lead. While we'd had some excellent success with these bullets, we had also had instances where the performance had been less than stellar.

On many animals the hard lead bullets would ice pick, passing through with no expansion and what appeared to be suboptimal energy transfer.



After the days hunt we would often sit around the pub discussing the perfect bullet for use in these guns. We kept coming back to a consensus that a soft lead bullet that would expand and transfer more energy on target would perform better.

When we returned home Eric commenced work on building the perfect big game bullet for the DAQ .457, finally coming up with a 360 grain hollow point after much experimentation. The bullets were caste in soft lead using a modified Lee die. Eric reported that there was very little variation in either dimension or weight, though the bullets sent to me had been weighed and sized as a precaution.



I received a call from Eric a couple weeks before my departure saying that he was shipping me a couple boxes of these bullets for me to take along. He warned me the bullets were not pretty, but thought they'd work perfectly on the tenacious African plains game. The box arrived a couple days before my departure, and in the rush to get packed and out the door (I was traveling with my whole family), and on opening the package I found that true to the warning, these were pretty homely looking bullets. But having learned to rely only on hands on experience, I loaded up my gear and headed to the range. I was a little concerned about potential accuracy as these bullets looked inconsistent, the hollow point ranging from gaping to really gaping. There was only a chance for a brief range session limited to a fifty yard range,' but I reckoned a limited range session was better than nothing. At least if they were really bad, I could save the weight of lugging them around the world in my baggage.

However, these thing were accurate! I shot five three shot groups at fifty yards, and all were under three quarters of an inch. I would have kept shooting for better groups, but ran out of air. That ended my shooting for the day, and as it turned out I didn't have an opportunity to get out again before departing for Cape Town.

The first morning of the safari, we set up a shooting bench and shot groups at 25, 50, 75, and a hundred yards. And while point of impact shifted considerably with distance, the groups stayed well under an inch at each. It was decided that this would be the bullet of choice for bushbuck, springbuck and lighter skinned quarry. For the bigger animals like the kudu, I'd stick with the 425

grain hard lead we'd used previously.

By the end of the trip I'd shot a springbuck, a duiker, and a warthog with the hollowpoint. In every instance the result was excellent, recovered bullets demonstrated that they had expanded nicely, mushrooming but shedding little mass. Because they held together and had so much mass, penetration was also very good.

“Warthogs are a very tough and tenacious animal, they can carry a lot of lead so you need to be sure of your shot placement and be very selective about the shot you take”! (Andrew Myers advice to me right before our first warthog hunt with airguns)

The warthog seen on the previous page, was hit (a little far back) as it walked through the brush at 65 yards. The bullet clipped the right lung, passed through the heavy body of the boar, then smashed the left hip. The hog dropped like a bag of cement. I pumped a second shot as a coup de grace, but from the damage done by the first shot he would not have gone anywhere.

From the results of our post mortems and seeing first hand how these bullets performed, I'd have to say that for medium sized thin skin game (deer fro example), this is the best bullet for the Quackenbush .457 that I have shot. Only problem is that if you don't have hunting buddy names Eric Henderson, casting your own might be the only way you can get your hands on them!

Kudu: Hunting the Gray Ghost

An airgun puts a new twist on this exceptional game animal

The kudu is the ghost of the veld, seamlessly gliding in and out of sight, it always amazes me that such a large animal can vanish in the blink of the eye.

This large spiral horned antelope is one of the most popular species hunted in South Africa, and for many hunters making their first trip to South Africa is *the* trophy of a lifetime.

What makes the kudu such a challenge is that all of their senses are honed to a razor sharpness, there is not a weakness in their defenses; they have the sight of a hawk and can pick up the approaching hunter long before the hunter sees them. It is embarrassingly frequent that my first sight of a group of kudu is as they trot out of sight over a distant hill top. Their hearing is so sharp, that the slightest snap of a twig will spook them. And I have to say that keeping completely quiet while stalking into airgun range is quite a hat trick.



And if they don't see you and don't hear you, better hope the wind is in your favor! Even if high up in an elevated blind it is not uncommon to be busted. Most rifle hunters in Africa take longer shots, but airgunning like bow hunting is an up close and personal pursuit, and I'm as fanatical about scent control as I would be hunting whitetail in the Midwestern woods.

The first kudu taken with an airgun was a cow I took while coming back from an afternoon hunt in heavy bush. We'd regained the truck late in the afternoon, and were headed back to the lodge for a drink, some rest, and a bit to eat. As we came over a hill we spotted a couple cows, and Rob stopped the truck and glassed them with a studied gaze. He said "Jim, we want to thin out some cows and take a some meat for biltong, you interested"? Well yes I was, grabbing my rifle while Andrew grabbed the sticks, we went over the side and slowly stalked another hundred and seventy five yards through the brush until about thirty yards away. Snapping the Quackenbush .50 caliber rifle to my shoulder I fired, dropping the animal cleanly. Later when we skinned her out, we found the bullet had gone in on the right shoulder, clipped the aorta and passed though completely.



Rob radioed back to the get a couple more guys to come out and help us pack the big old cow back out to the truck, and by the time we were ready to go, darkness has fallen. It was not easy to get the animals on poles and heave her out through the heavy vegetation, but we finally managed the job.

Cows are almost as wary as the bulls, maybe a bit less but this is countered by the fact they often travel in groups so there are many sets of eyes watching for danger.

The next kudu taken by airgun was a year later, when Eric Henderson, Randy Mitchell, and I headed back over for a group safari. This trip was just phenomenal and a lot of game large and small fell before our guns. A nice kudu bull was the focus for Eric, and he'd been planning on getting this trophy all year.

His first two or three stalks were very close, but each time something prevented the shot. So it was decided that he'd sit the elevated blind that just the night before, Randy had seen a nice big bull come in to. The blind is situated about 25 feet up surrounded by a clump of trees, and about 35 yards from the water hole.



It is a sturdy wooden structure mounted on telephone poles, and was designed for bow hunting. The requirements of the big bore airgun hunter closely parallel the bow hunter, and this stand worked perfectly. It was about the last half hour of shooting light when the bull came in from an area of steep hills off to the left of the stand. The kudu moved in towards the water and when he stopped to graze, Eric put a 510 grain .457 slug right through the lungs. The shot was a pass through and the big antelope ran off about 75 yards before dropping. This was the first kudu bull legally (and probably the only) taken with an airgun. I was out on another hunt at the time, and when I got back to camp the whole place was buzzing with excitement! At that moment I knew that I was going to have to add a bull to my list. And in a later hunt I did get my bull as well, which was in many ways the trophy of a lifetime.

One of the ranch staff had spotted this bull bedded down in a high kloof area, and we spotted him early one morning. We got inside of 50 yards, and he offered me a head on quartering shot as he watched me and got ready to bolt. My shot (also with the DAQ .457) was a little high, but pretty good placement.

The bull jumped and took off up the rugged hillside with our group in pursuit. He left a good blood trail, but it took us many hours to finally track him down and administer the finishing shot. As with bow hunting, the tool is up to the job, but anything less than perfect placement means you'll spend some time tracking. The satisfaction of taking such a challenging game animal with an airgun in a fair chase hunt however, is indescribable!



Airgun Hunting South Africa

Andrew Myers, Professional Hunter

In Between Varminting and Pest Shoots

Most sportsmen come to the Eastern Cape in search of our outstanding kudu and bushbuck, as well as the many species of plains game we hunt. Typically we go out in the mornings and afternoons with a break mid day. Whether the hunter is after game animals with firearms or airguns, there is plenty of time and a variety of pest species that can be shot in the “off hours”.

In the agricultural areas and stock yards one can shoot pigeons, many types of starlings, rabbits and vermin. In the past we’ve received special permits to use airguns, and are the only outfitters in the region that have been allowed to use them for large and small game.

One of the activities that has proven popular is setting up near the stock yards and feeders to snipe the huge flocks of pigeons that come in. We’ll shoot four or

Special Permits for airgun hunting are granted before season commences, check with us on annual status



five birds and prop them up around the feeders, which serve as decoys to draw in more birds. We don’t shoot the doves that fly in with the pigeons, and the combination of live doves walking amongst the dead decoys is like a magnet for the flocks passing by. I understand that the American hunters can’t use silencers, but they are de rigueur here. Some of the guns

are so quiet that birds aren't spooked while shooting.

We also go after the starlings, there are a few indigenous varieties such as the glossy, redwing, and pied starlings, and the European starling that seems to be a major pest specie everywhere in the world. Jim Chapman and I have spent a fair amount of time walking around the sheep pens and barns in pursuit of the starling grand slam.

And if you want more challenge than pigeons and starlings, the common crows and carrion crows provide it.

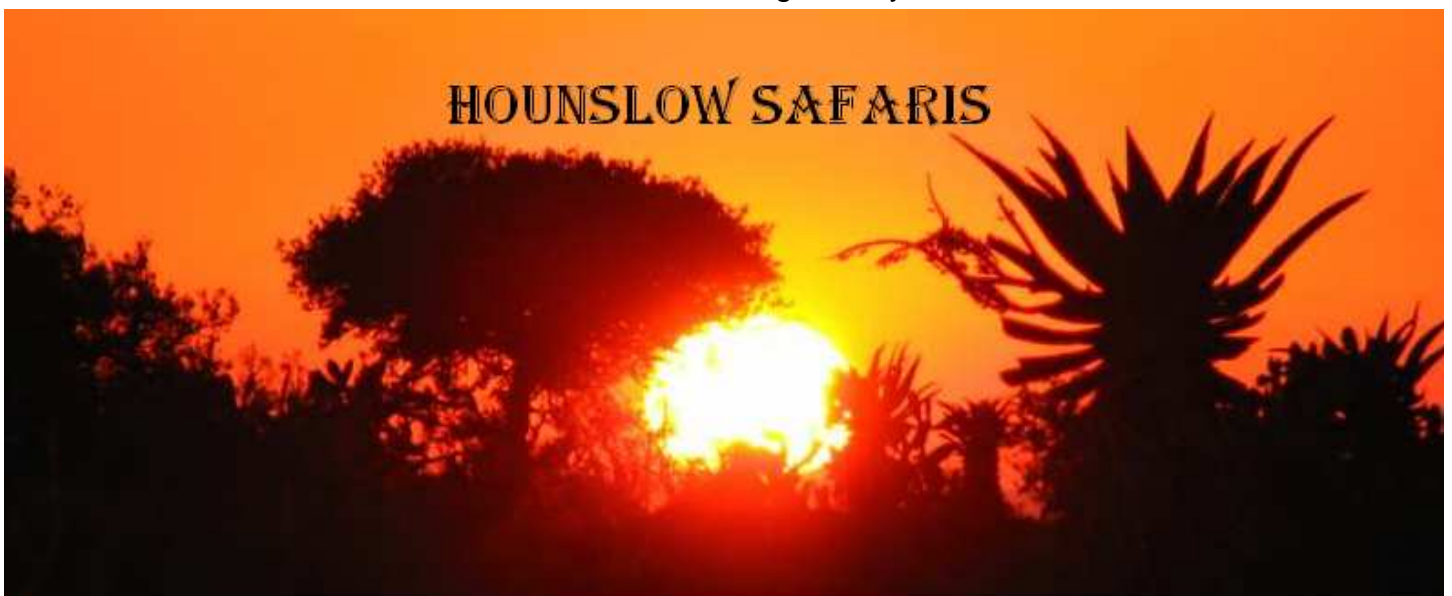


We have large numbers of hyrax, both up in the rocky outcroppings and in the rolling hills. To get in close, we have found that the use of camouflage allows the hunter to move into airgunning range effectively.

Regardless of whether your main objective is the fantastic large game hunting with airguns or firearms, you will have fun with side trips to pursue some of the unique and plentiful small pest species that are found here. The guys that have been coming out to hunt our traditional species have started to bring their air rifles along, and invariably glad they did!



HOUNSLOW SAFARIS



The Dragon Slayer .50 Big Bore Air Rifle Got Lucky

Charles Richardson

The first week of May, 2007 I went to the Double C ranch in South Texas hunting hogs. This was a three-day hunt including lodging, meals, guide, and three hogs. I bought this hunt on eBay back in the winter. It cost me about \$800.

Since I hadn't killed a hog while hunting with Eric, Sniper & Leroy in January I really wanted to get one this time as I was about out of pork in the freezer. Before the hunt I decided to take the 1st one with a centerfire if I couldn't get a close shot from the stand with my air rifle. I did take a pretty good hog while the guide was taking me to the stand he had picked out for my first evening hunt. It was shot at 161 yards with a centerfire.

So, after loading the 1st hog up for the guide to take in to be processed I cased my 30-06 and told the guide to put it in my cabin, as I would be air gun hunting the rest of the time with the .50 cal Career Dragon Slayer by Shin Sung. I would be using an Eotech red dot scope, as I knew I would probably be night hunting and the crosshairs on a regular scope would not show up.

Flashback time. The folks at the Double C had never heard of hunting with an air rifle. They allowed rifle, pistol, muzzleloader and bow so I knew they probably would be open minded about a big bore air rifle.



They said first they wanted me to shoot it on their range. At 50 yards the Dragon Slayer .50 was making one big hole in the target off the bench. They thought it was shooting really hard. I was using round balls and knew that the power level was not really as much as I would like. They said sure use it but we want a picture if you kill a hog with it. I have since modified the DS 50 to get more power and believe it will do better the next time I hunt with it.

So I am sitting on a tower stand watching for hogs when the feeder went off and all the exotics in the world started coming out of the woods. I had Black Buck, Axis deer, Fallow deer, wild sheep, elk, moose, buffalo, Waterbuck, etc all coming into the feeder which was about 45 yards away. But no hogs. Finally after sunset but before full dark I saw a few hogs coming down the dirt road toward the stand. By the time they arrived at the stand it was full dark. I could hear them well but couldn't see them.



The red light on the feeder had been bumped and was shinning towards the treetops. I think the Elk bumped it while trying to knock feed out of the feeder. The hogs fed for about 15 minutes and then left. They had run all the other animals off when they arrived. I stayed in the stand until about 10 pm at which time the guide arrived to take me back to the Double C for dinner, cold beer and a soft bed. Next morning came early, as I wanted to be in the stand while before daylight. I grabbed a sack of sausage and biscuits plus a thermos of coffee headed for the stand with a guide. The Double C doesn't hunt a stand twice in row, as they believe the animals need to feed without a hunter around if they are to keep coming back. I was on the new stand about 30 minutes before shooting light. I sit there and enjoyed my breakfast and watched a few birds fly and some grass grow. No animals of any kind showed up before I was picked up by the guide. Back at the lodge it was nap time until lunch. After lunch I shot clay birds over the pond from the deck behind the dining room and told lies with my fellow hunters until about three hours before sunset. This evening I saw the exotics all over the place but no hogs. I did hear some about dark but didn't see any. I did manage to catch up on my thinking about faster horses, older whiskey, younger women and more money.

The next morning we went to a new stand. I sit down, made myself comfortable while digging in my breakfast sack and pouring my coffee. While doing this I happened to glance out the window of the tower stand and saw three small hogs walk from under my tower stand headed for the feeder. I could just barely see them as the sky was just starting to get a little bit light in the east. I got the DS .50 up on the windowsill but couldn't get the shot I wanted. I wanted a headshot, as I knew the DS .50 wasn't putting out but around 575 to 585 feet per second and it wouldn't kill a hog cleanly unless I placed the ball perfectly. When they got to the feeder they kept milling around and not giving me a shot as they fed. I couldn't actually see them unless they were in the light aimed under the feeder. They couldn't find much corn and left pretty quickly without me getting a shot. As they walked away into the dark the feeder went off throwing corn all



around. It wasn't 10 seconds before they returned on a run. A little brown one stuck his head right under the light and held it still for a few seconds while munching a pile of corn. I hit him in the neck at 41 yards and he dropped in his tracks. He was a small hog at 26 pounds but fine eating size. The ball went through his neck and lodged under the skin on the off side.

While waiting for the guide to pick me up I decided two hogs are enough for this trip. So I put up the DS .50 air rifle and shot some pictures of the exotics coming to the feeder after daylight. I was a bit disappointed in the power of the DS .50 and decided to do a few modifications on it to increase the speed of the ball or pellet. I now have it up to shooting about 675 FPS with round balls from the original 585 fps. That is about a 15% increase in the power of the air rifle. I think it will make a big difference in hog hunting. I enjoyed the Double C Ranch and this hunting trip. It was the first trip I had purchased off of eBay. It will not be the last. I am checking eBay fairly regular for a trip somewhere else for this fall.



Airgun Depot is a new presence in the airgunning world, and is one of the founding sponsors of the Airgun Hunting Quarterly. As a sponsor they are demonstrating a willingness to help develop the sport of airgun hunting in North America



Sumatra 2500 Air Rifle- .177 Cal
Retail Price: \$545.00
Our Price: \$409.00



Sumatra 2500 Air Rifle- .20 Cal
Retail Price: \$545.00
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Retail Price: \$545.00
Our Price: \$409.00



Sumatra 2500 Carbine Air Rifle- .177 Cal
Retail Price: \$580.00
Our Price: \$409.00

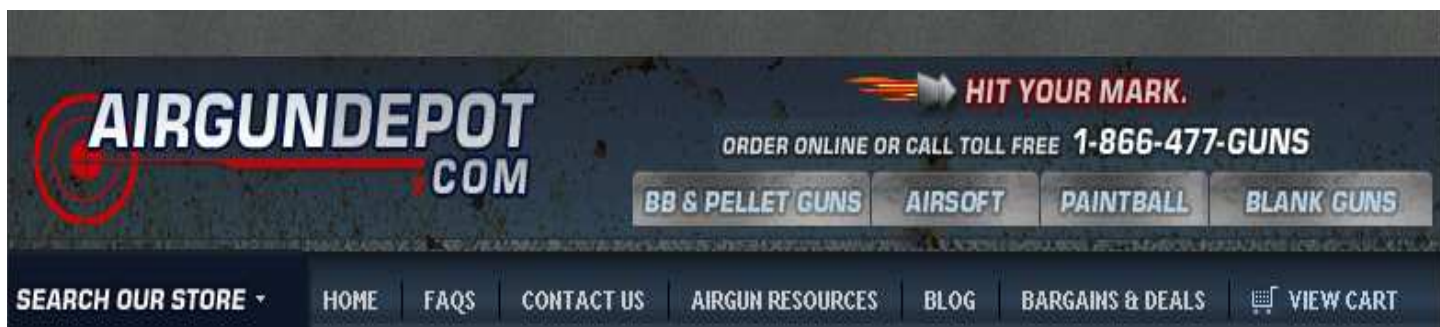


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The editor and writers of the Quarterly Ezine thank AIRGUNDEPOT for their support.



WhiteTails & Bigbores

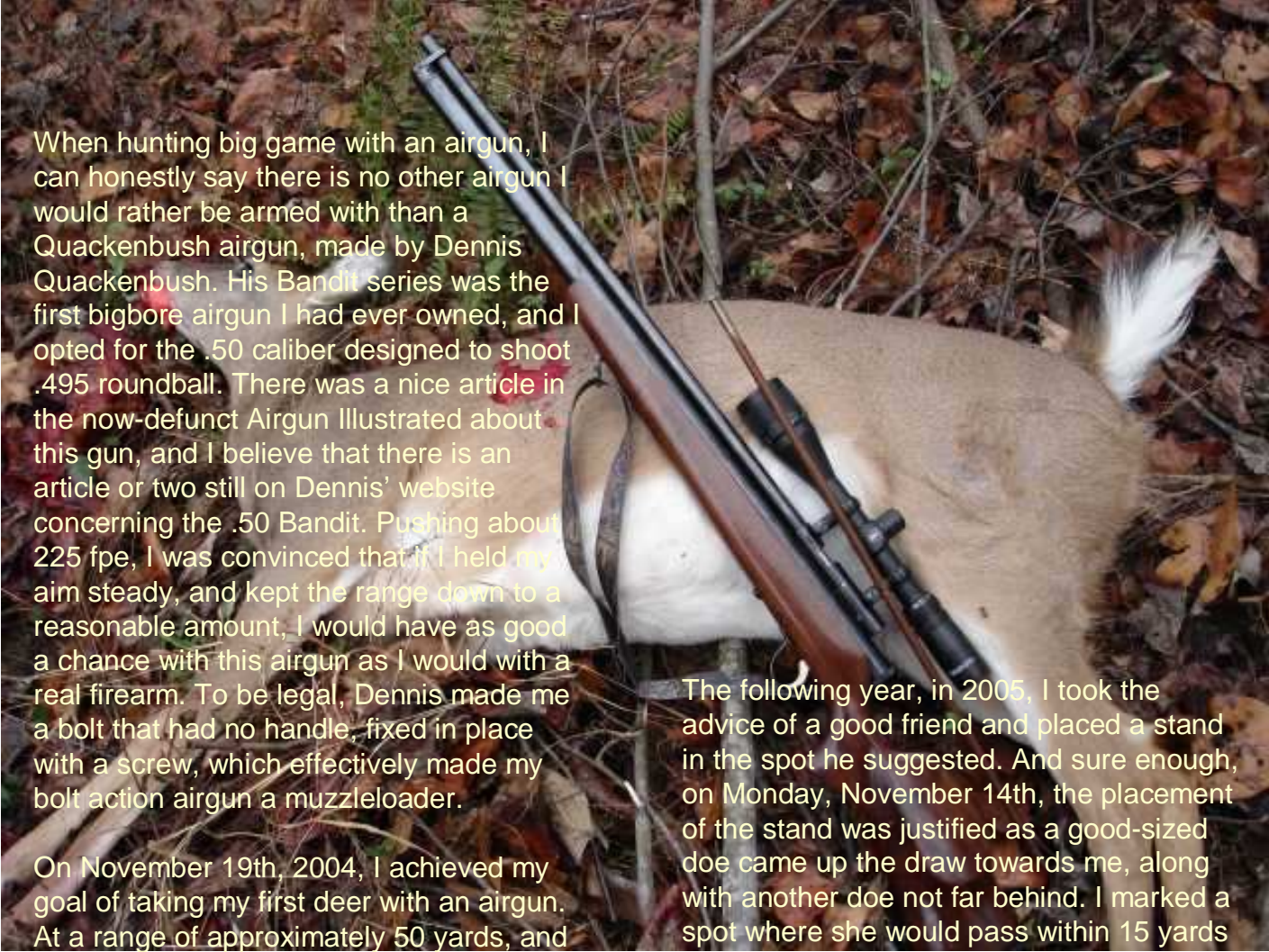
In the search for North America's #1 game animal, the whitetail deer, I've had the opportunity to hunt them with conventional firearms, muzzleloaders, and the bow. When the chance to hunt whitetail with an airgun came up, I was very excited as to the possibilities that might arise from this most unusual way of hunting.



First of all, there was the legality of the hunt to consider. I contacted the head of the law enforcement division in Kentucky and inquired as to the possibility of performing such a hunt armed with an airgun. Needless to say, they had never heard of it. This was 4 years ago, and by that time I had my small website, www.adventuresinairguns.com, up and running, and was able to direct them to it over the phone. I was pleased to hear their exclamations of surprise when they saw some of the pictures and stories that I had already enjoyed putting up concerning hunting big game animals with airguns. From the beginning, I had them convinced of the lethality of the bigbore airgun, but our main concern was the legality of the hunt according to the game laws then in effect.

For about 15-20 minutes, we went through the rule book together and finally determined that if I were to convert my airgun of choice into a muzzleloader, I would be legal in the state of Kentucky. Armed with this assurance, as well as an e-mail from the department head, I set out for my first whitetail deer hunt with a muzzleloading airgun.

Randy Mitchell



When hunting big game with an airgun, I can honestly say there is no other airgun I would rather be armed with than a Quackenbush airgun, made by Dennis Quackenbush. His Bandit series was the first bigbore airgun I had ever owned, and I opted for the .50 caliber designed to shoot .495 roundball. There was a nice article in the now-defunct Airgun Illustrated about this gun, and I believe that there is an article or two still on Dennis' website concerning the .50 Bandit. Pushing about 225 fpe, I was convinced that if I held my aim steady, and kept the range down to a reasonable amount, I would have as good a chance with this airgun as I would with a real firearm. To be legal, Dennis made me a bolt that had no handle, fixed in place with a screw, which effectively made my bolt action airgun a muzzleloader.

On November 19th, 2004, I achieved my goal of taking my first deer with an airgun. At a range of approximately 50 yards, and shooting from an abandoned farmhouse, I connected with a young deer after a few ranging shots (I was nervous, let there be no doubt!) and hit it in the spine, dropping it in place. I finished the deer with another shot after getting closer, and sat back to savor the moment. As far as I know, no one had ever killed a deer in Kentucky with an airgun, at least not *legally*. And the experience was even better than the first deer that I killed with a firearm. There is just something about using such a weapon as this to take animals that lends a certain historical resonance to the hunt, as bigbore airguns were used for hundreds of years by the nobility of Europe in days gone by.

The following year, in 2005, I took the advice of a good friend and placed a stand in the spot he suggested. And sure enough, on Monday, November 14th, the placement of the stand was justified as a good-sized doe came up the draw towards me, along with another doe not far behind. I marked a spot where she would pass within 15 yards of the stand if I were patient and lucky, and in what seemed an eternity, she finally reached the appointed spot. With great care, I eased up the .50 Bandit, once again in its muzzleloading configuration, and placed the sights squarely on her upper chest. A broadside shot at 15 yards was great for a bow hunter, much less a bigbore airgun, and the sound of my shot reverberated up and down the ravine I was hunting in. The big lead ball blasted through both lungs and exited the far side of the doe's chest. She jumped, looked around, then staggered 8 yards before going down. It was as clean a shot as I've ever made, with a quick and lethal result.

Now the story of this hunt gets funny from here, and if you've read on my website of this hunt, you'll remember that a buck was following this doe. I had reloaded and sat still in the event this was the case, and sure enough, he came out of the brush about 5 minutes later. I searched long and hard for the sixth point on his rack, but he only had 5, and so was safe from my shot due to out 6-point rule on the hunting lease. But I assure you, I've never looked harder for a sixth point in my life! I really, really wanted that double kill, a buck and a doe, with an airgun. The funny part is that he wanted that doe so bad, he tried lifting her up off the ground by her tail, and when she wouldn't respond, he laid down and took a nap, I suppose waiting on her to be more cooperative! For 45 minutes, he just hung around, and didn't leave until I tired of watching him and began climbing down from the tree.



Now I've had two years in a row taking a doe each time. But it was Jim Chapman who holds the honor of killing the first legal airgun buck in Kentucky, and he got a nice 12-pointer. The story is on his website, but a short synopsis of the hunt is that we hunted from the same stand just a week or so later, and on a miserable day for hunting, as well. It was cold, raining, and we almost didn't go out. But Jim is a dedicated hunter, and he wanted to give it a try. Am I glad we did! My only regret is that we didn't take the movie camera, for it was as nice a hunt as you would ever see on television. And at 50 yards, the .50 Bandit once again performed with authority. Jim made a nice shot behind the right leg of the buck, and it turned and ran uphill in the same direction it had come from. In about 40 yards, the effect of having both lungs shot out took over, and he staggered to the ground.

There was a lot of high-fiving and congratulating going on, so much that we didn't see him get up and make it another 20 yards away. He gave us a fright when we didn't find him where we saw him fall, but our worst fears were quickly extinguished when we found him moments later.

As things sometimes go, you eventually pass on a great gun to someone else. After enjoying an airgun safari in South Africa, I parted with the .50 Bandit in order to pay for the trip. But I now had in my hands an even more lethal airgun, the .457 LA Outlaw, (the LA stands for long action, allowing the use of conical slugs instead of roundball). With a 300+ grain slug, this gun puts out over twice the power of the .50 Bandit, and after seeing how well it did in

Africa, I was hyped about trying it out on a whitetail here in the states. So as the early muzzleloading season approached, I once again mounted the stand in the same location, which I was beginning to call my lucky spot, as it had produced three deer in just two years. The only difference this year was that I had a new gun, and I was using a new round with which I had yet to experience a kill. I had located some sabot rounds at Bass Pro one day while shopping, and bought several bags of them as they were on clearance. The day before the hunt I had shot for accuracy testing, and was satisfied with the accuracy for the range I would be shooting. So armed with a 180-grain .45 caliber sabot, I headed once again for the woods.



This year (2006) would prove once again to be a very good year for filling the freezer with venison. In the early muzzleloading season, which is open just two days, I killed a very large doe with a single shot to the spine at 40 yards, after passing on another doe and her fawn that was still with her. The doe I shot fell right in place, and once again I marveled at the effectiveness of a piece of lead powered by air.

Airgun hunting is a growing sport, and we may well be in the golden age of modern airgun hunting. It is still somewhat new in some states, and simply not allowed in others. Avid airgunners in more than one state have taken it upon themselves to try and change the rules, going to the meetings and submitting the required evidence to convince the powers that be that airgun hunting can be a positive addition to the hunting sports in their states. And in some cases, they have been successful. In others, the idea hasn't gone over quite as well. So check your state's regulations, and if they don't currently allow airgun hunting, it doesn't hurt to try and change their minds. Be polite, go armed with evidence to support your position, and work the system to make the changes needed to allow airgun hunting to have a chance.

Now, what are some concerns when hunting deer with an airgun? If you will approach deer hunting with an airgun in the same manner as hunting with a bow, you will have a good idea of how to go about it. Your range is longer than what you would attempt with a bow, but shorter than what you would try with a centerfire rifle.



Scent control is more important when airgun hunting that when firearm hunting, as you are much closer to your game. Place your stand in the same manner as you might if you were bow hunting, and your shots will be easy to manage. Heart and lungs are the desired places to shoot at, and based on my experience, that large, relatively slow moving chunk of lead is going to do its job well if you put it where it counts. Of the four whitetail I've either killed or seen killed with an airgun, none have gone farther than 40 yards. Even the firearm world can't say that, and we've all seen the TV shows where the deer bounds off and is recovered much further away than you might expect.

If you get the chance, I hope you will give hunting deer with a bigbore airgun a try. Be more discerning with your shot selection than any hunt you've ever done before, and in due time, your name will be added to the ranks of those who have enjoyed the thrill of hunting whitetail deer with nothing more than an airgun. And the old saying, "Keep your powder dry" simply won't make sense to you anymore!

AFRICAN HUNTING

Jim Chapman

ON A BUDGETS

I am going to share a little secret with my fellow airgun hunters. Many airgunners will spend hundreds or thousands of dollars to hunt exotics such as Axis deer, fallow deer, or Aoudad, down on the game ranches in south Texas. You can go on a two to three day hunt on one these ranch properties and take a wide variety of game animals. The way it works is that you hunt with a guide who is responsible for leading you on the hunt and getting you onto game, and importantly tell you what a particular animal will cost.

In case you haven't pursued exotics in the Lone Star State, these are fair chase hunts. Even when behind high fence, a big enough track of land can work wonders at keeping you and your quarry apart. You can make the hunt even more challenging by limiting your range with an airgun. But the reason the game exists on the ranch is that it has economic value. The typical arrangement is to pay for animals individually as the opportunity is taken. I have learned from long experience not to shoot first and negotiate price afterwards Misunderstandings happen this way.

There are several reasons to hunt exotics in Texas, one is that it is easy to get to almost anywhere in the state from a regional airport in a short period of time. Another good reason to hunt Texas is that you can pursue animals protected or extinct in their native ranges. Try to find a huntable blackbuck in India and your looking at a next to impossible task. In the native range there is not a sound management reason for taking one of these animals, while in Texas there are large free

range populations whose numbers need to be controlled.

Another reason, perhaps the major one, many people select Texas over Africa is that they think that they can never afford to hunt Africa. But it is more reasonable than you might think.

At one Texas Ranch, I saw the following price list; a springbok was \$3500, a bleesbok at \$3500, an impala at \$2500, Kudu starting at \$5000. and on and on. These four animals would come to \$14,500 excluding daily fees. If you live close you can drive, and if you're more distant you can find low cost flights.

But consider that on an airgun hunt at Hounslow safaris, it will cost in the neighborhood of \$3000 for a week of hunting, and you'll get a bleesbok, Springbok, impala, warthog, steenbok or duiker. The airfare from most destinations in the States to South Africa will be another \$2000 - \$2600. No doubt \$5-\$6000 is a chunk of change to most of us, but you'll get the hunt of a life time for about the same price as a comparable exotic hunt in Texas. I squirrel away a bit of cash at every opportunity and save it in a hunting slush fund, topping off with a couple hundred a month and some out of my bonus every year. It can be a bit of a sacrifice, especially with kids in or on their way to college, but I know that I'll remember each and every trip for the rest of my life. Don't get me wrong, Texas exotic hunting is great, but actually going to Africa is something special!

Hunting Texas is a lot of fun, can provide great challenge, and lets you hunt a variety animals from just about every part of the world. It is certainly more convenient for short trips, and you can find large ranches that go on for miles. But it's still Texas.

When you go to Africa. You're living the adventure. New sights new sounds, new taste, new animals to hunt on their native grounds. For my money a hunt to South Africa is everything I want. I can hike and glass, spot and stalk from a bakkie (truck) ,climb up into a blind over a water hole, and see tons of game on the hoof, not to mention that the variety and sheer numbers are mindblowing. I can fly out on a weekend, hunt during the week Monday through Friday, and fly back the following weekend. It is possible to hunt four or five properties in different environments and plan a big game animal per day.

Besides the actual shooting, getting close to the other wildlife: like elephant, giraffe, and zebra for photo sessions can't be beat. And the lodging and the food is great, Randy Mitchell said our safari on the Eastern Cape with Hounslow is

the only hunt he's ever gained weight on.

If you're going to hunt a single specie and there are time constraints, setting up a hunt in Texas makes sense. But if you have time, can travel the distance, and want to take several animals; fly to South Africa..... it is the most cost effective and memorable trip you can take.

If you're serious about either Texas or South Africa I'd suggest you contact Rob Dell at Hounslow, he can set you up with a low cost and highly productive hunt and can even arrange a big bore airgun for you to use!



Adventures in Airguns Hunting Forum

A forum dedicated to airgun hunters all over the world. Enjoy discussing your hunts, gear, favorite airguns, tactics, and anything else having to do with airgun hunting.

RAM HUNTING THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

ERIC HENDERSON



There are many great aspects to living in Texas, and high on my list are is the opportunity to hunt big animals with airguns. It's a bit strange, we're not allowed to take any game animals, not even a squirrel! But there are wild hogs, exotic deer, and many different types of rams that are airgun legal. I like to hunt exotics, and have taken several species with a number of different airguns.

My guns of choice for ram hunting are the Quackenbush big bores, I've used the .308, the .457, and 50 caliber to anchor these rams out to a hundred and twenty yards. These guns are powerful enough to cleanly kill even large animals with a good lung shot.

I also find a good set of binoculars or a spotting scope to be a great asset, allowing the animals to be judged before taking a long distant hike for a suboptimal animal.

There are several ranches across the state where you can hunt exotics in just about any type of country, from rugged desert hills to large grassland flats. Rams are at the top of my list when it comes to exotics. Some animals are reasonably easy to get in range of while others present a wary target. Regardless of terrain, one frustrating defense mechanism is when they bunch together for protection. It seems like most of the time the one you want will be in the middle of the group. We will usually drive the ranch roads and glass the area looking for small herds or lone animals, and this is where a spotting scope is handy. You can assess the animals before you commit to a long stalk. Rams have a good sense of vision and hearing, and if they've herded up you'll have a dozen or more eyes keeping guard. It makes for a fun approach!

“You can make these hunts what you want them to be”

You can make these hunts what you want; and to provide the most challenging scenario I like to find big properties with rugged terrain.

One of my favorite places to hunt Rams is “The Wildlife Ranch”. For a couple hundred bucks you can spend the whole weekend hunting rams with your buddies.

There are many different rams available to hunt, but the most popular are the ones found in the TX slam. They are Mouflan, Texas Dall, Corsican and black Hawaiian, other animals include four horn, painted desert, merino, New Zealand mountain goat, Ibex Goat, and Catalina goat, all of these make a fine mount for the trophy room.



“Mouflan, Texas Dall, Corsican and black Hawaiian constitute the Grand Slam”

This a great hunt to socialize on, and usually everyone will have a chance to take their animal. It's also the right hunt to introduce a new hunter to the sport. Jim and I brought 15 year old Derek on his first big game hunt

Where else can you have a weekend getaway for that price which includes lodging? My other favorite place is Lone Star Hunts. They mainly have trophy rams along with pigs. I have hunted there for years and have taken 2 trophy rams and lots of pigs.

If you want to try an airgun hunt for ram, give me a call and well set something up, always happy to get a newbie into the sport!





One of the best ways to see what airgunning for rams and other exotics is all about, is to watch the DVDs filmed and edited by Eric Henderson's Big Bore Productions. You'll see Eric and friends on hunts conducted on several properties in the Lone Star State



For Immediate Release:

Gene Lumsden, President and CEO of Legacy Sports International, LLC of Reno, NV and Mike Hurney, Executive Chairman of Webley Ltd. of Willenhall, West Midlands, UK are pleased to announce a newly formed business relationship. Legacy Sports will become the exclusive importer/distributor of Webley air rifles/pistols and Webley & Scott firearms in the U.S.A. and Canada, carrying their full line of shooting sports products. Legacy Sports will market these products through Legacy's normal distribution channels. Webley is probably the oldest name in the British gun industry – able to trace its origins back to 1790 when William Davies started making bullet moulds in his factory in Birmingham, England. Over the years the company gained a worldwide reputation for high quality guns of all types. As far back as 1911 the company had



Press Release

patented an air pistol and in 1924 launched the Mark I air pistol. Webley has long built up a reputation for well-engineered, high quality, high performance, value for money air rifles, and that tradition continues today and will do so for many years to come. Today, Webley offers the Patriot, Xocet, Xocet XS and Longbow spring air rifles, Raider PCP air rifles and Typhoon spring air pistols as well as associated accessories.

Legacy Sports International, LLC is an importer of firearms and shooting accessories. Bringing in high quality, reliable and affordable products for shooting and hunting enthusiasts is the mission of Legacy Sports' business. With well-respected brands including Howa, Escort, Puma, NikkoStirling and Breda and Pointer shotguns, Legacy Sports is committed to offer today's shooting sports enthusiast performance on the range and in the field. Legacy's track record proves - without a doubt - that they have consistently provided accurate rifles and shotguns as well as award-winning optics for sportsmen on a budget. This is why Legacy Sports is known as "The Most Trusted Name in the Shooting Industry".

For more information contact:

Legacy Sports International, LLC
4750 Longley Lane, Ste. 208
Reno, NV 89502

Rhomme@legacysports.com



Patriot

The Webley Patriot is about power - but it is about power plus. Many manufacturers have tried to produce high powered spring rifles but none have done so as successfully as Webley.

The Patriot is simply the most powerful spring rifle you can buy but thanks to the talented engineers at Webley it is no more difficult to cock than a standard 12ft lb spring rifle. On top of its unrivalled power it is also beautifully constructed, ergonomically perfect and above all unerringly accurate.

Xocet

Features high quality metal work blued to a lustrous sheen and high quality ambidextrous woodwork. Squeeze the newly designed 2-stage trigger and you will see that its performance matches its looks.

Technical Details

Weight	7.3lbs
Length	41.1"
Barrel	Rifled steel
Stock	Beech



Xocet XS

Features a high carbon rifled steel barrel is shortened by 6 inches (152 mm) and has a Black Hole silencer permanently attached. Unlike the standard model the XS has no open sights but its deep mounting rails allow fitment of a scope. The XS is built to the same high standards as the standard model, features a safety catch (new for 2006) and its performance is as quiet, as it is stunning.

Technical Details

Weight	7.1 lbs.
Length	40.3"
Barrel	Rifled steel
Stock	Beech
Caliber	.177 (4.5mm) .22 (5.5mm)



Longbow

The Longbow is a spring air rifle that demonstrates and exhibits all that Webley have learned in nearly a century of airgun design. Whilst finished to Webley's usual impeccable standards the most vital part of the Longbow is the way it performs. Not only has it been specifically developed to be easy to cock, its accuracy, weight of trigger pull and lock time make it a very efficient target and hunting rifle. As Nick Jenkinson of Airgunner Magazine put it "Overall the Longbow is one classy rifle".



Raider

The Webley Raiders are the best value for money family of PCP's currently available anywhere. Available in three formats, single shot, two shot and ten shot. They are all perfect sporting rifles, well balanced, unerringly accurate, user-friendly, reliable and robust.

All the Raiders have excellent, adjustable triggers, with a let-off weight that can be adjusted down to only 2.5lbs. This is a trigger any serious shooter would be proud to use. The stocks offer great ergonomics, and are available in Beech and Deluxe Walnut.

	Raider One	Raider Two	Raider X
Calibers	.177	n/a	177
	.22	.22	.22
Length	36 "	36 "	36 "
Weight	7.0lbs	7.0lbs	7.1lbs
Shots per char			
.177	55	55	55
.22	70	70	70
Magazine Capacity	1	2	10
Charging System	Probe	Probe	Probe
Stock	Standard Beech	Standard Beech	Standard

Feral Hogs: Our Texas Hunts

Jim Chapman

Introduction

I remember several years ago I saw article written by the venerable Dr. Robert Beeman on the history of airguns, in which he wrote about seventeenth century European royalty using airguns to hunt wild boar. Frankly I didn't believe it, but as I learned more about the Docs expertise in airguns and their history, and I studied the subject further, I came to understand that this was a little known legacy of airguns.

I always kept this in a corner of my mind, and when I first spoke with Dennis Quackenbush several years back, he set up an introduction to a guy that had recently started using his guns to go after pigs and exotics in Texas. That is how Eric Henderson and I started hunting together. After we spoke on the phone a couple of times, we set a date and I flew down to Dallas where we met up at the airport, bought a license at the Bas Pro Shop near DFW, and were on our way. I had taken many hogs in other parts of the States and Europe, but this is where I started hunting them with big bore airguns, and to date I've shot many feral pigs, warthogs, and even a couple pure strain Russians with airguns. In this article I am going to discuss the guns, bullets, techniques used on a few of our hunts.

The Guns

Let me start by saying that yes, it is possible to shoot and kill a pig with the standard small caliber airguns. It is also possible to kill a polar bear with a .22 rimfire, but it is an irresponsible thing to do.

The chances of wounding an animal are high, and if your hunting for sport this is unethical. If your trying to remove hogs as pest or vermin, even if you don't care about the ethics, it is still ineffective. The airguns that are appropriate are large caliber; .308, .457, .50 caliber high powered air arms (rifle or pistol). In my opinion the guns need to be at least in the 175 fpe or greater range, the more power the better.



The best guns for big game airgun hunting in my opinion are the Quackenbush guns. I have personally used the .308 (a couple of them), the .457 and .50 calibers rifle, and the .45 pistol for hogs. And I believe that between Eric, Randy Mitchell, and myself we've used just about every model that come off the DAQ production line. These guns produce power in the 200 – 600 fpe range, and can anchor a hog even a big one, with a head or body shot. I have had clean kills out to seventy yards, and Eric has gone out to over 100! Out of the three of us, I am the one that has strayed from the DAQs to use some of the Korean guns,



Eric posing with one of his Lone Star Hogs.

and am particularly fond of the Dragonslayer. However it is a bit underpowered for the bigger hogs, though there are some tuners that are dialing up the power quite a bit. The gun is dead accurate though, and I stick with head shots when using it. Two of my biggest boar were taken with this gun, one 295 lb and one 300 lb on the hoof. I have a Big Bore 909 that the guys at Pyramyd had re-barreled to .308, which I'll be taking out on a pig hunt soon.

Bullet Selection

This of course depends on the gun, but the lightest bullet I've used in the .308 was around 90 grains, and the heaviest was 400 grain in the .457. The ammunition that I use in the Dragonslayer is 175 grain TC round ball. You need to experiment with you own gun to find the best bullet, but I look for accuracy first. With the korean guns I zero at fifty yards and keep my shots in that range, with the DAQ I zero at 75 yards but can reach out to a hundred with confidence.



On one hunt, we took a muzzle loader bullet with a hollow base and flipped it upside down. At forty some yards it passed to the offside shoulder under the skin, opening up in a perfect mushroom before coming to rest.

Why Hunt Texas

The Lone Star State is a great venue for the airgun hog hunter, first and foremost because it is legal. Secondly because there are lots and lots of pigs there. And finally because even though the state is almost entirely private property, there are many places that you can hunt for a reasonable price. Either go online to search for ranches that offer hog hunting, then call to see if they'll take you with an airgun providing you have a gun to use. You can also set up a hunt with Eric, and he can provide you with a gun. I also set up a couple hunts a year, and will take new hunters along.

On one of our typical hunts weat Lone Star Hunts in Texas. Starting out in the pre-dawn darkness, I was carrying the DAQ .50 loaded with 360 grain cast lead bullets. Eric and I had hiked along a creek then up into a large pasture dotted with trees and mesquite. We spotted a small group of hogs rooting about a hundred yards out, and with minimal coverage slowly moved towards our quarry, freezing up whenever one of the hogs stopped to test the wind.



At about fifty yards I extended my shooting stick and set up for the shot. The pigs would not cooperate and kept moving behind the brush and tree limbs, which were sparse enough not to give cover, but heavy enough to block my shooting lane. After a few minutes of moving and adjusting without getting a shot, we dropped to the ground and crawled into about forty yards. The wind favored us and gave me time to set up, but I still couldn't get a clean head shot. Deciding to take the broadside lung shot being presented to me, I squeezed the trigger and heard the thwack of the bullet followed by a startled squeal as the 160 lb hog dropped on the spot.

We hunted aggressively from dawn to dusk and at the end of the day had taken four hogs with four different guns; I'd taken mine with the DAQ .308 and the .50 rifles while Eric had taken one with the newly developed titanium "Bigbore Bob".58 rifle and his second with the DAQ .45 pistol.



Continued Texas Hog Hunts

All guns performed well, but for me the most impressive result was obtained with the .50 caliber shooting a 360 grain cast lead bullet loaded backwards, previously mentioned.

I have frequently been asked why I prefer to hunt with high powered airguns, and my reasons are multi-faceted. These arms are amazingly engineered and I'm always impressed that a puff of air (OK, a BIG puff) can generate so much power. I like that this method of hunting is a bit different, and that when I'm in the field with an air rifle hunting boar there is a direct lineage to the European bore hunters that came centuries before. But mostly it is the challenge. I like the fact that big bore airgunning combines the honed field skills required of a bow hunter along with the shooting skills required when hunting with conventional firearms.

New Custom Airgun Maker

We don't have too many American PCP airgun manufacturers, so the recent appearance of Joe Bontrager on the scene is even more welcome. Joe recently built a few .177 and .22 rifles that were discussed a few pages back. But also of interest are his proven big bore airgun designs. Joe has built previous large bore pcps and has used them to take whitetail deer, his first design was a .32 caliber propelling a 115 grain bullet at up to 950 fps. That gun was pretty rough, but still effective.

The most recent design (seen below) is a .45 which is in the prototyping and testing phase. Joe is a hunter, and is building these guns with a focus on the needs of the hunting airgunner. We'll be watching and reporting on these guns, it's always good to see a new gun on the bigbore scene. It will be interesting to see if Joe turns his hobby into a business for this significantly underserved segment of the airgun market!



ROCK CHUCK

HUNTING IN CENTRAL OREGON



ROCK CHUCK Hunting in Central Oregon. Have always been into Hunting all of my life, and was introduced to Airgunning in 2003 and continued Pest Control for local Farmers and have enjoyed the advantages that Airguns have to offer in regards to quietness, as well as being able to shoot many more places then you can with a Firearm. It seemed like I could never get enough of it, in fact wherever I went there would always be a Airgun in the back of the car just in case the opportunity presented itself.

I was lucky enough to meet many great folks through the Airgun forums, one in particular lived in my area and was impressed with my Airgun collection he had seen in various posts that I had made on the forums. He asked if we could get together so he could see some of my guns, so we met at his home and did some shooting at some paper. I myself have always been a Theoben Rapid fan and have many custom Rapids that I really enjoy shooting. So after getting together with Tim, I received a call from him explaining that he had got in touch with some Farmers in Central Oregon that were having some trouble with a critter called a "Rock Chuck" these beasts were eating crops, and digging holes causing a problem for grazing Horses, and cattle, not to mention the fact that the Framers dog was getting attacked by these varmints. So the date was set for June 21, 2005 for the date was set for my fist Rock Chuck Hunt with Tim, as it turned out Tim had gone the end of May said the Chuck were all over and it

Bryan Fix

was going to be a Hunting experience to remember so I was excited.

The Rock Chuck AKA "Yellow Bellied Marmot" (*marmota flaviventris*)

They are considered a ground Squirrel, and live primarily in the Western United States and Southwestern Canada the average size is between 5 – 11 pounds favorite areas are Rocky and grassy areas the combination of both is preferable. They dig burrow under rocks. They reproduce when they are about 2 years old and typically live in colonies in groups of between 10 – 20. Litters usually include 2 – 5 offspring per female. Rock Chucks have separate areas within the burrow "toilet rm" "living rm" "bedrooms" and "eating rms". They are out from mid April till the later part of July and then are in Hibernation for the rest of the year.

My weapon of Choice for me is a Theoben Rapid MK II shooting at about 32 ft.lbs using JSBs in 22.caliber, Tim Likes the Daystate MK III .22 caliber and was consistently getting clean kills out to 80 Yards Head Shots are always the best on Rock Chucks.



The day starts with a 3am wake up call and meeting Tim at his home about 10 minutes away then off to Central Oregon, arriving at about 7:30 AM. Meet the farmer and talk about where the largest areas on concentration of Rock Chucks are hanging out. Then we are off to the Hunt.

The area originally was very rocky, and the Farmer has cleared the rocks off the fields, and made a fence line out of these rocks, on the outside perimeter of the Fields leaving the fields themselves flat and grassy, for the horses, and Cattle graze on. As we are walking slowly towards the fields we can hear the head Chuck chirping (sending the warning signals to the others) and see all of the Rock Chucks in front of us anywhere from 90 – 120 Yards in front of us heading for the rocks for protection,. we make a mental note of how many Rock Chucks there are, and where exactly they are heading into the rocks,



then we get within about 40 – 50 Yards from were they went in, and set up our shooting sticks, and wait, for them to re-appear. It is important to walk VERY slowly on the approach, and be ready to stop instantly for Chucks that are a little bolder and can be watching you from as close as 10 Yards.

For more in depth Hunting stories of Rock Chucks, and other animals such as Wild Hogs, Bobcats etc.....please visit our site www.airgunadvice.net and browse the "Hunting Lodge" we would love to see you there.

Killer-B

Site Admin

www.airgunadvice.net

Usually they come out of the rocks right where they went in but it takes about 20-40 minutes, it is a waiting game and anything you have for cover is helpful, next to a tree, backed up to the Rock wall, whatever may be available. It is possible to get even closer then the 40 – 50 Yards, however you will wait longer for them to make their appearance, and you need to stay as still as possible. They slowly start creeping out of the rooks, and when you feel that you have a clear shot and confident that you can make a head shot, we take the shot, they are a very wary animal. That is the best way we have found to Hunt these Chucks, any other area of shot placement when they are on the rocks will allow them to live long enough to take cover in the rocks and die, but a Head shot will take them out where they stand. If you ever have the opportunity to Hunt these animals it is really a kick.

Take Those Little Guys & Gals Airgunning!!!

As an adult, do you ever wonder why you take your kids to Disneyworld? Or, how about a ballgame, concert or waterpark? You know you are going to have a good time, but do you know why? The bottom line is that you do these things to see the smile on their faces. Sure it gives you the chance to explain the do and don'ts of safety for that particular situation. It also affords the quality time so fleeting as the year's progress.

Well, guess what my friend? Airgun hunting fills in all of these blanks for you. You may not be a hunter at all and that just doesn't matter. Inter-active targets will do that job as well. Little plastic green army men or multicolored cowboys fly like nobodies business when hit with a pellet screaming in at 600 to 1000 fps. Empty pellet tins filled with flour provides a nice "puff of smoke". There are dozens & dozens of target options to coax that grin from a child. My thing happens to be airgun hunting, so I'll carry the prattling from that point of view.

You wonder how much listening a child is doing when they truly just want to get to the end result. The thing is, that as an adult, we repeat those safety issues, humane guidelines and total respect for nature quite often because we just can't help ourselves. When a child is having fun, he/she will cling to every word that we say in our teachings. You may be quite surprised if you take the time to listen as they repeat the proper safety technique or respect for nature when speaking to a third party. Oh don't worry; it

is an ongoing process, as corrections have to be made. Mistakes are going to happen and legalities must be followed and taught; but that is our job as adults and we should never afford negligence.

After spending the day plinking, teaching & learning with my nephew & my youngest son it was time to fulfill my promise to take them nutria hunting. The two twelve year olds listened and asked questions all day and were truly excited at the prospect of putting their knowledge to the test. My nephew Joe spotted a nutria across the pond. I explained that they needed to sneak along the cover, ever watching their path for snakes, alligators or whatever.

Redd Bordelon

The shot needed to be delivered and only a headshot was acceptable. The two boys listened intently, and then began their 175 to 200 yard trek. I watched that pair of focused boys masterfully carry out their woodsmanship until they ended their journey about twenty yards from their quarry. Joe braced himself on a small pecan tree and delivered the .22 Kodiak pellet right on the money. I could not have done a better job myself. Later as we retrieved the quarry, my son, Andre' asked quite excited, "can I pick him up, Dad?" Lo, the results, of two excited boys & their quarry...

The moral of the story...

Well, it's quite simple actually. You can be safe, legal, humane, and respectful and still have a great time in the "World of Airguns". I do have a warning for you, however. You are going to have to answer a lot of questions like, "Dad, when are we going again?" or, "you aren't going without me, are you?" Not to mention the ever popular, "are you coming over here soon, Uncle Redd?" "Do you think we can go squirrel hunting when the season opens?"

Share this hobby with safety & wisdom. After all, there really isn't anything that makes us happier than seeing the excitement on a child's face and Airgun Adventures will put it there!!!



Kids and Hunting

If we will stop and think for just a moment, I believe that we would all come to the conclusion that the things in life that we enjoy the most are the things we learned from someone else who had a passion for it as well. Great musicians learned from other great musicians, and great athletes will all tell you about their idol that they had as a child.

It isn't any different with hunting. Almost everyone I know, myself included, was introduced to hunting by an authority figure such as a family member or close friend. And if we were lucky, that introduction came early in our childhood when the desire to please and be a part of grown-up activities was still strong in our young minds.

In today's world, there is a sad trend for children to forget that there is an outdoors to enjoy. Video games and computers command so much of a child's attention that it is often difficult to entice them to step outside and enjoy the benefits of a love for the outdoors. Introducing them to the thrills and challenges of the hunt gives them "real world" experience as opposed to "virtual world" entertainment. Being involved with a hunt brings home the realities of nature, as well as the sense of responsibility that you gain from safe gun handling.

I will share a quick personal experience with you about my son. Our first squirrel hunt together happened at a young age for him, around 6 or so. I shot a squirrel with a shotgun, and Bryan paraded around proudly with the squirrel since carrying the game out of the woods was his job. When we got home, a dose of reality hit him as we began to skin our squirrel in preparation for eating it. As he helped me hold the squirrel, I noticed tears welling up in his eyes. I asked him if he was okay, and his reply was a question of whether or not the skinning hurt the squirrel. It was a priceless opportunity to teach him about guns, the responsibility of owning and using one, and the choices we each make concerning life and death when we use them. In a few moments he was back to normal. He now understood that when you point a gun at something, that something is very likely to die. Bryan has gone on to take his first squirrel with an air gun, and also has taken his first whitetail deer at age 11.

If we will take the time, we can build memories for our children, as well as ourselves, that will last a lifetime and build the character that our children need to excel in life. And as the ranks of hunters grows thinner each year, we as hunters have a mandate to pass along our knowledge and love of the hunt to future generations. So take the time to introduce a kid to hunting, and be that idol that a young boy or girl can look up to.

Randy Mitchell

Farm Pest Hunt

Our intrepid pest control shooter
Heads out to the farms!

Robert
Hamilton

Farm Pest Hunt: 70 ground squirrels, pest birds, feral chickens, etc.

Summary: Three farms in one day, with a visit to a fourth, and new access to a cattle ranch.

LATE HUNTER GOT NO CROW (1,000 acre farm):

What is farm pest hunting? Well, it is backyard pest shooting done on a bigger scale. Have a starling coming into the backyard to eat the cat food or the bird seed put out for native song birds? Grab a pellet rifle and shoot the starling. Fortunate are the airgun enthusiasts who have a backyard and local regulations that allow such airgun pest control.

Not me. Two story apartments overlook my small backyard. So I have to look elsewhere. I found a 1,000 acre farm a reasonable drive away. A clean-farmed place (vast fields with little habitat for wildlife) raising veggies. It has very few pests, but still is a place to shoot/hunt as long as one doesn't expect much.

This farm has a handful of crows that roost in the willow jungle along the local river that forms one border of the farm. Maybe 20 crows. They congregate at night and leave their roosts at first light. So, being on the scene at first light is the way to hunt them.

But airgun hunting is supposed to be something one is enthused about. I had not gotten to bed until 2AM and when the alarm clock beeped a little before 5AM, it was time to be introspective. Time to decide if I was a hard core hunter or not.

I searched my soul.

Consequently, I reset the alarm clock to give me another hour and a half and went back to sleep.. The 1,000 acre farm crows were safe for another day. Last crack of dawn crow hunt there had netted six crows. All with the .177 caliber Beeman R7 (600 fps with 8.4 gr JSB Exact 4.52 domes, Beeman pell-seated (ball end); Swift 4-12x 40mm scope@12x on a Mac1-drooped BKL one piece, medium height mount). But I just wasn't up to another sleep-deprived crow hunt today. Maybe next time.

Why a wimp gun on a 1,000 acre farm? Why not a more powerful airgun? Well, the crows were in the willow jungle along the river. Shots were elevated shots at crows up in the trees. Where would misses go?

The willow jungle bordered the river for miles, but the willow jungle on the 1,000 acre farm side of the river was only about 50 yards wide. The river bed was about 60 yards across, water plus dry portions. Then another 50 yards of willow jungle on the far bank. So figure a safety zone of about 150 yards of river and rough lands and willows.

The trees prevented seeing whether or not farm workers were in the fields of the farm across the river. Safety being the first rule of hunting, meant that despite its low power and short range handicap, a Beeman R7 was a better choice than a more powerful, longer ranged airgun. But I slept in, instead.

MOP UP AT THE 400 ACRE FARM:

But I did manage to show up at the more distant 400 acre farm by 7:30AM. Smaller than the 1,000 acre farm, it was a superior hunt location because it has livestock and the 1,000 acre farm did not. Farm pest hunting is almost always best at farms with livestock (cattle, pigs and a few goats, sheep and horses at the 400 acre farm). Livestock have to be fed. Livestock feed attracts farm pests.

I parked the car next to the small, time and weather-worn plywood construction site trailer the 400 acre farm manager used as an office. The manager's wife was at the desk with a small pile of papers and mail in front of her. She wished me luck on today's hunt.

Today's hunt was to be ground squirrels, not that I was above taking a shot at any crows who offered me an opportunity. Last hunt here, I had walked up and down the farm lanes used by the farm livestock feeding truck. It is not a perfect situation because the cattle in the large, fenced outdoor pens/enclosures got fed twice a day. That meant that the big, red feed truck drove along the line of concrete feed troughs at least twice a day. Often enough I would approach a ground squirrel within



range and while setting up the shot, the feed truck drives by, spooking the pests and I lose the shot opportunity. Though I do get to imbibe the dust cloud.

I did have the Beeman R7 along, as backup or just in case hordes of black birds or other pest birds had descended upon the farm en masse. I had the Beeman R9 in the car as well.

FEW BIRDS AGAIN:

This year, more than any of the previous years, has had a dearth of pest birds. Normally there are two or three thousand pest birds (black birds, feral pigeons, starlings, crows, and English sparrows) scattered about the farm. But not so far this year. Pest birds have been scarce. Not just this farm, but others I hunt. Why? I don't know. As I drove in, I saw few pest birds. Just a few here and a few there. Maybe only several hundred pest birds spread over the entire farm. So, I felt no urge to leave the ground squirrel gun (Beeman R9) in the car and hunt pest birds with the bird gun (Beeman R7).

GROUND SQUIRRELS WITH THE R9:

Today will be my second field use of the .177 caliber Beeman R9 I bought used not long ago. I ended up with a Weaver v16 4-16x scope on it, using the non-drooper BKL one piece medium mount. For some reason, this particular R9 did not have much barrel droop. Given calm air and a steady rest, the R9 was near slam dunk out to about 60 yds. This is because with its 30 yard zero, at 60 yds drop was 3 1/2". Holding 3 1/2" high is reasonable. The R9 could take pests at longer ranges than that, but longer than 60 yd ranges were more chancy.

Despite its plain Jane, un-checked, utility beech stock, and despite lacking the robustness of a R1, this Beeman R9 has proven to have the magic ingredients necessary for a hunting airgun. Those being user accuracy and hold insensitivity. Unlike my soft tuned .177 caliber AirArms TX200 Mk3 (750 fps with 7.9 gr JSB Exact 4.52 Express via a minimally spaced Maccari R6 spring) which gives good groups very reluctantly, this R9, with its full power Maccari R9 kit (870 fps with 7.9 gr Crosman Premier Lites#7), seems to want to do good groups, despite me. The mark of a good hunting airgun.

WEATHER:

So far this year, cooler weather has been predominant. Typical weather has been cool, windy, overcast mornings, courtesy the nearby Pacific Ocean and sunny, yet more windy afternoons.

Today was no exception. The wind never stopped but blew softly all night before. And built up in speed with the rising of the sun. By the time I had my pellet pouch on a belt around my waist, my Bushnell compact binoculars and Bushnell500 laser rangefinder on their lanyards around my neck and had slung the R9, the wind was coming out of the northwest about 15 mph.

THE FARM WORKERS' VEGETABLE GARDEN:

Last hunt here, the approx. 1 acre vegetable garden next to the two large, white, boxy double-wide house trailers where the farm livestock feed truck driver and his family lived in one of them, I counted about 20 ground squirrels visible in dens in the narrow, sloping rectangular strip of range grass land between the garden and the nearby cattle effluent runoff pond.

I had found I could sit on the far side of the pond and have six or seven ground squirrel dens within 60 yards of me, all at the same time. It should have been a good spot to get a lot of shots from.

It was not.

The 13 year old son of the feed truck driver was on duty. I could see him, in close attendance with a kitten, stalking pest birds and ground squirrels with his kid-size and powered Gamo break-barrel springer. Two ground squirrels were visible, but there should have been more. The 13 year old was apparently on summer vacation and was hunting every opportunity. Guarding the garden. Good kid.

But not a happy kid. I waved and we hunted towards each other. He took some shots at something I didn't see. No targets presented themselves to me. He was unhappy because he had hoped to accompany me on today's hunt. But his parents had told him to limit his hunting and shooting to the area around the house trailers. Protecting the family garden, not the entire farm. Well, he was not happy, but the area around their garden seemed to have as many ground squirrels as anywhere else on the farm.

SLIM PICKINGS SQUIRRELS:

There were no concentrations of ground squirrels today. Like last time, I had to walk three or four hundred yards between squirrels. I'd pick off one here and another there. All shots were off a fence post, fence rail, or my camera stand rest. There were scattered feral pigeons that let me walk openly up within 30 or 35 yards, but I passed up the shots. My Chinese family likes to eat pigeons, but I was already a mile from the car and it would be at least a

couple more miles of walking before I circled back to the car. I didn't want to carry a bag of pigeons along and didn't have a backpack. Just some plastic bags from the grocery store.

I would have taken any reasonable shot I could get at a crow, but only saw a few crows and they were either two or three hundred yards away or I walked too quickly and didn't spot the one or two crows within range on the ground, in with the cattle, until they had already spotted me coming and spooked.

Down along the north boundary fence, with its line of drip irrigation-fed, young, six foot high wind break trees and yet smaller bushes I walked. For almost a mile. Watching for squirrels. I saw about a dozen squirrels but most of them were well out in the north barley fields. Ranges were seventy to ninety plus yards. Too far in the now 20 mph wind. I had to settle for a few squirrels at 30 to 40 yards, close to the fence line.

CATTLE POND EMBANKMENT SQUIRRELS:

About the only place where I found decent numbers of ground squirrels was at the northwest cattle effluent runoff pond. It was about a two acre pond of understandably brown water being down slope of the large cattle pens. There were about eight or nine ground squirrel dens dug into the bulldozer-heightened sides of the pond. The farmer was not keen about the squirrels tunneling and creating leaks.

BAD CHOICE OF FOOT WEAR:

I was smart enough, unlike last hunt here, to be wearing high top, hiking boots this time. So the sock-penetrating, dart-shaped wild oat and other grass seeds were not a problem. But I had fixed that mistake only

to make a different mistake.

The hiking boots I had selected for today were lightweight, nylon cloth-sided, Vietnam style jungle boots. Nice and light. Cooler, better ventilated than regular hiking boots. But lacking ankle support.

The easy walking was on top the packed dirt, earthen dikes that surrounded the pond. But I would be easily visible to cars and trucks passing by on the paved, public country road about 150 yards west of the pond. Here in the Monterey, California area, being seen by passing motorists while hunting is begging for a "terrorist sniper" sighting to be called into the cops. So I walked close to the water's edge, putting about 10 feet of pond dike above me and hiding me from view of the road. The problem was that the dike sides I paralleled were fairly steeply sloping. I was circling along, on the inside of the pond embankment, shooting squirrels as I moved along. Eventually, walking with one shoe about a foot upslope of the other, I twisted my ankle. Not enough to stop me, but enough to make walking on the incline painful. If I had been wearing my heavy leather, high top hiking boots with their good ankle support, I doubt I would have gotten hurt.

The ankle hurt each step, but hey! There were still some ground squirrels ahead of me. I limped along and kept picking off squirrels. The R9 was certainly lighter and so easier to carry than my heavy TX200 Mk3.

CATTLE LANE GROUND SQUIRRELS (EMBARRASSING MISSES):

Reluctantly forgoing more circuits of the cattle pond for a future hunt and a healed ankle, I walked over to the nearby calf pens and picked off a few more ground squirrels.

Nearby was another cattle pond and I saw several squirrels on its dirt and brush embankment. Unfortunately there were two farm workers tending some of the young cattle, about 70 yards to one side. They could see me and they could see the ground squirrels.

The farm workers stopped work to point out a ground squirrel to me, and watched expectantly to see me roll it down the 15 foot high earth dam that formed the down slope side of this pond. The Bushnell500 told me the range was 45 yards. I took a rest on a rusted-brown, steel pipe gate next to me. The gate unfortunately moved with any pressure on it. The ground squirrel could be shot at, by correctly threading the pellet between the wire strands of the barbed wire fence the squirrel was next to. I put the crosshairs on the squirrel. The squirrel moved around, looking for grass seeds.

With the farm workers watching. I missed the squirrel three shots in a row. It was a small squirrel, a juvenile. A mature adult would not have given me a second try. Embarrassed, I moved closer, to 40 yards. The squirrel finally figured out that I was neither a cow nor its friend and went down a den hole. Great. Nothing like looking incompetent with onlookers present. Fortunately, another ground squirrel popped out of its den, near where the three times-missed squirrel went down, and at 40 yards, I rolled it down the pond embankment. I hoped the farm workers were still watching. They weren't. Sigh.

I do my best shooting when there is nobody around to witness it. I admire folks who don't get rattled by on-lookers. Time to move on.

TWO BULLS (GOT TO STOP DOING THIS!):

A few hundred yards up the middle cattle lane, No pest birds and few ground squirrels here. Some of the cattle pens (pens being fenced enclosures about 70 yards by 100 yards in size here) were empty of cattle. Some weren't. But few pests regardless.

With the lack of ground squirrels along the concrete feed trough-lined sides of this farm lane, I started watching the interior of the cattle pens. Inside each pen was a concrete cattle watering trough, about two feet wide, seven feet long, and sitting on a small concrete slab. Sometimes, ground squirrels would tunnel dens underneath the supporting slab, thus being near the water and a reasonable scamper from the feed troughs of no more than 50 yds.

Most of the water troughs had nothing. But passing by the fourth pen, I looked right and saw a big, adult ground squirrel sitting up on the edge of the trough, drinking. It took me about 30 seconds to set up the shot, range of about 45 yards, crosshairs steady courtesy a sturdy, 6" diameter, rusted-brown steel pipe fencepost acting as my rest. The problem was that the squirrel was sitting on the lip of the water trough. At the shot, the squirrel, drilled through the vitals, from back to front longitudinally, fell forward with hardly a twitch. Into the water.

Not so good. I don't like to enter the cattle pens but the dead squirrel would surely foul the drinking water in a few days time. I had to get it out.

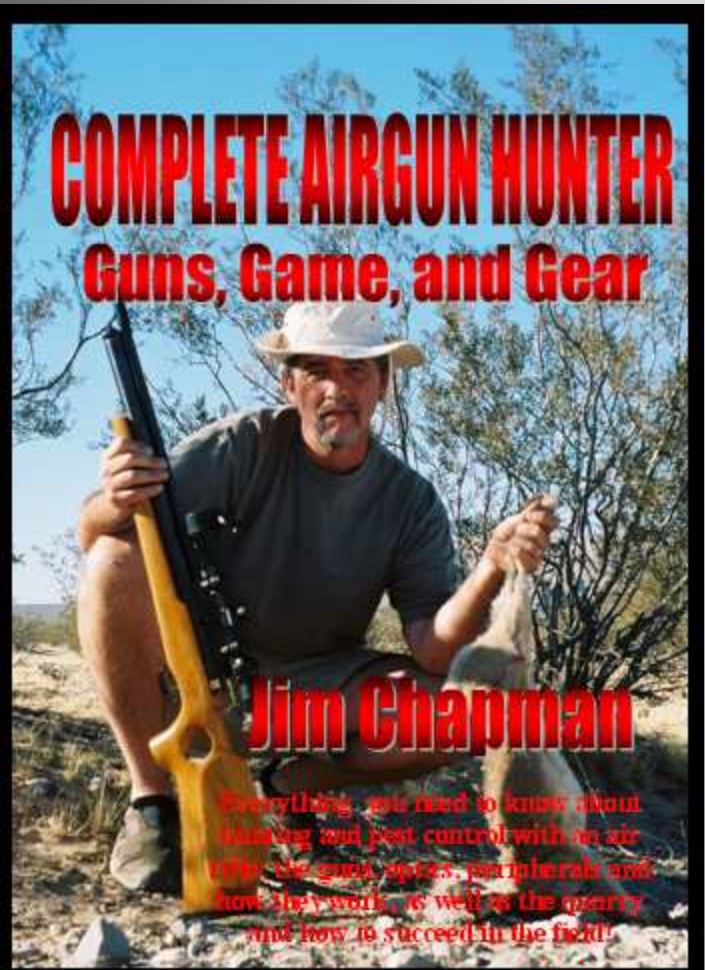
There are not a lot of big, breeding bulls at this farm, but there were two fairly sizeable bulls in this pen. Just my luck. I hadn't noticed them before. They had been mixed in with the heifers. But they moved to confront me, where I stood next to the fence.

A bull in the adjacent pen approached as well. The adjacent pen bull was a truly, huge, massive all black, Black Angus bull. All the bulls had their horns clipped, but not their attitudes.

The adjacent pen bull started pawing the dirt and raising dust. Well, that pen was to be avoided. Of the two bulls in the pen I currently faced, one bull was a big, older bull and the other was big, but younger. Finally some luck. The older bull was farther away and distracted by the heifers (young adult female cattle) for the usual reason. The younger bull was only about 15 feet away, but being younger and not the dominant bull in the pen, seemed less certain of himself.

Removing my gear to lighten my load and increase my speed, I hopped the fence and walked directly at the younger bull, waving my arms and hat. The bull hesitated, uncertain of how to respond. Its hesitation allowed me to walk sideways past it and down the fence line. At the feed trough, I saw the squirrel in the water, a foot under. I fished the squirrel out and stuffed it down its den hole and wasted no time getting out of the pen. The younger bull was still just standing and staring, about 25 feet away, but the older, bigger, Alpha male bull was approaching. I doubted the wave the arms and hat technique would work on him. He had that look in his eyes that advised me to put a fence between him and me and not waste time doing it.

Coming Soon!



Forth installment of Jim Chapman's series on hunting with airguns. Jim covers guns, gear, quarry, and hunting techniques he's used to successfully take game on three continents.

I hurried back to and over the fence, in my haste planting my boot in a big, fresh, pudding-texture cow flop. For sure I'd better take that boot off before getting into the car! But mission accomplished. Whew! I'd better pass on pests that would fall into water troughs. At least in the pens with these big, breeding bulls.

REST OF THE HUNT:

The rest of the hunt was simply a case of walking, if slower than usual with the sore ankle, several more miles, going up and down the farm lanes that bordered the various cattle pens. Most of the time, the occasional ground squirrel would let me openly walk up within about 50 yards which was the maximum distance I wanted to take the shot at in this wind. I usually shot from a kneeling rest position to get the pellet traveling in the lee of the concrete cattle feed troughs lining the farm lane, thus minimizing wind drift.

By now, early afternoon, the wind was blowing about 25 mph with gusts to 30 mph. I had left my usual cowboy style, wide-brimmed hat in the car and was wearing a "French Foreign Legion" style visored cap with a rectangle of cloth hanging down on the back and sides for sun protection. My fellow farm pest friend James had given it to me. The cap was a tan-brown color and a near match for the tan-brown Orchard Supply Hardware utility shirt and pants that were my farm pest hunter uniform despite making me look like a building custodian in search of his mop. The idea being a camouflage-effect, non-paramilitary uniform to make me easily recognizable at a distance by the farm staff. So I am not mistaken for a poacher or trespasser.

GOOD DEEDS PUNISHED:

The saying of no good deed goes unpunished is true. As I walked along, I spotted a chunk of metal in a cattle feed trough. Non-edibles do not belong in livestock feed troughs. Being a well meaning, helpful guy, I leaned over and picked the chunk of steel out of the feed trough. As I leaned over, a handful of 7.9 gr Crosman Premier Lites fell out of the belt pellet pouch onto the aged blacktop of the feed truck lane. Oops. I counted them as I picked them up. Ninety-six. Having fallen onto wind-swept asphalt pavement, a fairly clean surface, I had only to blow some hay chaff bits off some of them and they were clean. No observable barrel-damaging grit. I put them back in my pellet pouch and continued the hunt. Years ago, I was on a ground squirrel hunting trip. Having been invited along by another guy and his friends. We were sighting in, in back of the cabin and the guy accidentally spilled a bunch of his .22 caliber pellets in the dirt. I picked them up for him and gave them to him. He tossed them without a word of thanks. Guess he was less thrifty than myself. Dropped pellets, if undamaged, can be cleaned easily enough. My pellet pouch has a zipper closure, but it had broken and I hadn't found a replacement pellet pouch yet. Zippers are nice for insuring that when one climbs over a fence or leans over to pick something up, that pellets are not lost. Not good to be miles from the car and suddenly find one has only seven pellets remaining in the pouch, the rest back somewhere a few fence crossings ago.

QUITTING EARLY:

My cell phone showed the time to be 2:30PM. There were yet ground squirrels out, but I wanted to hunt additional farms today. Enough here at the 400 acre farm

. Slim pickings pests and the strong winds did not encourage staying all day. Maybe I would have better luck at another farm?

FINALLY A CHANCE TO SHOOT A BUNCH OF SQUIRRELS:

I hunted back to the car along a farm lane. Finally a good shooting opportunity presented itself! About 400 yards short of the car, I saw a group of a dozen squirrels along and running about in the road ahead. They were over 200 yards distant. I slowly but steadily walked closer. I stopped at my preferred maximum engagement range of 50 yards to the nearest squirrels. There were six squirrels, an adult and the rest juveniles. I was ready to take down the adult and mop up the juveniles.

But then the farm feed truck roared down the lane, coated me with dust and spooked the ground squirrels. A common enough occurrence on a busy farm. Bummer. This den of ground squirrels was in an obvious location and only about 200 yds from the farm manager's office trailer. Hopefully he won't take their presence as a mandate to start putting out poison bait stations all over. But I had promised the 20/600 acre farmer I'd be there to hunt his place around 3PM. And it was already 3PM. The squirrels would stay down about 15 or 20 minutes. I was out of time. I needed to go. Not a lot of fun with so much wind and blown dust anyway. Maybe the next farm, about 30 miles north and more out of the wind tunnel area would be easier hunting.

I had gotten no pest birds, though I had missed a few chances at crows. I had

been walking too fast and looking just for roadside ground squirrels and missed seeing the crows until I got too close. I would have had several est. 40 yard single crow shots otherwise.

The total at this farm of 67 squirrels were taken at ranges of: 35, 31, 23, 40, 50, 40, 35, 35, 41, 65, 37, 40, 33, 65, 50, 50, 36, 50, 47, 30, 30, 30, 35, 40, 26, 29, 37, 25, 40, 33, 22, 35, 26, 12, 28, 39, 45, 55, 52, 50, 25, 35, 30, 40, 40, 50, 61, 35, 35, 50, 35, 30, 15, 40, 55, 53, 55, 61, 45, 50, 32, 25, 40, 23, 53, 35, and 36 yards.

Notice how many shots were under 50 yards. Most of the ground squirrels taken were juveniles. Less wary than the seasoned adults.

Ranges under 20 yards were eyeballed as my Bushnell500 doesn't measure anything under 20.

ON TO THE 20/600 ACRE FARM:

I got to the 20/600 acre farm at 3:45PM and stayed until 6:30PM. The farmer was concerned about ground squirrels undermining the road strips in his open-sided cattle-feeding and hay barn. The barn floor of this 70 yard long, 40 foot wide and 40 foot high sheet metal-roofed barn was dirt but he had two narrow, concrete, single lane road strips in it, for his farm vehicles. The ground squirrels were digging underneath the concrete so that one area of the roadway cracked and broke off when he drove over it with his feed truck. The squirrels had tunneled under and removed the dirt supporting the concrete road pavement.



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I parked the car about 150 yards away from the barn, because there was no good place to park it closer without being in the way of farm vehicles, and carried the R9, my folding camp chair and the adjustable height camera stand rest. I set up a comfortable shooting position about 10 yards inside the west entrance of the barn, out of the sun.

I waited. And waited.
Nothing.

A couple starlings flew in and out. But they would perch up in the rafters and the thin sheet metal roofing was not a good backstop for a powerful air rifle like the R9. So I just watched them. Same with a few blackbirds. Same with the barn pigeons. I would have taken a shot at the pigeons, despite the Beeman R9 feeling like total overkill compared to the Beeman R7 or Weihrauch HW55 10 meter air rifles I normally use for bird pests. All the pigeons landed and perched within 30 to 60 yards. But the pigeons to my left were sitting on the sheet metal roof of the cattle shade/day beds shed. The pigeons up in the rafters in front seemed to take care to have sheet metal roofing directly behind them. So I let them be. I looked up at one place in the roof where someone looked to have taken a shot with a firearm shotgun. Nice pattern of holes through the roof. Pretty with the daylight shining through. But whoever had shot up the roof had evidently not been invited to stay and shoot more holes.

FERAL CHICKENS:

I got bored. No ground squirrels. Maybe too early? In any case, I left the camp chair where it was, grabbed the camera stand rest and walked around the barns, sheds and livestock corrals to try for feral chickens.

Generations of chickens ago, a farm worker had raised chickens. But had left the farm. The chickens had been left to survive on their own. The chickens that strayed far from the farm mostly got eaten by coyotes and other predators. The feral chickens who survived were the ones who stayed closer to the human activity of the barn, sheds and cattle corrals areas. The farmer didn't want them and despite being feral, the chickens weren't hard to stalk. The farm buildings, fences and piles of debris gave me good stalking cover. And in the open, their spook distance was only about 35 to 40 yards anyway. I had seven hens bagged and in the freezer chest in but an hour.

I also shot two blackbirds at 35 yards each while out after the feral hens. Hens with chicks and roosters (saw one or two) were not shot.

When hunting feral chickens with the Beeman R7 or HW55 10 meter rifle, I have to do head and neck shots only. But with the much more powerful Beeman R9, I was taking upper chest shots. Maybe a mistake as a couple chickens required a second shot and one chicken was hit twice and still lost into heavy weeds and bushes. Head and neck shots, despite their greater difficulty, would have been more effective than the body shots I took.

BACK TO THE BARN:

I was back to the barn soon enough. The winds had been blowing strongly out of the west. Wind speed maybe 20 mph with gusts a bit higher. The camp chair would immediately blow over whenever I stood up. Yet the wind was fortunately at my back, reducing the wind doping required. In the next hour, I saw four ground squirrels surface inside the barn and I shot

three of them (31, 41 and 25 yards). The squirrels were taken between 6 and 6:30PM.

PROMISES TO KEEP:

I had promised a pest shoot to yet another farmer, the 15 acre farmer. Several months ago, I had told him that I'd do a night shoot on his feral pigeons. The new farmer of the 50 acre farm had hinted she might want me to shoot ground squirrels there as well. The 50 and 15 acre farms were very close to each other.

VISIT TO THE 50 ACRE FARM:

Last time here, the old farmer had been finishing shutting down his cattle operations and leaving. He had been renting the 50 acre farm from relatives he didn't get along with very well. Friends of the previous farmer were tarred with the same brush. I knocked on the relative's door. She and her husband came to the door and I gave them the 1 lb box of See's chocolates I had brought.

That earned me a smile but not continued hunting access. I asked her if she would like me to shoot ground squirrels as she had suggested she was open to my doing that, last time we spoke. She had since changed her mind and told me that they would call me if they needed my services. A polite "don't call us, we'll call you". Reminded me of when I was job hunting. I wished them success with the farm and left for the 15 acre farm. A short drive as it was only a few blocks down the road. Her father's place. A man as welcoming as his daughter was not.

ATTEMPTED NIGHT HUNT AT THE 15 ACRE FARM (CAN YOU SAY, "DUD"?):

I got to the 15 acre farm. It was too small and too exposed to be a good hunting spot, despite my being welcome there. The

owner did not live on the place, but two other families did. One Philippine and one Mexican. And there was yet another Mexican family visiting as they kept a few cattle there. I gave the four young kids of the visiting Mexican family some of the Hershey's milk chocolate with almonds I had as a snack stash in the car and chatted with them while I awaited darkness. The boys had interest in what I was doing.

And a box of See's to the Mexican family whose house I would be nearest. They had graciously given me the ok to shoot from their backyard as it gave me the shortest, safest shots at the pigeons coming into the small barn nearby. My wife wanted to get her and her family started on cleaning the feral chickens and drove out to me and took the big cooler chest with the seven chickens back to the house. She brought me dinner from Costco's. A frozen mocha coffee drink and a still hot chicken bake. By this time of day, considering when I went to bed the night before and when I got up this morning, I was appreciative of anything with caffeine in it.

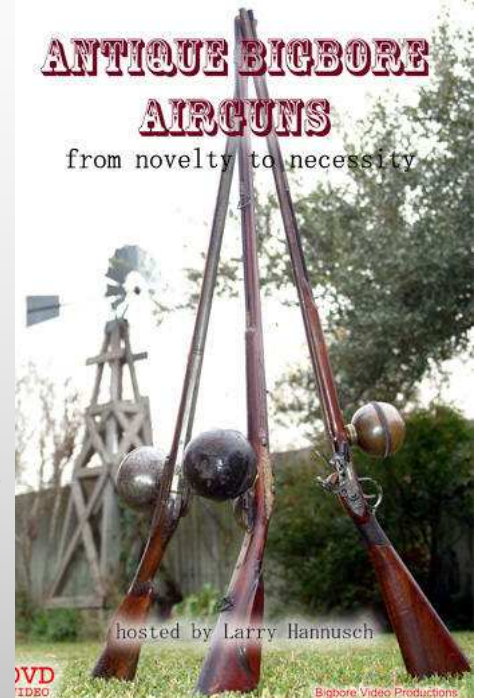
I sat in the car, reading an adventure novel and ate, waiting for pigeons to come home to roost in this farm's small barn and in one of the sheet metal sheds where piles of old droppings showed they roosted in quantity. The sun was down. Not dark yet, but still only two pigeons had flown in. I could see them as they sat under the eaves of the small barn. No pigeons had returned to sheet metal shed.

I had not gotten the Beeman R7 out of the case yet. I had brought a flashlight and planned to drop the pigeons off their roosts

Big Bore Video Productions



A few years ago, big bore airgun hunting pioneer Eric Henderson started production on his Big Bore Airgun series, which now numbers four volumes comprising mixed exotic hunts, hunts for feral hogs, and the two newest releases feature ram hunts and a documentary on antique big bore airguns.



All of these videos are entertaining and show airguns and airgun hunts you'll not see anywhere else.

If you view all four DVDs in the series, you'll also see the evolution of Eric's camera work and editing skills, starting off a little rough moving to very high production values in the later volumes.



These DVDs show real hunts; the good the bad and the ugly!

come dark. The kids wanted to see me shoot something, but what with cars on a nearby road and so many people wandering about, not to mention the McMansion with its less than friendly owner across the road, I wanted to do the job as discreetly as I could.

I welcome additional hunt places and for sure the owner here was welcoming. But the location just was not the best. Too exposed. No additional pigeons had arrived by 8:30PM. What was going on here?

My guess? When the 50 acre livestock farm was operational, about a quarter of the est. 200 pigeons that hung out there daily, roosted at this nearby 15 acre farm. When the 50 acre farm shut down, the pigeons left both the 50 acre farm and this neighboring 15 acre farm. It had been the livestock feed that drew them. No cattle meant no feed. No feed resulted in few pigeons. To include the 15 acre farm pigeons.

I have seen this before. A 200 acre multi-generational veggie and livestock farm near my town had 250 to 300 pigeons on the premises daily. They fed on the livestock feed, both pre- and post-digestion. The farmer shut down his livestock operation and sold off the cattle. Shortly thereafter, no more pest birds.

No livestock feed? No pest birds.
I went home.

DAYS LATER: JAMES ASSISTING AT THE 20/600 AND 100 ACRE FARMS:

Clearly there were more than the four ground squirrels in the big barn at the 20/600 acre farm. I had shot three of the four, but there were a half dozen active den

holes. Some of the dens surely had numbers of juveniles. It was that time of year. We knew the dens had to have more ground squirrels because the farmer would cover the den holes with dirt, and they all would be dug out by the next day. But the farmer said he didn't actually see the squirrels. Spooky?

But I couldn't get away to check for more squirrels.

So a few days later, I dropped by the 100 acre farm, where my friend and partner James was happy as a clam, using his scoped .177 caliber Beeman R7 to pick off blackbirds at 20 to 25 yards from concealment in a straw bale blind I had set up next to the hundred yard long, open-sided hay bale storage shed. Pest birds, blackbirds mostly, were flying in to feed on the almond hulls pile next to the salad discards pile.

James had picked off 18 blackbirds and a feral pigeon by the time I showed up. He commented that the R7 was a bit out of its depth on the pigeons though. Despite reasonable ranges of 30 yards and under, apparent solid broadside hits did not always drop the bird. So thus explaining the scoped Beeman R9 I saw leaning up against a bale, next to the folding camp chair James was sitting in.

James, being the gracious soul he is, allowed me to help carry his pile of gear back to his car and followed me to the 20/600 acre farm. I am not saying he does not hunt light, but a wheel barrel would have been handy.

At the 20/600 acre farm, we set up his folding camp chair and adjustable camera

stand rest about 10 yards inside the west entrance of the open-sided hay barn/cattle feeding barn so that James would be seated with a steady rest about 20 yards from the closest ground squirrel den hole and 60 yards from the farthest. After the bright sun, the shaded interior of the barn was dim. But we could see four ground squirrels within 60 yards.

James used both his R9 and his R7 on the squirrels, but found the R9 to be the more effective ground squirrel gun. It was a R9TK (a Maccari special) putting out 7.9 gr CPLites at 875 fps. and quite accurate in James' hands. James eliminated 8 ground squirrels by patiently waiting them out. The east cattle pasture had some more ground squirrels thinly scattered in the few higher spots where the winter flooding of the local creek does not drown them out.

The barn loft had small numbers of feral pigeons coming and going, but the farmer had made it clear that the ground squirrels inside the barn were the priority. At day's end, James kicked dirt into the ground squirrel dens and decided to check back in a couple days to see if he had missed any squirrels.

A couple days later, James was back at the 100 acre farm, continuing his blackbird shoot. After shooting over one hundred pest birds (mostly blackbirds with a handful each of starlings, feral pigeons and English sparrows), James drove around to the backside of the 100 acre farm, where on the east slope of a hillside there were some ground squirrels. He set up a small pop blind to both conceal himself from the squirrel dens upslope of the blind, and from passing cars to his rear. I had let the county Sheriff's Office know, in advance so

they didn't feel a need to send a SWAT team to the location when passing antgunners called in terrorist sniper sightings.

When we had scouted the hillside the other morning, no squirrels were sighted. But the farmer assured us the squirrels were there and sure enough, in the afternoon they were. James sniped more than a dozen before calling it a day early enough to have time to check on the 20/600 acre farm ground squirrels inside the open-sided hay/cattle feeding barn.

NEXT HUNT TO BE A CATTLE RANCH?

On the drive back from the 20/600 acre farm, I swung by a cattle ranch that the 100 acre farmer suggested I stop by. The rancher seemed a bit amused that I would be serious about hunting ground squirrels with a pellet rifle. He mentioned that the ranch had some squirrels, the usual big tree squirrel-sized California ground squirrels and said that he and his son use firearms on them. But that there were some ground squirrels around his hay barn and I could try my luck for them. The rancher brought out his personal varmint rifle, a very impressive .22-250 laminated stocked bolt action with a nice Leupold scope on it. He said his son shot squirrels out to 300 yards.

I guess my claims of being able to take squirrels at 50 yards didn't wow him. But next hunt, I should get my chance. Maybe the squirrels will be gun shy enough that their spook distance will be too far for me. Time will tell.

LESSONS LEARNED:

First, for some unexplainable reason, my R9 is less hold sensitive than my Beeman R1. Thus making my R1 a gun safe queen

and the R9 a go-to gun. Odd.

Second, both my .177 caliber TX200 Mk3's are proving to be hold insensitive, making them good hunting guns, despite their less than Beeman R1 power, their awkward, slow loading and heavy weight. The TX200 is a compact rifle though, being much shorter than my R1. Nice brush gun thus.

Third, wind socks are handy in blind hunting. At the 100 acre farm, we set up a five feet of bale twine to hang down off an old farm power line. Inside the blind overlooking the almond hulls pile, it is near impossible to tell wind speed and direction. Having a length of twine vertically hanging down from the power line, gives the blind hunter a better idea of the wind via a quick glance to see how far from vertical the wind was blowing the twine. Previously I was using plastic engineer tape but bale twine is more durable.

Fourth, good ideas can be simple ideas. The 20/600 acre farmer's comment about filling in ground squirrel den holes to see if they are active was a good idea. After a shoot, kick dirt into den holes one has shot over. Then next hunt, there is no need to sit and watch over shot out dens. The dens still with squirrels and worth watching will be the dens that have been re-opened.

Fifth, a .177 caliber Beeman R7 on barn pigeons is like using very light test line for big fish. As long as the shot can be taken safely, a Beeman R9 or other more powerful airgun is the more effective choice.

But inside a barn or around high intensity farm activity, we may have to make do with R7 power level. Safety first. Effectiveness second.

Good hunting to you all!



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The Trophy Room

When Budgeting For Your Trip, Don't Forget the Taxidermist

When you finally save up the money for your big hunt, and have bought the airline tickets, paid your guide fees, licenses, etc, you may think the financial planning stage of the trip is over. But when you get that trophy and decide you have to keep it, and believe me the more exotic the hunting venue and game the more this desire to keep a trophy kicks in, you'll have another big expense.

On each of my last few trips to Africa I've told myself before going that I would not keep as many trophies. Yet on each trip the number grows, and my taxidermy bill climbs higher and higher. In this article I'll relate the cost of my last safari so that you can appreciate where the money goes.

The airline tickets from Indianapolis to Cape Town, then on to Port Elizabeth was \$2500.00. For once my bags and gun case were not overweight, so there were no extra charges this time. However, I've typically been hit with a couple hundred bucks in penalties. The base cost of the hunt and selected species was \$2400.00, then I another \$2600.00, because well, it's hard to stop when your surrounded by so much quality game. So after a week of hunting, I have spent \$7500. This is still a great price, though I did spend more than





I'd budgeted. So I headed home with a plan to sell off a couple guns to make up the difference.

I'd been home for a couple weeks when I received an email from the Taxidermist Grant Drew with the bill for my mounts; which included; shoulder mounts on a black springbuck, bushbuck, and a duiker, European mounts on a kudu and a bleesbuck, and a few flat skins that added up to a price tag of \$2500.00. Again, this is a more than fair price for the work I'm having done, but my intention had been to only do a couple European mounts and flat skins.

A few months later when the trophies are ready to ship; they have been fumigated and crated, I will owe a shipping agent in PE another \$650.00 for transport to Chicago. At this point I'll receive a call from the US expediter that will import the trophy's, bring them through customs, fish and game, get the appropriate papers and ship the crate to me so I'll only have to pay \$400.00 more.

If you are going to have your trophies done up as shoulder mounts, you can count on the taxidermy on an African trip to cost almost as much as the hunt itself. If you stick with European mounts (as I'd intended to do), you can afford to take more game on the hunt, it's a balancing act!

It's not just Africa or big game, on another recent hunt, I went after javalina in South Texas I didn't get the boar I'd set my sights on, however did manage to shoot a nice ringtail cat that I decided to have done as a pedestal mount. I'd seen one at the lodge I was staying in, and decided on the spot I wanted one just like it. When I was given a quote on the taxidermy fee of \$450 I about choked! But I still *needed* to have it.

My point here is not to complain about how expensive taxidermy is, I think a good mount is worth every penny you pay. I'm just advising that when you budget for a hunting trip where there is a likelihood of taking an exceptional animal, don't forget this potential expense.

As many know, squirrels aren't adverse to a little extra protein in their diet, and are notorious for raiding bird nests. On the morning in question, a fox squirrel had apparently set his sights on a bird nest that was built in one of the big maples just off my front porch. As was my habit on my day off, I was relaxing on the porch with an airgun (bird-feeder guard duty, you understand) and heard a squawking that, was I located in a more urban setting, would have woke up the neighborhood! The squirrel had climbed the tree and attempted to raid a nest of some kind. To this day I don't know which bird claimed the nest, as there was a veritable tornado of feathers coming to the call of the afflicted avian in the tree. No less than six different species of bird decided to give this squirrel a piece of their mind, as well as several pecks from their beaks for good measure. I sat watching with unholy glee the antics of robins, mockingbirds, cardinals, orioles, grackles, and red-wing blackbirds as they chased the squirrel round and round the tree.

Now, I'll have to hand it to the squirrel.....he was either very determined or a glutton for punishment, for he elected to keep trying for over 20 minutes to get at the nest. The grackles bore the brunt of the work, but the robins and mockingbirds certainly kept up their end of the assault as well. The other birds hung close, offering bursts of encouragement in their own language as they checked on their own nests in nearby bushes and trees.

Picture in your mind the sight of a squirrel moving so fast you can barely make out the blur as he circles the tree at breakneck speed, just ahead of a raucous group of avian neighbors bent on reducing the pelt

he wears to a patch-work quilt of skin and bleeding holes bereft of hair! With so many species joining in, the poor squirrel would just get away from one or two birds before being dive-bombed by the remaining participants as they took up the chase. And like I said, this went on for over 20 minutes! I've never seen so many different kinds of birds come together like this. Sure, I've seen a mated pair of birds drive off invaders before, but not a group that was so diverse and crossed so many avian cultural lines. In any event, I elected not to end the occasion with a pellet, deciding instead to let the squirrel take his lumps and learn his lesson the hard way. In due time, the squirrel decided that a juicy chick was not to be his that day and he headed for the woods, helped on his way by a triumphant-sounding chorus of bird whistles and swooping last-minute encouragement via a pecking bird beak!

I wish my kids could have been there to see it. They would have had a fun time watching the squirrel get his come-uppance, and would have been enraptured by the antics of the animals involved. So pay attention when you are out shooting or hunting, and realize that there are so many sub-plots going on all around you all the time involving the lives of the animals that inhabit our area. Peak in on some of those events, and you are likely to be quite entertained!

Airwaves

Feathers vs. Fur!!

One of my favorite things to enjoy is watching wildlife. Whether I'm hunting or relaxing on the porch, I get a big kick out of watching animals and their shenanigans. I love TV shows that show animal behavior during a hunt, or even something as simple as a squirrel trying to figure out how to get at that bird feeder someone just hung on a pole.

Recently, I was happy to witness in my very own front yard an event that pitted the denizens of the air (the feathered ones) against the agility and acrobatics of the fur-clad climber called the fox squirrel. And quite a battle it turned out to be!

Cont'd on preceding page

Randy Mitchell



A photograph of a large, dark airgun leaning against a tree in a dry, grassy field under a blue sky. The airgun is positioned diagonally, with its barrel pointing upwards. The tree has a thick, gnarled trunk and sparse green leaves. The background shows a dry, grassy field with some distant trees and a clear blue sky.

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AIRGUN HUNTING

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