

THE ROAR

Paringa downstream

By Per Jacobsen

A road trip from Masterton straight to the southern West Coast was well over and done with. We barely got our permits from DoC before Jamie Scott rung us up. "Yep, the weather's good, be at the base of Paringa in two hours."

In an hour of absolute sheer panic and hunting anxiety we managed to pack up most of our gear, with a few "lacks" to follow.

There were three of us in this hunting party. My good mate Putin and myself, both from Denmark, and our Kiwi mate, Pete. Pete has spent the majority of his life hunting deer the hard way in the mighty Tararuas, so having the chance to hunt the roar for 11 days on the West Coast wasn't an opportunity he would pass. We have hunted many a time before, and with bloody good success.

In reality before we met Pete, the animals didn't come easy!

A After a comfy base camp and a turd yard were christened, we each went our separate ways to go exploring. I must have walked about half an hour before I got on top of a ridge and yelled out a roar, with a bit of Viking depth to it. Bear in mind my ancestors are Vikings so it's kind of in the blood to scream out loud.

If any young hunters are unsure about what the term "The Roar" means, then listen up, cause I've got a way to explain it. At a certain stage of the year the stag gets a bit thick behind the ears and the hinds are getting ready to mate. The stag's way of drawing the hind's attention varies slightly from the human courting. It wallows in its urine, deer poo and semen in order to stink way worse than any other bugger in the bush. To top it off, he yells out an almighty roar, which is the small detail the hunter uses to hunt the deer. You see, the animal gets annoyed when another rival is in its territory, and therefore

storms over to the "rival" to chase him off, only to wound up staring straight into the barrel of a loaded gun!

Within seconds I got this almighty reply to my roar! Quickly I got into stealth mode, and within ten minutes a hind bolted in front of me. Another animal got very annoyed with my roaring and I suddenly heard this massive roar about twenty metres to the left of me. The adrenalin was pumping throughout the system. I prayed my gun wouldn't fail if he came storming at me. Thirty seconds went by and then I heard a roar about ten metres to the right of me. "This was heavy man." I could see the shape of the deer, and the antlers annoying the hell out of the bush. He barked three times and then buggered off faster than he arrived. I was happy I didn't take the shot, as I did not have a clear visual. This should not be the only occasion during this trip I was happy I didn't pull the trigger!

The valley is about 3 km's long with a small stream running out towards the Tasman Sea. There is a bit of a swamp on the first kilometre and then it turns into thick bush, with an insane overgrowth of Supplejack. From our campsite we had roughly 1.5 km out to the most deserted beach, with a beautiful set of rocks no further than 400 metres away.

Enthusiastically Pete and I set off the next morning downstream trying our luck with the bugger from yesterday, without any joy. Our mission was then to get down onto the beach and have a look around. We had spent the last two hours stalking our way through the bush and were very anxious to get out onto the beach. At one stage I stopped and said, "The beach seems much lower than from where we are standing", and took another step out into the absolute nothingness! I fell down through a set of sharp beach plants, couldn't manage to hang on even though Pete jumps out to grab me, whilst screaming, "Hang on!" - Yeah right Sly.

I fell down about six metres into a wee waterhole. My legs gave in to the weight of me and I smashed my knees down in the rocks. Half a second later my gun hits me straight in the head and took me out for a quick moment.

Pete yells out, "You all right?" I looked at myself; everything seemed to work, but with a bit of falling down pain to follow. I got off with a nasty cut between my fingers whilst trying to hang on to the beach plant, and a big bump on my head. When we came out onto the beach, a plastic bag hanging from a tree in the shade caught our attention. The toast hadn't gone off, nor the cheese. We only found one new footprint. Jamie assured us we were the only ones in there and that none had been there before us - to the best of his knowledge. We are literally miles away from civilisation, and you have to cross a big swamp to get to us. A bit spooky that was. We walked down the beach and saw a few tracks from deer. This place was magic. Along the beach were these massive drifted tree trunks that had got washed up. The bush was like a massive overhang of the cliff.

When we got back to the mouth of the stream where we came down, Pete who is a Search and Rescue Officer stops, and gets all weird looking - stares at me, then says, "something has died here Per"... Holy shit came to mind; the footprint guy must be lying just around the corner! We were both rather freaked by the stink of a rotten cadaver. As we made it around, we found a Stag dangling from a tree, dead by hanging! The stag must have travelled like us, slid and fell, unlucky for him his head got stuck in a Y shaped branch and... well, that was sort of the end of him! I got all nasty and reckoned the stag's head was a pretty good reminder to a weird but great day, so in an act of Vikingness I crawled on top of his antlers and about half an hour later saw the body separating from the head. Pete reckoned that was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. Dunno about that, but I can tell you, it smelt like a mad woman's shit!

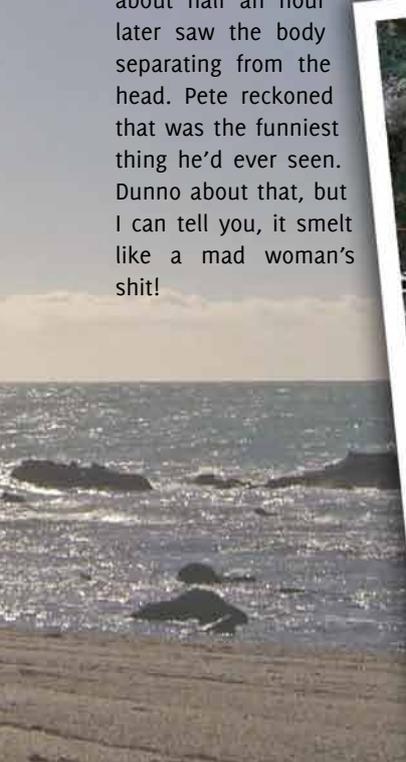


Dead by hanging.



Per showing his 4-point Stag on the sand.

Basecamp



Despite "Huey's" attempts to rain us off, we were still out there doing it every day, and even managed to get quite a fair bit of contact with the deer, yet no joy. It came to the point where rice with HP Sauce was on the main course. We needed some bloody meat - and fast, as we still had about five days to go!

A very wet following morning saw three keen hunters getting out of the fart sack and out in the bush. I had barely begun my stalk when a shot roars through the valley. Meat! I was so hungry I decided to run back to camp and start cutting onions and spuds, just to get a big feast going. As I entered the camp, another shot roared and as this is happening, a human scream fills the valley. I can tell you my mind just when blank and I damn near choked, "someone shot someone." Could it have been the footprint guy, or one of my mates? I got the first aid kit and bolted off towards the scream. It wasn't until I was about 30 metres away that I could hear the screaming were expressions of joy by Pete. He was all right; he had just shot a stag!

Pete had stalked alongside a ridge in the bush when he saw the arse of a stag from 20 metres away, he tried to get closer but the stag was on the move. They got about 50 metres apart, when he sent a bullet flying towards the stag. It jumped up and vanished into the bush instantly - Bugger! Pete was however not a novice at this game, so he followed the blood trail of the stag an impressive 300 metres through the bush, found it lying in front of him and immediately shot it one last time, hence the scream of joy.



Putin was intensively hunting a particular part of the bush as he had lots of contact there, Pete was humming on a pink cloud and so I decided to go beach hunting. I planned to stay the night out there so I could do a bit of hunting up and down the beach. The stream provided easy access to the beach without too many supplejacks annoying me and the bottom of the stream wasn't swampy as you would think, and I even managed to be rather quiet when stalking through that stream. As the sound of the surf was increasingly growing by the minute, a different sound in front of me grabs my immediate attention. I took another step and managed to see grass and beach plant leaves get tossed up in the air - a Stag! I could barely see it. He was no more than nine metres away from me and just as well because he was a mad bastard! Ever so slowly I sneaked through the stream covering another metre, and

another. At this stage I wound up four metres away from the animal and still couldn't get a clear shot. Then he yells out a rather vague roar, grunts, and steps out in front of me, looking straight into the barrel of my gun. I fired and he did a nervous twitch, turns around and I see a big hole on his other side. I didn't want to risk him running away so I fired again and that was enough for him. But the bastard refused to go quietly. I was in clear vision of him, and yet he just stood there. Then he bedded down on his front legs and blew lots of blood out of his mouth and into the rays of the sun. The bugger made his own little rainbow! He was far from a giant, a rather abnormal 4-point stag, but I can honestly tell you this, I've never been involved in a more intense and exciting hunt than this one. I got all the meat I could possibly carry and walked on down to the beach, and just for this single day - my beach.



I found a great spot to spend the evening. I was looking into a lagoon with heaps of animal tracks around it, and could manage to look up and down the beach. Having this much ground to cover, my mind was dead sure an animal would appear – and so it did. About 400 metres down the beach something stepped out of the bush. I turned around, got my gun up and looked through the scope - FOOTPRINT GUY!!! The hair stood up straight on the back of my neck. I couldn't believe I just had a human being in my scope. A lot of things went through my head, "Why didn't you see it was a human before you took the gun up you idiot," and "Is footprint guy a bad or a good guy?" I suppose my mind wanted badly for this to be an animal, and somehow got me convinced that of course it's an animal. I felt bad about aiming at him, so I walked down to apologise, and hoped he wouldn't smack me in the face. He wasn't anywhere to be seen when I finally got down there. A guy came out a bit further up. I yelled, "Hey, how are ya mate." He replied with fright in his voice, "Holy shit, where did you come from?" I replied, "From Denmark, Scandinavia. The rest of my Viking fleet is further up the beach." and that sort of broke the ice. We had a yarn and I apologised for aiming at him. He didn't mind, I think the party had one too many hot toddies that evening. They however assured me that they had not hunted upstream nor left any supplies anywhere – in fact they hadn't been hunting at

all – the weather had been too rough apparently. West Coast mate!

I walked back to my campsite situated out on the beach while thinking about where the hell footprint guy was? I slept with my gun rather close to me, not that footprint guy should be a bad bastard but hey, maybe he didn't like Vikings. I had a beautiful night with no rain, trillions of stars in the sky, a wee campfire, and the smooth sound of a calm surf. It was therapy money can't buy.

Morning dawned and I set off back to the main camp to tell my mates about everything that had happened. Putin still lacked a bit of luck, so on the last day Pete and him teamed up on a hunt they'll never forget! They got into a spot where a roar was returned. Putin headed off on a stalk whilst Pete kept the stag roaring. As Putin was on his way he slipped, stumbled down the hill and somehow managed to annoy a wasp nest with the result of 14 stings all over his body. Murphy's law ruled once again!

A few moments of pain later, a somewhat dizzy Putin got within ten metres, only to see the stag come storming at him, turned around and ran back, stopped right on top of the ridge – and looked into the barrel of a loaded gun. Bad call deer! Finally after ten days in the bush, Putin got his stag. A small 4-pointer but every sting worth it if you ask him!

She's a rough opponent the West Coast bush, and after eleven days spent in there we were thrilled to hear the sound of the big kerosene-burning blowfly coming to get us out! You may not believe me when I tell you, but it's been an amazing experience living in that swampy bush. Rain, constant wet close, bruises, cuts, stings, sandflies and mud up to your elbows. That couldn't be an amazing trip – you may say. Maybe not to you, but when we are sitting at home gazing upon our wee trophies, knowing all too well the amount of blood, sweat and tears we shed to produce these simple proofs, try to put two and two together and if it still doesn't add up, well maybe it's just us that are a bunch of hard cases then! You ask footprint guy, he'll tell ya all about it! 🐾

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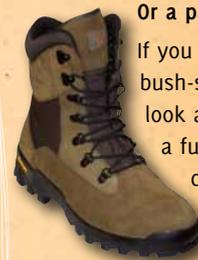
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