

The Small Game Edition

# AIRGUN HUNTING

New  
Online  
Airgunning  
Quarterly

**Airgun Pest  
Control Report**

**Airgunning DVDs**  
A review of what's  
available

**Spring Hog  
Hunt with a  
9mm air-pistol!**

**This Month!**

- Crossman 2240 hunting pistol
- Pest birds and airguns
- Raccoon control

**Five hunting  
trips that  
won't break  
the bank!**

**Urban Hunting Rifle**  
the take-down Hunting Master AR 6  
Pistol/Carbine Conversion from Evanix

June 2007

# *Dennis Quackenbush Airguns*

## *DAQ*



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*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!*

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# AIRGUN HUNTING

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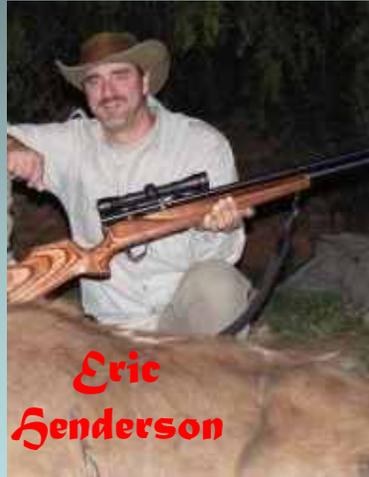
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# AIRGUN HUNTING

## Contributors



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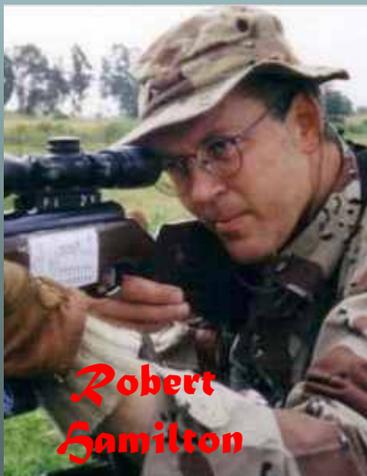
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# Editors Corner

I've been hunting with airguns for over three decades, and have noted with satisfaction that our sport has been gaining visibility in mainstream hunting circles of late. As an Editor for Predator Xtreme Magazine, I get a lot of email and letters from current airgunners, as well as traditional firearms hunters that have only recently learned of these unique hunting arms. I'm often asked if there are any dedicated magazines available for the enthusiasts, and I have to answer no. Predator Xtreme has been one of the most progressive publications in offering a regular airgun hunting column, but several of us thought a hunting journal focused specifically on AG Hunting would be desirable.



One of the great things with this sport is all of the quality people you meet along the way! I've asked a few friends and airgunning authorities I've had the pleasure to meet or correspond with to join me in producing this inaugural issue of Airgun Hunting, which is being released as an online quarterly journal. It will be supported entirely by advertising and made available free of charge to airgunners everywhere, which is a marked difference from other attempted magazine launches in the past. This E-magazine, can be freely downloaded from several airgunning websites. Any money required to make this effort fly will come solely from advertising, which will be reasonably priced so even the little guys and those just starting out can get space to show us what they're offering.

I hope that we have succeeded in putting together a publication that serves to promote the sport, enrich the experience for our fellow airgunners, and fill a void that has existed for too long. Welcome!

**Jim Chapman kicks off this issue with a discussion of our objectives for this and upcoming editions**

# Contributors Welcomed

Like to Contribute? We are on the look out for hunting articles and gun reviews from around the world. Stories of an interesting hunting trip, a review of your favorite hunting gun, and helpful field tips are all welcome. I am especially interested in submissions from airgunners in Europe, South America, Asia, and our friends down under!

Not sure of your English / writing skills? Send us your best effort and we'll help you edit it into shape.

Articles should be 1-3 pages with 3-4 accompanying photographs. Reviews and hints can be shorter. We also accept pictures of your bag after a day afield, and appreciate pictures of you and your buddies hunting as much as kill/gun shots.

A word on legal quarry and gear: this online journal is geared toward airgun hunters around the world. We are governed by many laws and conventions on what is legal, ethical, or acceptable. Please make sure that anything you write about is legal in your state, territory, or country.

*Jim Chapman*



# The Mailbox

**Q** Hello, I was wondering in your testing if you have found a better choice for air-shotgunning than the Gamo Viper express, and where I can buy one. My farm is overrun with cowbirds, and even the Missouri Conservation Dept. says they are becoming a 'pest' because they lay an egg in the nest of a host songbird, which then grows faster than the other birds, and kicks them out of the nest. They are beginning to actually cut into the songbird populations! Thank you very much, Doug

**A** Doug, the Viper is interesting in that it is the first, and I believe only, spring piston powered shotgun. The power is limited and this gun is useful for small pest inside of thirty feet. There have been a couple CO2 powered shotguns that had more power and more range, but these guns by Farco and Crossman are no longer in production. Dennis Quackenbush is building a prototype PCP shotgun that we're eagerly waiting for.

**Q** Jim, I learned about your website in Outdoor Life Mag p.12 and am interested in using an air gun for squirrels while waiting for deer in my deer stand while bow hunting because the small amount of noise would not adversely affect deer like my .22 rifle has in the past. I shot a squirrel once with my .22 rifle, and the sound of it firing sent a decent sized buck that was within 100 feet of my bow deer stand running. Can you recommend a quiet rig for the stand?

**A** This is not a bad idea, I brought my Beeman C1 on the stand this year, after noticing an army of squirrels in the area on previous hunts. One morning I shot four bushytails, and not more than a half hour later watched a small herd of does meandered under me. I think just about any mid powered springer will do the trick. A more compact gun like a C1 or Stingray is a good choice as they are easy to pack along.

**Q** I have read a couple articles you've written on the Dragonslayer .50 caliber airgun. Would this be a good big game airgun? Thanks, Tom

**A** Tom, I really like the Dragonslayer for its accuracy, style, and shootability. I think it's the perfect gun for medium sized game and predators, but have to say that it is probably underpowered for big game. I have killed a couple large boar with it, however it was marginal. Having said this, I've noted with interest lately that there are a few airgun do-it-yourselfers that are modding the gun and realizing some pretty substantial gains in velocity. If somebody finally gets this gun up to a couple hundred FPS, I may change my opinion! But for now, I'd say yes for coyotes and no for the big hogs.

*Jim*

# Pest Birds and Airguns

Airguns are the perfect method to reduce populations of pest birds, which consist of English sparrows, starlings, and pigeons in just about all North American venues. Why are these birds considered pest? There are various reasons; they get into feeders and can consume a surprising quantity of feed when numbers are high, they can foul an area badly with their droppings creating a health risk, but in my opinion the biggest problem is that they don't belong here. They are classified as non-indigenous species, which means that they are not native to our shores. The reason this is problematic is that when a non native species is present, especially in large numbers such as these three particular examples are frequently found, they compete against native species for food and nesting sites. Starlings are very aggressive and

can be devastating to native species of songbirds, they have wiped out local populations of purple martins in some areas. There are other birds that become pest under certain situations, such as crows and grackles that are damaging crops or ornamental shrubs.

Shooting pest birds is a great way to keep in hunting trim, and you can find a place to shoot no matter where you live. I like a .177 as this caliber is typically flat shooting and can deliver pinpoint accuracy without needing to worry too much about holdover. And it does not take a lot of power or a real large wound channel to effectively reach out and kill winged pest at 35 or 40 yards. Check your local regulations and codes to make sure your city or county doesn't have restrictions that supersede state laws.



# Choosing a Caliber

Currently there are four calibers available in production airguns; the venerable .177, the .20, .22, and .25. The caliber selected is dependent on what the intended use is, and what gun it will be shot out of. I tend to like smaller calibers such as the .177 and .20 out of spring piston airguns, and the larger .22 and .25 with precharged pneumatics. I must add though, there are exceptions to this rule.

**the right caliber depends on what you're going to hunt and what type of gun will be used.**

The .177 and .22 calibers are by far the most widely available and therefore commonly used. I've often time been asked if I preferred .177 or .22 in a hunting rifle. As with conventional firearms, the right caliber depends on what you're going to hunt and what type of gun will be used. Where it differs is that regardless of application, there are only four caliber choices when it comes to production airguns. The .20 and .25 are the least common calibers; the selection of pellets is more limited and they can be difficult to find. Also there are not as many guns chambered for these calibers, which makes them a less practical option for the casual shooter. By far and away the most common calibers are the .177 and .22. In addition to the wide selection and availability of pellets, there is a virtually limitless range of guns built for these chamberings. I use all four calibers, but for the purpose of this discussion I'll limit the scope of my response to how the .177 and .22 stack up for hunting.

Airgun hunters often quote the old adage ".177 for feather and .22 for fur". However, it is really not so simple and depends on the distances that will be hunted over, type of powerplant used, the style of pellet, as well as the quarry. The conventional wisdom is that the .177 has a flatter trajectory but lacks knock down power while the .22 has a more arced trajectory yet offers better terminal performance. There is in fact a lot of truth to these long held beliefs, but it is not the whole story. A .177 spring piston gun will yield a higher velocity than the same gun chambered in .22. For example, if a .177 Beeman R1 was generating 900 fps with a 7 grain pellet, that same power plant chambered for .22 would be propelling a 17 grain pellet at 775 fps. The energy generated by the .177 would be 12 fpe while the .22 would be 22

## Muskrat and .177

Last year I was asked by a friend to thin out a couple of the muskrats that were undermining the banks of his stock pond. I got out on site early one morning, and using a .177 JSB exact in a Gamo CFX, dropped him at 35 yards with a single headshot. He was anchored, not even making it back to the water a couple feet away.



fpe, so in addition to the larger pellet opening a larger wound channel it would transfer more energy on target. The larger cross sectional area and greater mass of the .22 would also result in more energy being retained as the pellet traveled along its flight path. But there is another factor to consider; the trajectory of the .22 would exhibit substantially more drop at fifty yards than the .177. Gravity acts equally on objects regardless of mass, so there will be a more pronounced drop in the point of impact with the lower velocity pellet because it is in flight longer, and gravity has more time to exert its influence.

**I tend to like the .177 and .20 out of spring piston airguns, and .22 and .25 with PCPs. I must add though, there are exceptions to this rule.**

So based on these statements we would have to agree that the .22 is more powerful and the .177 is a flatter shooting caliber. This is true with spring piston rifles as they are not able to generate the power required to propel the .22 at the same high velocity as when chambered for .177. But if the powerplant being used is a precharged pneumatic, the story is somewhat different. A PCP chambered for .177 that is shooting at 900 fps can, with a tuned valve and heavier hammer spring, generate 900 fps with the .22 as well. In this scenario the trajectory will be the same with both calibers. As a matter of fact the heavier pellet will shed velocity less rapidly and retain more energy as it travels away from the muzzle. This advantage cannot be offset by increasing the muzzle velocity of the .177, as at a little over 1000 fps the smaller .177 pellet becomes aerodynamically unstable. For this reason, it is often said that PCP air arms are more efficient with larger calibers.

Another factor to consider is the type of pellets being used. Both the .177 and the .22 can be had in a variety of weights and configurations; including pointed, wadcutter, hollowpoint, and roundnose styles. But this topic covers a lot of ground and will be revisited in a future column.

I believe that both .177 and .22 are viable hunting calibers for most small game providing the guns being used are accurate and the hunter selects proper shot placement. I have taken countless squirrels, rabbits, pigeons, prairie dogs and similar sized quarry with both of these calibers, usually opting for a head shot. My personal preference is to use .177 for spring piston guns as I am willing to give up some power to obtain a flatter trajectory. However, when using a PCP my preference is for the harder hitting .22, as both power and flat shooting characteristics are achieved. I believe that more power delivered on target is better so long as accuracy is not compromised; therefore my adage is “.177 for springers and .22 for PCPs”.



**Jim Chapman**

# Airgun Hunting South Africa

## Andrew Myers, Professional Hunter

I've been hunting with airguns for quite a few years now. Growing up in South Africa I had the chance to hunt many different types of game. Many of the men in my family hunted, so I had a lot of excellent opportunities. It came to mean quite a lot to me, along with fishing and other outdoor pursuits.

After school I did what a lot of us do, packed my bags and headed off to work in the UK for a while. That was an interesting experience, but what I really started to miss was hunting. I don't know if you know it, but getting a gun and finding a place to hunt, is not easy to accomplish in the UK. I found out about airguns and the fact that I could hunt rabbits and rock doves with it. After looking around at the variety of airguns manufactured there, I settled on a BSA Superten. It was a 12fpe gun when I bought it, but I bumped it up to around 30 when I got back home.

When I got home I started hunting with firearms again, and as a matter of fact did my courses and took the exams to become a professional hunter. The hunting business is competitive over here, and my friend and business associate Rob Dell and I were looking for ways to differentiate ourselves. We thought having hunters bring a standard small bore airgun for small game hunting after the big game outings would be a selling point.

About four years ago I met Jim Chapman, and we started talking about setting up a hunt. A couple discussions had passed before it dawned on me he wanted to use an airgun for large game as well as the small stuff! I have to admit, I had never in my life heard about guns like he was talking about. But he sent me literature, had me go to the Quackenbush Airguns website, and we continued to kick the idea around. Once Rob and I were convinced this would be an effective and ethical way of hunting we approached the authorities. We presented the facts we'd compiled and were granted permission to do an evaluation test with Jim, and that led to our first airgunning safari. We had members of the Biodiversity Committee and the Eastern Cape Game Management Association come out and inspect the animals we shot, as a matter of fact they shot the DAQ guns and were quite impressed, I can tell you!



Based on this experience, the following year we received permission to expand the hunt. On this trip Randy Mitchell and Eric Henderson came out with Jim, we had a tremendous hunt and a lot of fun with the success.

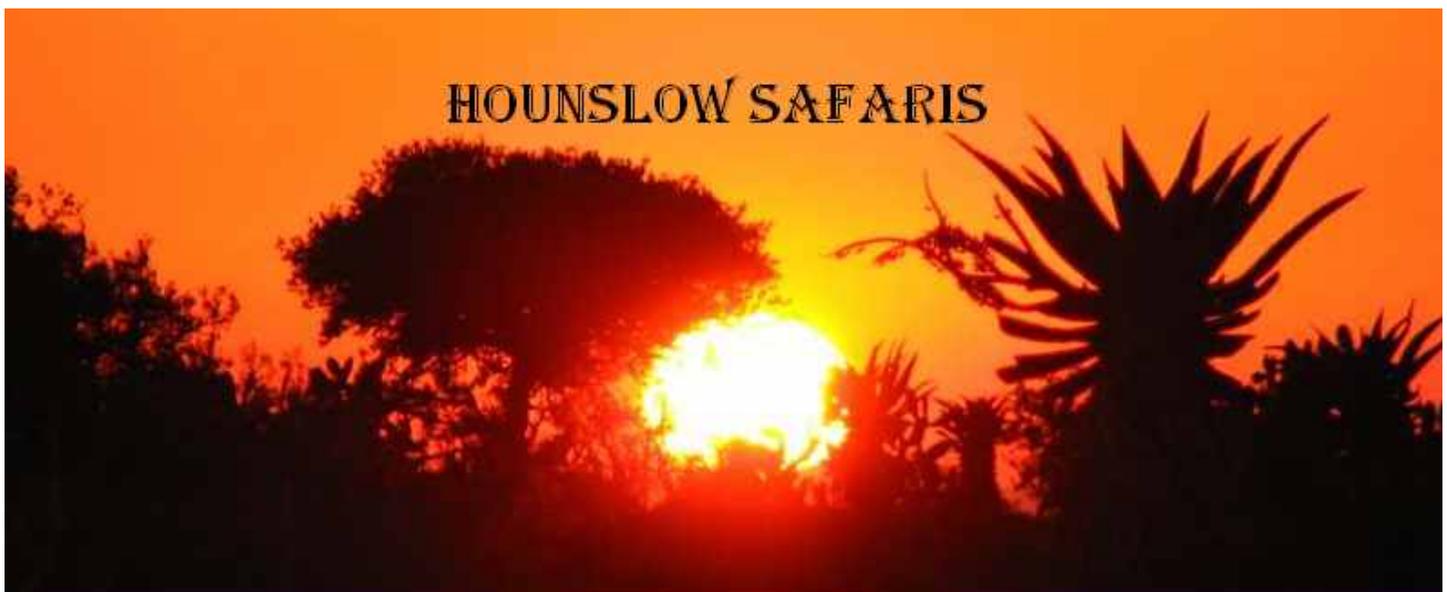
We have all been impressed with the airgun hunts, we lead safaris for firearms, muzzle loaders and archery, and these are some of the most challenging hunts we do. These guys have to really work in the field to take their game, and these are some of our favorite hunts to lead. So far we've taken springbok, impala, bushbuck, kudu, duiker, steenbok, warthogs, and have seen that these guns consistently produce clean kills. I've had to take a turn with these guns myself, shooting a warthog on the last trip.

But besides the firearms hunts with centerfires and airguns, I continued to enjoy hunting small game with my small bore airguns. Even with all of the opportunity to hunt we have, there is something great about



spending a day shooting varmint or small game. Jim, Rob and I spent a break one day shooting pigeons that were coming down at the feeders, and were having so much fun we almost didn't make it out for the afternoon hunt.

In future articles this is what I want to write about; the great experiences we have hunting small game species with airguns. We are able to hunt brush hare, springhare, hyrax, mongoose, vervet, waterfowl, Guinea fowl, many types of pigeons, crows, ravens and many others. I think this is one of the most enjoyable aspects of airgunning.



# Mission: Raccoon Pest Control

Jim Chapman

I was recently asked by a friend if I could help him thin out the pest species on his small farm property just outside of town. An out of control population of raccoons was starting to cause substantial damage on the property, tearing into a couple of the out-buildings and invading the poultry yard. After a few weeks of night time raids these coons had depopulated their hen house pretty completely. My friend wanted the raccoons to go away and it was agreed I'd make a trip out to take a look around.

Arriving onsite before daylight very early one morning. I spotted a big possum moving across the road about thirty yards ahead as I started up his drive. The mutant rat stopped about twenty yards into the woods. The shrouded barrel on my gun reduced the report to a whisper, and the sound of the pellet slamming home was louder than the shot. Parking the car I looked around and found a likely place to set up. Hunkered down with my back to a tree about forty yards from the hen house I sat in wait. After about a half hour I caught the outline of a small coon on his way to a chicken and egg dinner, barely visible in the dim light of the approaching dawn. Leaving the light off but switching on the illuminated reticule I was able to make out the silhouette of the raccoons head, and the glowing crosshairs allowed me to center my shot. Squeezing the trigger I heard the thud of the pellet hitting home followed by a momentary thrashing, then silence. I sat a while longer to see if any of his kin would follow him out, but there was no further activity.

As daybreak was now on the way, I decided to head down by the stream where a strip of woods about a hundred yards wide separated two corn fields. Finding a place to sit where I was partially hidden by a fallen tree limb, I waited about ten minutes and started blowing a baby squirrel distress call. Nothing happened, so I waited a few minutes then repeated the call. This time there was a response; a very large raccoon was making a beeline for me. Stepping over a fallen log he paused for a moment, giving me the opening to make a shot that knocked him off his feet. I find that raccoons will often come in on call, and have had particular success with the baby squirrel and woodpecker distress calls.

**A heavy weight roundnosed pellet will provide good penetration and knock down power on these large AG Quarry**

Raccoons approaching a call are not overly cautious, and it has been my experience that they usually move straight in. One of the advantages of these evening/early morning shoots is that you never know what you'll come across; any time you're in raccoon territory there is a reasonably good chance a possum, skunk, fox or coyote might put in an appearance. All but the coyote are fair game with the .22 and .25 caliber guns I favor for mid sized quarry. These guns are capable of killing a coyote, but in my opinion they are not powerful enough to ensure a clean kill. The .308 and .50 caliber airguns for coyote are another story, but we'll visit that subject at a later date.

The airguns I use for taking these mid sized animals are all hard hitting and accurate. I have killed many raccoons and possums with .22 caliber guns, but have a preference for the mid bore .25 caliber in a precharged pneumatic air rifle. They provide a bit more reach, and if a head shot isn't possible requiring the body to be targeted, the larger caliber is more effective. A .27 grain 25 caliber pellet traveling at 900 fps generates about 50 fpe which will anchor a raccoon on the spot even with a body shot. As most raccoon hunting takes place in low light conditions, a scope with good light transmission characteristics is a must.



**Raccoons are pretty tenacious animals; a .22 or .25 caliber gun putting out 30 fpe or more with a well placed shot will do the trick though**

Lately I've been using a scope with an illuminated reticle, as it helps in picking up the target when there is low ambient lighting. I also like to use a tactical flashlight with a pressure sensitive switch mounted on the gun, as it provides optimal mobility.

Conventional high powered airguns offer a practical means of controlling mid sized pest species such as raccoon, possum, and everything up to fox. Keep the range to around fifty yards; use a heavy round nose pellet in .22 or .25, and take head shots when possible. These guns are fairly quiet, but if your rifle has a shrouded barrel or integrated moderator all the better, you can use them in populated areas without disturbing the neighbors. As I frequently mention, adding an airgun to your hunting battery will allow you to expand your hunting opportunity while providing a means to rid your property of pest animals without having to resort to poison or traps.

# Texas Spring Hog Hunt

Randy Mitchell

For the last several years I've enjoyed hunting with a bigbore airgun. There are numerous stories on my website about different hunting trips and the results, but I must honestly say that this spring's hog hunt at Lone Star Hunts near Henrietta, TX, was one of the most challenging yet. This is my second time hunting there following the Little Rock Airgun Expo that is held at the end of April each year.

The Expo was fun, and visiting with your fellow airgun enthusiasts that you've know for a few years, as well as meeting new ones, is well worth the trip. I highly recommend it if you ever get the chance. It will wet your appetite for more knowledge about airguns, and you will almost always find something new and interesting, as well as get a chance to heft and fondle some of the classic airguns of yesteryear.

**Randy and friends head down to Texas following the Little Rock Airgun Show to hunt feral hogs**

After the show, Eric, Brian, Walter, Mason, and myself headed towards Dallas to pick up Eric's gear. After a brief stop at his house to load his gear, we visited with his lovely wife Grace and their beautiful little girl for a few minutes before heading out for a quick bite to eat at a really good Italian restaurant. We ate quickly, headed out, and only stopped for the Texas Highway Patrol who felt it important to remind me that my license plate lights were out. With a nice warning and a friendly wish for good luck hunting from the patrolman, we continued on our way. We had good intentions to get up before dawn and be on the stands near the feeders before the dawn. That simply didn't happen, and it was a good half-hour or more after daylight before we managed to get ourselves out of the cabin and into Cody's truck. Cody is the guide for this hunting venue, and he spends the whole day trying to scare up some really spooky pigs for the hunters who come hunting there.



This year, I had planned to hunt with a Sam Yang bigbore in .45 caliber. However, at the airgun show I let the gun go to a young man who was very intent on getting into bigbore hunting and simply had to have that gun. So before I left, I bought a 9mm PCP pistol from Dennis Quackenbush to replace the Sam Yang I had just sold. Dennis didn't have any of his bigbore rifles with him this year, as there is still a backlog of deliveries he has to complete. And since I was purposefully going for a small hog this year to try a different recipe and method of cooking, I made the choice to use the 9mm on a hog that was smaller than what the average hunter might opt to shoot.



This time of year is not the best time to hunt these hogs for a number of reasons. First of all, the hogs are at the end of a long hunting season, having been hunted nearly every weekend since October. This means that for the last 7 months, they have been pursued on a weekly basis, and they are really skittish, holding close to cover, and being very cautious. Secondly, the terrain is really thick, with knee-to-waist high grass and overgrown thickets making up the majority of the terrain. With a pig's build, it is hard to see a large hog in the grass, much less smaller one that I was hunting.

I had sighted in my 9mm the night before with a Tasco Varmint scope mounted on it. It features a 2.5x10 zoom feature, and I was betting that I wouldn't need any

magnification greater than the lowest setting in this type of hunt setting. And I was using the 9mm Korean manufactured pellets in the gun, not the heavier pistol bullets I would normally use. So keeping in mind my limitations, we started out.

Within 5 steps of leaving the truck, my feet were soaked in my hunting boots. They apparently insulated, but not waterproof. I'll have to remedy that in the future! I spend the next 8 hours in those wet boots, and by the end of the day, I had prunes for feet! Eric had accompanied Walter and Mason, while Brian and I worked the other side of the creek. We stealthily made our way towards the rear of the property, hundreds of yards away, looking for hogs along the creek bank and under the low mesquite trees. For 3 hours we were very little. So I knew that we would have to dive into the thickets eventually to scare up some hogs.

Brian and I separated after about 45 minutes, and I mounted a feeder stand that had gone off as I passed it, hoping the sound of the feeder spraying corn would bring the hogs out of the thickets for a shot. But after about 45 minutes on the stand, I gave up. They weren't budging.

I finally decided that a slow stalk through the thicket would be the only chance I would have, and I began a very slow walk and stop method, walking about 10-20 steps and stopping for a few minutes to listen and look, as well as smell. When you get near a wallow, you can actually smell the hogs before you get up on them if the wind is right. Seems strange, but it's true. I remember noticing a bent over mesquite tree with a fork just about the right height for sitting down in front of me, and as I took a step towards it, the bushes rustled and I froze. I couldn't tell where it came from so I



“I finally decided that a slow stalk through the thicket would be the only chance I would have”

began a slow turn, and as I made it halfway around, a piglet stepped into some lower grass from a thicket to my right and just behind me. We both froze when we saw each other, and at first I thought it was a rabbit, with the grass as high as it was. But he quickly ducked back into the thicket, and I spun back around and cocked the 9mm. Since I had his location more or less determined, I did my best to look like a tree, remaining as motionless as possible. I began noticing the grass bending against the wind, and several small pigs began showing the tops of their backs in the high grass. As I focused on them, I began to wonder if they had a larger hog with them, so I glanced around for a tree to climb in the event a large hog wanted to argue about the situation. I really wasn't armed correctly for a

And since I was purposefully going for a small hog this year to try a different recipe and method of cooking, I made the choice to use the 9mm on a hog that was smaller than what the average hunter might opt to shoot.

confrontation with a truly big hog, though I was carrying my backup pistol for emergencies. As I looked back towards the hogs from my search for an escape route, the large hog I was thinking had to be there stood up. Now the grass nearly completely covered the smaller hogs, but when their momma stood up, there was no question as to her size. She had to run 140+ pounds, and all of it business. These wild hogs don't have the waddle of domestic hogs.....they are broad in the front shoulders, and trimmed down in the rear. They can run like nobody's business, and if they decide to come your way, you had better be quick. Thankfully, the old girl headed away from me after deciding her current thicket wasn't to her liking anymore. I prepared for a shot since I



assumed the piglets would follow her. But to my surprise, the piglets kept rooting through the grass, and eventually one of them stuck its head out far enough for me to get a good shot right behind the left ear. I placed the crosshairs on the base of the ear, and moved them slightly behind it, and fired.

Six little hogs went scurrying through the tall grass, with my target flopping in the grass only 10 yards away. That's right, the cover was so thick you could get as close as that before discovering your prey. I stood next to my prize as it finished its contortions, putting another shot into it to hasten the end. Another shot presented itself on a little larger version of the one I had just shot, but I passed on it, content with the pig I had in hand.

Cody and Eric showed up after being contacted by radio, and we loaded a very tender and juicy 20 lb. hog onto the jeep. It was just what I wanted in size, though I was prepared to shoot a slightly larger one if I had to in order to give my brother-in-law a chance for a grilling opportunity that we had discussed before I left for the hunt.

At the end of the day, my little hog was the only one taken. Opportunities came up, but with the conditions I mentioned earlier, it was a tough, long day of hunting. I spent the rest of the day attempting to drive hogs out into the open for the other hunters, but to no avail. With a shower and some removal of ticks, the day was done, and it was time to sit around the cabin and share the day's experience with each other. And that is perhaps the best way I can think of to end a hunt....by sharing the experience with others.

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# “Backdoor guns, Finding Ol’Faithful”

**Matt shares his thoughts on a couple of his “go to” hunting rifles, and what makes them exceptional field guns!**

“Backdoor guns, Finding Ol’Faithful”

Written by : Matt Sasso of

[Airgunhunters.com](http://Airgunhunters.com)

As airgun enthusiasts we often find ourselves fascinated by the newest toy on the market or the high tech gizmo that’s going to have us shooting farther and more precisely. It’s a whirlwind and it’s easy to get caught up in. And let’s face it; there are some nice toys to be had out there in the airgun world and lots of folks interested in the latest review. Even so, I thought it might be nice to pay homage to the foundation of airgunning, the “back door gun” and what makes them so special to us all.

What’s a back door gun? It’s precisely that, the trusty airgun that leans in a corner in close proximity of your back door. The faithful side arm you reach for more often than not, it’s the gun with the dings scratches and rust, the gun that has taken you beyond trust and well into faith. And it’s the gun that brings you back to airgunning time and time again. It’s no accident that these guns find themselves filling the niche. Whether you’re deep in the country or bound by the confines of suburbia these guns

## Matt Sasso

share very similar and somewhat personal characteristics.

So what makes a backdoor gun? What are the points that anoint a gun as Ol’faithful?

### 1. Simplicity

First and foremost, simplicity is essential to the mix. A backdoor gun needs to operate on a very simple premise. “Cock or pump, load and shoot”. Notice we didn’t include fill with high pressure air or drop in a CO2 cartridge. That’s because a backdoor gun should operate under its own power and not rely on any other gadgets or gizmos to generate power. It’s not that I am discounting the effectiveness of PCP and CO2 guns. But that special quality of Ol’faithful deems that it just work every time there is a squirrel in the feeder or a possum in the garbage without the additional burdens of “Did I fill the gun before I put it away?” or “How many shots did I take on this cartridge?”. For that reason pumpers and springers fill that niche perfectly. Essentially, at the end of days when all else fails you should be able to continue to load and shoot.



In addition, the finish should be quality but humble. Any gun that is too pretty will never qualify as a backdoor gun for the mere reason that it has to be shined, put away and kept safe. And anything too ugly will never warrant your affection or stand the test of time. This should be a comfort to most new airgunners because finding Ol'faithful doesn't mean you are going to need to find a second job to pay for it. Most of these guns will fall in a modest price range. You'll be paying for quality where it counts.

## 2. Reliability

A backdoor gun will never meet the standard unless it is reliable every time. So what makes a gun reliable? Hitting what you aim at is a sure sign that things are working out. Beyond that you should be able to easily develop a real feel for how the gun is going to perform at different ranges and from different shooting positions. It should seem like you never lose the feel for the gun and can shoot it dead on even if you haven't touched it for 6 months. This is no accident. Most likely the backdoor gun has a great fit and comfort that provides easy muscle memory. You will hear bow hunters talk about muscle memory a lot because it is essential that the archer retain the same shooting form to shoot accurately.

Invariably, some guns provide better muscle memory than others and warrant the expression, "It's just like riding a bicycle, you never forget how"

Another piece in the reliability equation is power. The power should be consistent always. Once the gun is broken in and settles into its comfort zone you should be able to set the sites and never touch them again. The gun should just deliver for you

every time. Consistent power will allow you the confidence to make shots from the porch that you might never try in the field. For example, one thing that shooters become very sure of in their own backyard is distance and how the gun will perform at those distances. There is a tree about 85 yards off my back deck that commonly holds lots of starlings. And the buggers like to sit atop it and just taunt me to try for them. In the field I would most likely stalk a bit closer before shooting but from my backdoor I will simply shoulder my RWS 34 and aim 3 inches high and wait for the pellet to smack home. There is no guessing. I just know how all the pieces of the shot will come together and at the center of it is my trusted backdoor gun. I know it'll keep up its end as long as I deliver.

It's unavoidable when discussing power to skirt the question of "How much power?" There are very debatable answers to this question and rather than tussle over the myriad of answers I will simply answer from experience. The best versatility for a go everywhere do almost anything production (springer/pumper) gun that will always perform well will shoot: 900-1000fps in .177 and 750-850fps in .22. These power ranges give you a good ratio between accuracy, range, noise, loading and shooting effort. Please note that lesser or greater power may work just as well for your situation and I have taken many squirrels inside of 30 yds with a .22 traveling at just over 500fps I just find the mid to upper ranges of velocity to be more accountable.

Finally, the mechanics of the gun should function consistently. This means the trigger, bolt, cocking mechanism, screws fit of metal to stock all function and maintain

themselves. Its also nice if they seem to be able to take a little abuse and come out smiling.

### 3. Adaptability

The gun should be very adaptable. First, it should be able to take a fairly wide array of small game at reasonable ranges and should fall into the 80/20 rule. This means the gun should be able to take 80% of the game at 80% of the ranges you are most often presented with. Most likely these will be pest birds, gophers, squirrels, rabbits possums within 50 yds. It may also have enough power to take larger game like raccoons at very close ranges with a well placed shot. But overall, a backdoor gun is going to fit a very wide niche of airgun hunting needs. In fact, you'll probably also find Ol'Faithful does more traveling than any other gun and may accompany you on all kinds of hunts. For years my .20 cal Benjamin Blue Streak followed me on deer hunts. I can't think of one time when I didn't have it out in the afternoon as a way to quietly get some good small game hunting in as well. That gun took a lot of grouse, rabbits and squirrels. Its over 40 years old now and has become my fathers backdoor gun as he has waged war on the squirrels raiding his garden.

Also in the adaptability category, the gun should be accepting of many different kinds of pellets. Over the years I have found that my favorite guns have a favorite pellet but overall they will shoot almost anything well with few exceptions. This is a real asset when you have a bushy tailed raider at the bird feeder and the only ammo you have at hand is a pile of mixed pellets in a cup on a hutch by your back door. It's nice to know you can drop anything in and hit your mark.

### 4. Sites and Optics

Sites and Optics probably lend themselves a bit more to the first point about simplicity but I get so many questions about these that it made sense to break into it for this article. A backdoor gun should have very simple optics. For myself I prefer open iron sites. I think I prefer this because of the simple nature of the whole setup. In addition, open sites are a lot more durable and are less likely to get knocked out if the gun is knocked over or dropped or riding around in the back of your truck. With the advent of low cost quality scopes entering the airgun world, it's rare to see a picture of someone's airgun without some sort of scope mounted on it. Admittedly, most of my guns have scopes on them but for my trusty RWS 34 I have chosen to keep it undressed. In addition, open sites come up and get the shooter on target faster and in the case of the backdoor gun with its comfy fit, they should be accurate well into 50 yds. However, That Benji I mentioned earlier proudly sports a very simple 4x32 shotgun scope. I mounted it for my father and for the shots he takes in the 30 yd range and it's perfect, fast and efficient. When it comes down to it all "Good shooters shoot well.", and you'll need to decide what you want for your backdoor gun but a reminder is that too much complexity will lower your trust in the gun and often have you considering failure points like mounts and the alignment of the scope itself..

Over the years I have found a few top contenders for the role of backdoor gun. And not surprisingly there are a select few guns that meet the standards we have just reviewed. Let's start with the list of production guns that are contenders:



**Rifles:**  
Benjamin 392.22cal

RWS 34 .177 or .22cal



Gamo 220 Hunter .22cal



Beeman R9 .20cal



**Pistols:**  
Benjamin H77



Crosman 1377 or 1322

It's a short list and based on your experiences you could most likely expand it in any direction given your backdoor gun of choice has the qualities we have discussed. In addition, you also may want to include modified guns on your list but I thought it less confusing to limit the selection to production airguns in hopes of answering at least part of that very familiar question. "I am new to airgunning, what gun should I get?" I think most of us would agree that all of these guns on the list would make for a good shooting partner and would stand the test of time just as well as their simple design has. Understandably, the R9 is at the high end of the price range but its just such a performer I didn't think I could leave it off the list. But overall a very modest budget of \$100-\$160 will get you into a very reliable, very comfortable and very accurate shooter that will fill the majority of your backyard and small game needs. I am sure some folks are wondering why I have not included any of the low cost Chinese guns. For me its simple, they don't meet the reliability requirements without a very thorough cleaning or tuning and the range of quality is still too varied although the quality has increased greatly. I just feel that for the most part a shooter should be confident that the

gun will do its part. And while I have had some great experience with the Chinese guns it has not yet been consistent. BTW, for those in the know, I would have also placed the BSA Hornet on the list if they ever put it back into production. That was a dandy little backyard stinger.

There you have it. A short list of backdoor guns and a way to measure them. As I was writing this article, I couldn't help but recount and actually feel my old Benji .20 taking its first crow from my mother's porch, the quick draw of my Benjamin h77 targeting squirrels behind my garage and my now very favorite RWS 34 dropping varmints with precision at the edges of my property. Earlier I mentioned that the backdoor gun is the one that brings you back to airgunning time and time again. There are lots of distractions in the world and plenty of important things that keep us from shooting as often as we like. In the end the most special quality of a backdoor gun is this. It's a very comfortable and familiar hand that guides us back to the essence of it all, "Fun".

**Matt Sasso and  
Airgunhunters.com**

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# Crossman 2240

AG Hunting takes a look at one of the best options available in a hunting handgun



An off the shelf 2240 will cost about \$50, and can be found at most "megamarts"



To take larger quarry you'll need the power mods (above) but for small birds out of box power suffices.

This gun was modified with a DAQ .25 receiver/barrel, improved airflow, a trigger job, my own handmade grips, and has accounted for many rabbits and squirrels



For several years now, the Crossman 2240 has served as a simple to modify airgun that can be purchased at a relatively low price, and can be worked on with common tools found around the garage, with outstanding results being achievable. The most common modifications include;

- Trigger job
- After market grips
- Opening transfer port / improving CO2 flow
- After market receiver
- Longer barrel
- Caliber change ( to .25, 9mm, etc)

All of these modifications can be done fairly simply, and there are currently several suppliers of after market components. It is also pretty straight forward and a lot of fun to build your own grips, though for around \$40 you can get some really beautiful laminate grips from various sources.

After I've done the above mentioned modifications my guns typically produce sub 1/4" groups at 20 yards, producing between 9-10 fpe. This is more than enough power and accuracy to serve as a close range small game gun.

I have used the modified 2240 to take ground squirrels and tree squirrels, cottontails and jackrabbits, sparrows, grackles, and pigeons with good results, though I generally keep my shots inside of 20 yards



The gun shown on this page was built using a DAQ .25 caliber receiver and barrel, a Biohazard valve, and a trigger tuned to a 1.5 lb pull weight. A Tasco shotgun scope with a 1.5x magnification topped the gun, mounted on high profile leapers mounts that allowed access to the loading port.



The Biohazard valve (left) moves substantially more gas than the standard valve (right), and was designed for the .25 caliber gun

The gun has a marked preference for Field & target pellets. In one test I placed 25 pellets into a half inch group at 20 yards. This gun has been used to take many cottontails and squirrels over the years, and the .25 pellet smacks the quarry with a decisive impact that anchors them to the spot. By attaching the carbine stock, this gun is capable of reaching out another ten yards.

I've built up a collection of these modified handguns in calibers ranging from .177 to 9mm, powered with CO2 cartridges and bulk fill, with stock grips, custom grips, and several sighting systems. I think this is one of the most flexible platforms available for building up a hunting CO2 handgun. Build one, shoot it, and see why so there are so many fans!



# CUSTOMIZING BUDGET PRICED AIRGUNS OVER-CAPITALIZING YOUR RIG

Jim Chapman

I recently received an email in which I was asked if it made sense to buy an inexpensive Chinese rifle and put money into having it customized. The gun in question was a clone of a popular British PCP, one of which I'd purchased out of the first production run and used successfully in the field. This got me to thinking about whether it made sense to spend money improving a low end airgun, and if so under what conditions and how much represents a smart investment?

Over the years, I've purchased a number of airguns that I unpacked, sighted in, shot enough to learn its idiosyncrasies, then headed straight out to the field to hunt with. I've also had guns that didn't quite do what I wanted out of the box, and I either tuned them myself or sent them off to an airgun tuner for tweaking and further optimization. And finally there are guns that I started out with the intention of using as a platform on which to build something better, or more often something that was otherwise unavailable.

I have taken a low cost product like a 2240 that I'd spent \$50 on, then buy a third party receiver and barrel for \$90, a valve from Biohazard for \$70, and a muzzle brake, trigger shoe, power adjustor for another \$100, so that in the end I held in my hands a \$300.00 semi custom .25 caliber hunting CO2 air pistol.

There is not a comparable air powered handgun that I could have purchased, plus I got the parts and did the modifications myself learning something about the gun as I proceeded. I think this is well worth the investment, though you most probably won't recover it when and if you sell.

Taking an inexpensive Chinese springer and doing a simple home tune on it is a cost effective way to get enhanced performance and more than your monies worth out of a less refined product. Many of the newer Chinese guns are actually pretty good out of the box, but with some simple to perform tweaking can actually be turned into a sweet little hunting gun.

But there is a point of diminishing return. For instance, buying a QB-78 and converting it into a pcp will cost more than buying a purpose designed pcp. Now if your going for something that is different to add to your collection, this is still a viable option. But if you're looking for a budget hunting air rifle that has a proven track record, there are more cost effective options.

I have a B4 that was modified, turning this low end Chinese springer into a very shootable rifle. But in the end I had over a couple hundred bucks into what is effectively a thirty some dollar airgun. I will never be able to recover the money I have in this rifle.. On the other hand, I enjoy shooting this gun so why should I want to sell it? It's all a matter of perspective.

# The AR6 Urban Hunter

I used the Evanix AR6 as my small game rifle on an African safari last year, and was really impressed by the excellent accuracy and 30 fpe power output. I took all manner of small and medium game with this gun. The only negative comments I have is that the gun is fairly large and very loud. But everyone that hunted with it on that trip; Randy, Eric, Andrew, and I felt it was a great all around hunting gun.

Leap ahead a few months, and I was given an assignment to write an article on urban hunting, and started to look around for the perfect kit. I wanted a take down design, compact dimensions when assembled, accuracy and power. I'd read a good review on the AR6 pistol that Stephan had written for Airgun Hobby, and when I saw the pistol configured with a removable

stock I felt I was on to something. The gun has the same solid construction of the full sized model, and uses the same double action and rotary magazine as its big brother. The small reservoir tube gives far fewer shots



**A 30 fpe PCP rifle that breaks down to fit into a pack is the ultimate "Urban Hunter"..**



***As open land disappears and human population density increases, I think Airguns will continue to gain in popularity. Quiet, accurate, and powerful ... what else do you need?***

# The B-57 Urban Hunter

Another urban hunter I've put together for situations where not a great deal of power is required, is based on the Chinese built B-57 take down carbine. This side lever .177 spring piston air rifle yields velocities in the 600 fps range, and has proven quite effective on rabbits and rats out to 20-25 yards. I've set up a light and laser mounted on a leapers tri-rail mounting system, both of these accessories are controlled with a pressure activated switch attached to the forestock with Velcro. The scope is a compact Leapers 4x32 Bugbuster that fits the rifle well.

This takedown carbine will fit into a pack for transporting to a the shoot. This gun likes light pellets, and as a matter of fact is one of the few guns that I will use Raptor pellets with. At 20 yards the accuracy is still pretty good, the velocity hits the advertised 25% increase in velocity over standard pellets, and the terminal performance is good with excellent penetration.

As a matter of fact, this is one of the situations in which these pellets make sense. At ranges much outside of 20 yards the accuracy starts to suffer and the velocity decreases rapidly. But matching the gun and pellet to the right conditions, results in a viable combination.



***A low powered spring piston airgun has its place in the pest control gear bag .... Good for shooting around buildings and equipment, these guns are quiet and misses won't cause damage.***

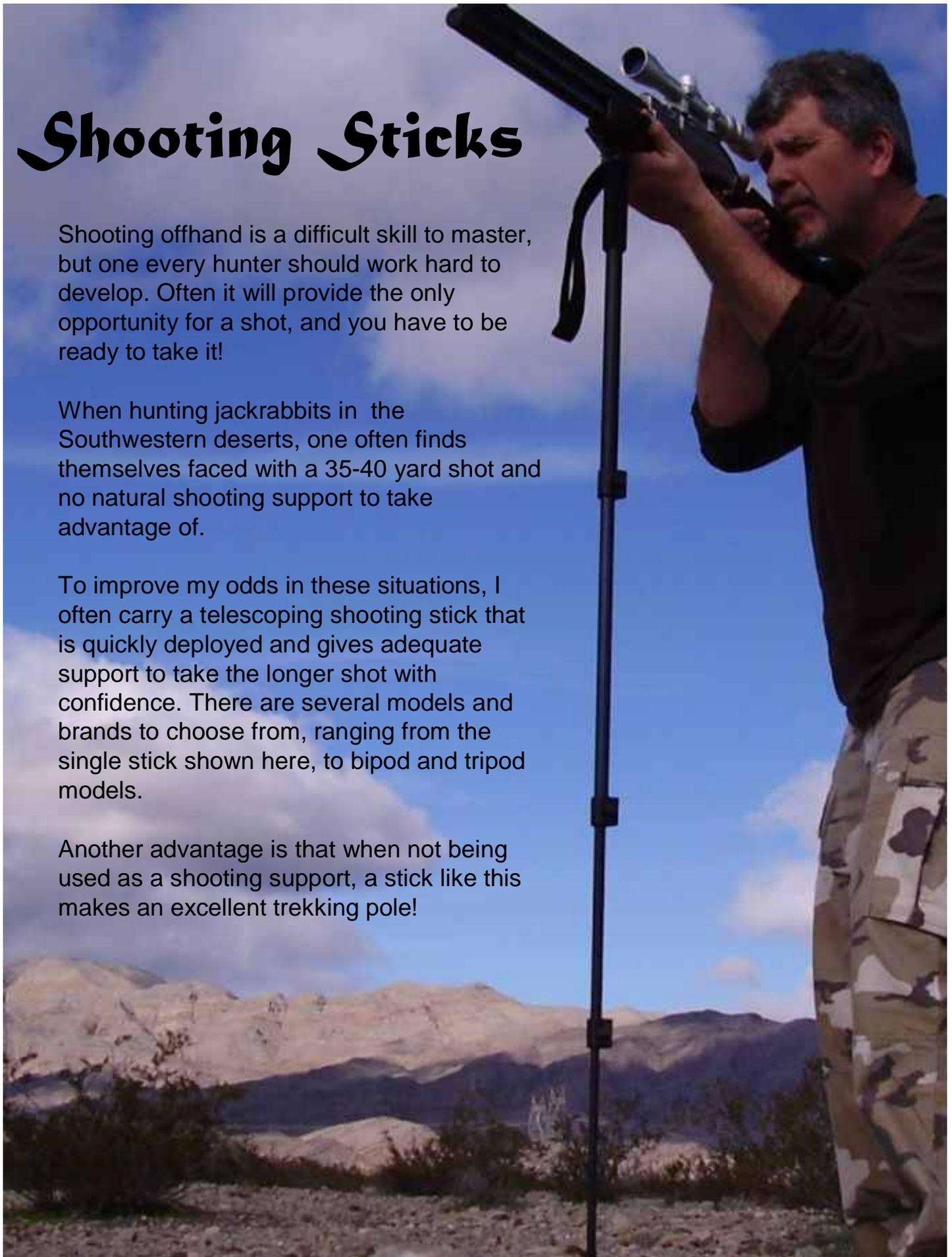
# Shooting Sticks

Shooting offhand is a difficult skill to master, but one every hunter should work hard to develop. Often it will provide the only opportunity for a shot, and you have to be ready to take it!

When hunting jackrabbits in the Southwestern deserts, one often finds themselves faced with a 35-40 yard shot and no natural shooting support to take advantage of.

To improve my odds in these situations, I often carry a telescoping shooting stick that is quickly deployed and gives adequate support to take the longer shot with confidence. There are several models and brands to choose from, ranging from the single stick shown here, to bipod and tripod models.

Another advantage is that when not being used as a shooting support, a stick like this makes an excellent trekking pole!



# An air rifle to remember: Career 707 Western

**Stephan Boles**

Today, I was sitting at work thinking about all the air gun hunts I've been on. Though, I have taken a few big game animals, my mind always goes back to the desert and hunting the blacktail jackrabbit.

Hunting jackrabbits takes a lot of patience. You will find that most of your shots will be anywhere from 50-80 yards out and that means you will need an airgun that can reach out and hit them with authority. For me, that airgun is the Career 707 Western!

Back in Jan, 2005. I made a call to ARS ( Air Rifle Specialists ) about buying a Career Carbine and out of the blue he said " You know, I may just have the gun for you. The other day, I was looking through some boxes and found a nice Career Western in 22 cal". I said, " A career Western? What's that?" then he said " It's a Career 707 just a little bit different. The back of the receiver reminds me of the Browning Auto 5. It has a long barrel and you can hit dimes at fifty yards." I asked "Will you send me a few pictures of it?" Within 30 minutes I was looking at one the most beautiful Careers I've ever seen. I immediately called him back and closed the deal.

About a week later, the big brown truck stopped by my house and I knew what he had for me. I ran out side, signed for the package, and went to the only place I can be alone in the house.... the bathroom. I opened up the box and took a deep breath when I first saw the rifle. The wood stock has stripes going through it and had a high gloss finish also. The receiver is a silver-gray with an etched landscape of a deer in the mountains on both sides. The barrel and air reservoir is deeply blued. The rifle had a little air in it but, I wanted to make sure that it would take a full charge so; I slowly started to fill the gun. When the needle on the gauge went past 1500 psi, I halfway closed my eyes. Hoping that I didn't hear any air leaking out of the seals. It took a full charge and I put the rifle in the corner and checked it about every hour for the rest of the day and it held. No air leaks.

If you ever see one of these Career Western air rifle's at a gun show or for sale somewhere, you may want to give it a second look. It you pass on it. Just give me a call.

The next day, I had to take it out to the range. I put on a Barska scope and zeroed the gun at 60 yards. The following day, I went hunting. I was using the big heavies, Eujin 28.6 grain pellets. I filled the gun up, put maybe 20 pellets in my pocket and off to walk over the desert hills. The temperature was around 45 degrees and everything was still and quiet. As I walked over the first hill, I kept looking down at the rifle. With the scope on, it looked so beautiful. As I crested the first hill and looked around, I felt eyes looking at me. I then spotted a big eyed jackrabbit looking at me. I said to myself, "Here's your first chance to score a hit with this gun". I looked down, took the gun off safe, slowly cocked it, put it to my shoulder, looked up and tried to find the jackrabbit in the scope. He was nowhere to be found. I brought the gun back down and looked around for him when all of a sudden, he moved. He was maybe 20 yards from where I saw him last. Knowing that he was out at about 50 yards, I put the scope on him and laid the cross hairs just below his chin and fired. The gun didn't seem so loud out there. The pellet hit him right in the mouth. It looked like I hit him with a laser beam. The jackrabbit simply fell over. He didn't move, just dead.

I went over the next hill and didn't see anything. The sun started to get higher and warmed things up a bit. The rabbits started to move around a lot more too. The next hill, I saw three jackrabbits at the same time. Two of them saw me first and bolted. One didn't move. He was 62 yards out, and as soon as I cocked the Career Western, he

sat up with his ears moving a little back and forth. With a 28 grain pellet loaded, I put the cross hairs right on his neck and gently pulled the trigger. Through the scope, all I saw was the fur moving and the jackrabbit kicking on the ground. I have to tell you right now, this is an awesome rifle! It fits my hands like a glove and when I aim at something, it's like pointing my index finger. The cocking action is very smooth and you can't tell when the pellet is transferred to the barrel either. It's all done with one smooth motion. You can keep the rifle on your shoulder while still on target and put many shots down range.

On day four, I got up around 6:00 am and headed out to a new area about 30 minutes away. I passed the area countless times but have never stopped to see if there were any jackrabbits. Air tank and gun in the truck, and a strong cup of coffee in hand, I made my way to the new area. After getting there, I started to fill up the rifle and felt something looking at me. Just a feeling I had. I looked around and saw a jackrabbit about 15 yards away! This never happens to me. Why didn't he run when he heard the truck pull up? I kept getting my rig together and when I finished and cocked the Career Western. He sat up with ears in air. I aimed at him and put the cross hairs on him, putting pressure on the trigger when all of a sudden, I decided not to take the shot. I was really looking to test my skills a bit and wanted more of a challenge. And besides, that little jackrabbit was brave enough to stand there while I got my rig together.



[CobraAirguns.com](http://CobraAirguns.com)

Walking towards the distant hill I noticed a lot of rabbit droppings. There had to be more jacks in this area. I didn't get more than one hundred yards from the truck when I saw a jackrabbit take off running. He was only 20 yards away when he took off and ran about fifty yards and stopped. I raised my Career Western and I could see his whiskers moving. I put the cross hairs right below his eye and pulled the trigger. The rifle went boom but nothing happened. From the sound, I could tell that a pellet was not loaded, so I turned the gun over on the right side and saw that in fact, I had not loaded any pellets in the magazine. I went in my pocket and pulled out seven 28 grain pellets and loaded up. I put one down the tube by cocking the gun, and I was off again to get another shot at that rabbit. The jackrabbit only went another 20 yards and stopped. Looking through the range finder, I knew he was 74 yards out. I put the cross hairs halfway up his long ears and pulled the trigger. Right after the sound of the gun, I heard a hard sharp knock sound. The jackrabbit did a flip and started to kick up some dust. I started to make my way toward him. I always continue to hunt up to the kill. You never know, you may see another one on the way. He had stopped kicking. Upon inspection, the pellet had hit him right between the eyes and there was a big quarter size hole in the back of the head. Very powerful combination of gun, scope and pellet. I took the rabbit back to the truck and went off again to find more.



I took a break for a few minutes then I went over the next hill. As I made it to the top and looking down on the other side, I saw two big jackrabbits run from about 40 yards away. I cocked the Career Western and put the scope on one of them and waited till he stopped. They were both going in the same direction, only a couple feet apart from one another. Both of them stopped at the same time. It wasn't two seconds after they stopped, that a 28 grain pellet was on its way to plow into the chest of one. I could hear the shot hit and the jack just fell over. To my amazement, the second jack just walked over and sniffed his friend which gave me enough time to cock the Career Western and line up a shot on him as well. By the time he realized what was going on, it was too late. The cross hairs were right on his nose when I pulled the trigger. With a 28 grain pellet going 989 fps, the second jackrabbit hit the canvas too. Hitting him in the neck, right in the spinal cord. I looked at the air gauge and found that it hadn't move at all.

Between me and the next hill was about 300 yards of flat land which is a little harder to see jackrabbits but I took my time. I saw one looking right at me! When I saw him, I was shocked! He saw only about 10 yards away! I raised the Career Western cocking it at the same time. Rushed the shot and shot right over him. Unbelievable! He took off full bolt! I followed him in the scope and he stopped about 50 yards. I was just getting ready to pull the trigger, when he took off again. This time, he made it to the hill in front of me and I took a deep breath, let half of it out, put the cross hairs about a foot over his ears and slowly pulled the trigger...BOOM! To my amazement, the

jackrabbit did a flip and started kicking! I took the range finder out of my pocket and took a measurement. I couldn't believe it, 141 yards!! I took the measurements five times to make sure. Hey, I know it was luck but, hey, I'll take luck every now and again. On my way to recover the jackrabbit, I saw another take off. He was maybe 20 yards out and I quickly shot at him but it was a clean, clear miss. Oh well, can't get them all. If you ever see one of these Career Western air rifle's at a gun show or for sale somewhere, you may want to give it a second look. If you pass on it. Just give me a call.



# Sparrows (I think) in China

Reprinted from the American Airgun Hunter  
by: Jim Chapman

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This is one of those strange stories about a hunting trip that wasn't supposed to be a hunting trip. I was living in Tokyo at the time and working all over Asia. I had been called down to Beijing China on short notice to help salvage a project going bad. My travel agent arranged the trip, my office in Tokyo arranged the meetings, and everything was set... I thought. I climbed off the plane in Beijing and made my way to a hotel a couple of miles outside of the airport and several miles outside the city. I had stayed in this hotel a few times before, and the plan was to get a nights sleep and be picked up by my companies driver in the morning. I called into the office to tell them I'd arrived, but nobody answered. I kept trying and kept getting the same results, so after a couple of hours I called back to Tokyo to find out what was going on. There were several calls back and forth and it was finally determined that there had been a mistake in the schedule and I was suppose to have arrived three days later, and to make matters worse (or better as it turned out) there was a holiday just starting and I was on my own. I decided to set up shop at the Movenpick Hotel out in the country rather than head into the city, and spend a long weekend drinking beer and laying by the pool. I did this with great success and woke up the next morning a bit off color, and decided to get some exercise instead of a replaying the events of the day before. I called down to the concierge and asked what activities were available and after running through the options decided to rent a mountain bike and go for a ride in the countryside. I had the hotel pack me a lunch and a couple bottles of water, threw some stuff in my pack and was off.

Just a mile or so away from the hotel, I found myself on little packed dirt roads surrounded by agricultural land, mostly rice fields, that stretched out as far as the eye could see, I kept riding as the day started to become warmer, it was a clear blue sky with a scattering of clouds. Riding along I saw something coming towards me, but I couldn't make out what it was, and as it grew closer I realized that an entire family was balanced on a bike. Mom, dad, baby and grandma (or grandpa, I couldn't tell) perched on what looked like a dilapidated beach cruiser, and what contributed to the bizarre silhouette was the ample stock of household goods and farming implements they had also loaded on. I eyed them thinking this was quite a site, when I realized they were looking at me the same way. I am over 6'1" tall, wore somewhat longhair and a beard at the time, was wearing day glow bike shorts without a shirt. I must have been the very picture of some rice field demon rolling down the road. We all pedaled by, eyes locked on one another, going on our way with our own individual stories of the weird sight we'd seen.

I continued on for a few more miles and rode by several family farm compounds that, even though we were only twenty or so miles out of Beijing, looked like something out of the distant past. They were of a common design, a few rough stone buildings arranged in a rectangle around a courtyard, with a large hinged door to allow entry with equipment or animals. I could see families inside, going about their business. At one of these compounds, it was somewhat larger than the others, and surrounded by scattered trees I saw what looked like a teenage boy of fourteen or fifteen creeping around these little woods with an airgun. I broke out my water and a snack, and leaning my bike against a tree, sat back to watch. After a few minutes the kid saw me and looked somewhat alarmed. He started moving away, but I waved him over. Trying to look friendly and non-threatening I finally got him over to me, and using my Berlitz language book I tried to ask

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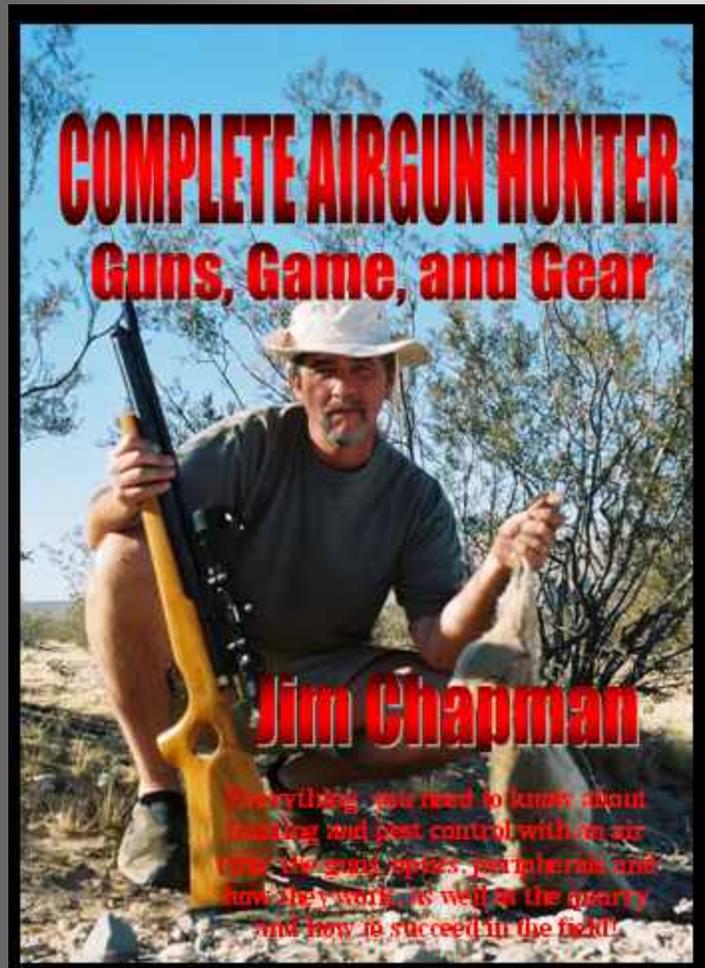
him about his gun and what he was hunting. I did not know then, but I do now, that the Berlitz guide has a dearth of hunting expressions. Using sign language to show him that I liked to hunt (aiming and squeezing off shots from my imaginary gun) and trying to modify the Berlitz phrases for meeting new friends at the disco, I continued my inquiries. At one point, he looked at me with what I thought was alarm and trotted off into the compound. Now I've done it I thought, I led him to believe that I was a western subversive set on infiltrating China with a plan to get my hands on an air rifle, and cause god knows what havoc and mayhem.

As I was climbing on my bike to take off before the family descended on me with pitchforks, the kid came running back carrying an additional rifle. He indicated through signs (he spoke as well but I got not one word of it) that I could use a rifle and shoot with him. This was too good an opportunity for an inveterate airgun hunter, and besides, I was on my own schedule and in no hurry to anything else. The rifle was an underlever cocking pneumatic air rifle, which had a military look to it. I later realized that it was probably some variation of a Model B3 rifle that is now days commonly sold via the internet. It was roughly finished and pretty banged up, but on shooting a few shots to acclimate myself, found it pretty accurate considering I was using iron sites. We were shooting .177 flat head pellets, and I had no way of knowing (or based on the diminutive size of our quarry, really caring) what velocity these guns were putting out.

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**Coming in July!**



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.

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We hiked down to some trees behind one of the out buildings where I had first seen him stalking. Looking up I saw a flock of perhaps forty or fifty little brown birds flitting from limb to limb. I pointed and he nodded affirmation that these were our quarry. I took aim at a bird about 20 feet up in the tree and squeezed off a shot, missing him cleanly. The kid laughed, I guess bad shooting transcends cultural differences in language and humor, and snapped off a shot.... Plap! A bird dropped to the ground. The others did not seem to take notice that one of their numbers had departed under less than favorable (for him) circumstances. I took aim once again, and this time nailed one of the little buggers with a chest shot. The bird came tumbling down, and my hunting companion didn't look pleased. He pointed to the chest shot and indicated this was bad placement; he made me understand that these little birds, I think they were sparrows of a type, were destined for the table.. I spent the entire afternoon shooting and the two of us took a large number of birds, which seemed to please him to no end. We would shoot at a stand of trees until the birds got nervous, then move to another. I think a CO2 multi shot rifle probably would have been powerful enough for this game, and the ability to follow up would have been nice.

I noticed it was getting late in the day, and nodded my thanks for the fun day of shooting. Riding away I thought it interesting that without being able to speak the same language and having nothing in common but the hunt, I had spent a really fun day somewhere in the agricultural backwaters of

China shooting what at home was a pest, but here I guess I should consider game. I have long believed that there is a certain subset of any population that are hunters, and now I know they have their own language.

To wrap up my story, as I tried to find my way back it got dark. There were no lights anywhere and I was surrounded by a great deal of nothing. The compounds were all shut up, and even if they weren't, I wouldn't have been able to communicate. My food and water were long gone; I was hungry, thirsty, and lost. I was using my compass to try to keep going in the right direction, and it was a little disconcerting riding along under moonlight. After working my way through fields and around dead ends, I rolled out parallel to the highway. But I wasn't sure if I'd come out above or below the hotel, so taking a chance I picked a direction. It turned out to be the right direction and eventually I rolled into the hotel parking lot. The next morning I brought the bike back, and the guy that rented it to me was most unhappy that I had kept his bike all night. After the exertions of the day and night before I decided that I'd spend my last free day back at the pool, drinking beer and reflecting on the hunt.

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# THE MATURING AIRGUN FIELD

To demonstrate the greater maturity of current airgunning, I'll cite some experiences and observations from over the past 20 years. The first one is advertising, because for many airgun enthusiasts, they've never seen many of the guns that they desire, so it's the advertising that they see first with their contact with airgunning. Mature people accept plain and blunt statements of fact when delivered with courtesy and sincerity. Mostly gone now is the flowery language extolling the pride of ownership and the double speak of giving you the highlights without a complete picture of the airgun; scanty information. Nothing is more important when you make a mail order purchase and the item arrives and you realize that it is priced more than it's worth, and the quality is less than what you paid for. The internet has been a good source for airgunners because they are few in number and widely separated and the internet ties them together coast to coast. Through internet participation airgunners soon learn from others about undelivered promises and unreal claims, allowing them to make a better choice in their purchase. There was once a gray market in airguns. A gray market is when an item is imported by someone other than the official importer/distributor. There would be European or English made airguns for sale by never heard of before people (and never heard from again) who, on a trip to Europe, returned with a handful or a score of airguns hoping to recoup part of the cost of their trip by selling the airguns. The unfortunate part for the buyer was is that the guns were lower power European specification and may have been styled or have other specifications different because they weren't intended for sale in the United States.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE GROWTH OF OUR SPORT

**Dennis Quackenbush**

The official importer/distributor was under no obligation to offer warranty service and, because of European specifications, the parts may even be different, therefore unattainable in the U.S. I haven't seen any gray marketing of airguns for a long time now because upon seeing a picture of the gun most airgunners would catch on that they are not made for the U.S. market. The speed at which new innovations in airguns occur is much more rapid. The eventual end of innovation will never happen, but the airguns have taken a quantum leap forward. The only problem with this is that it makes the airgun that you bought just last year obsolete and less saleable used. Yet, some airguns are so good, like the TX 200, that they are good sellers for years on the strength of their proven usability and performance. The growth in numbers of airgunners is encouraging. Years ago there was only a small amount of hard core airgunners who, without the internet, would gather at airgun shows. The first Little Rock airgun show, sponsored by US Airgun Magazine, was small.





But among those who attended were the most dedicated, they had to be, to go along with the difficulties. One of them was after the first day's show a majority, just about everybody, went to Michael's restaurant, which was connected to the La Quinta motel. The restaurant was used to sending sandwiches as room service and when the 40 to 50 people from the airgun show descended upon it, it was overwhelmed. It took actual hours to get your meal. It took over 2 hours for my wife and I to get our meal. While some fumed about the situation, most were happy to spend the time amongst newfound friends discussing airguns. So instead of being a restaurant it was a meeting room with refreshments served occasionally. The first Baldwinsville show I attended was so small that half of the American Legion bar room was petitioned off for the tables of the airgun show. But that size was no impediment. Everyone there wanted to be there to be in the company of other airgunners and surrounded by airguns. The gun handling safety awareness has risen tremendously, thank goodness. At the Baldwinsville airgun show I was standing next to the jukebox talking with Tom Anderson, when I got shot in the leg. Across

the room a group were studying a Sharpe air pistol by disassembling it. Nobody had checked the barrel to see if there was a pellet in it or that the gun had a charge in it. During handling the gun discharged. Fortunately the breech was not closed properly, for when the pellet flew across the room, it was not at full power. It struck me right on the seam of my Levi's (then, Levi's were still made in the USA and were substantial products). It hurt like a bee sting! It didn't penetrate the skin, but I still had a welt from where it hit. Another unthinkable airgun handling mishap, that should never happen again because it broke all the common sense safety rules, was that a loaded, cocked, ready to fire, high power big bore airgun was handed to an inexperienced person. Well the gun discharged during the handling and at least the muzzle was pointed downrange, but when it when off the muzzle was elevated so it shot a hole in the ceiling. These types of mistakes would not be repeated today with the heightened awareness that airguns are not toys. And in another 20 years I would be more than pleased to be able to say that the airgun hobby has reached new heights of participants with even better airguns (in ways we can't even think of right now).

**Dennis Quackenbush is arguably the guiding light of the high powered big bore airgun movement in this country today. His airguns have taken more big game than any other.**

*Editor*

# Airgun Pest Control Report

A master of the low power hunting gun heads out to the Californian farmlands to thin out air-born and ground dwelling varmint

**Farm Pest Hunt: The good, the bad & the ugly.**

**Summary: (a) 50 & 15 acre farms hunt; (b) 400 acre farm hunt; (c) 100 acre farm hunt; (d) 200 acre farm hunt and follow up; and (f) 400 acre farm retry. Plus Hamilton finally gets a Beeman R9,**

**50 ACRE FARM HUNT (Hamilton gets kicked off and other bad news):**

The 50 acre farm, what with its cattle, goats, chickens, and farm dogs and cats had been a family-run farm for over 40 years. I got access to it only a few months back. Some starlings, some blackbirds, a few ground squirrels, the occasional English sparrow and a multitude of barn pigeons! And to make things sweeter, of the average 200 daily pigeons there to share the livestock feed, over 50 of them were farm residents. Mostly up in the rafters and eaves of the 100 or so yard long, open sided barn where the cattle feed troughs were.

On my initial scouting walk thru, the pigeons perched up high in the rafters were letting me walk within 15 yards. Talk about a place made to order for a low power airgun like a Beeman R7!

**Robert Hamilton**

Why such a low powered airgun for pigeons? Why not a powerful Theoben Rapid or other potent pcp?

Well, for logical reasons:

- The place was only 50 acres. And most shots would be at high angles. Can't be lobbing pellets across property lines and hitting passing cars or the McMansion on the other side of the country two lane road.

- The barn had a sheet metal roof. Punching holes in the roof where they are obvious to the farmer is a fast track to being told to leave and never return.

- An R7, given precise pellet placement, will take a barn pigeon out at 40 yds or so.

On my first hunt at this 50 acre farm, using my anemic Swift 4-12x scoped R7 (600 fps with 8.4 gr JSB Exact 4.52 domes), I got 31 feral pigeons and more than that in blackbirds, starlings and ground squirrels, shots averaging 35 yards. Very doable for an R7. So a couple months later, on my second hunt there, it was a bit of a shock to find about 80% of the cattle gone, the rest to be sold off, a lone hired hand feeding the remaining cattle and wondering if his job would last until the end of the month.

Calls to the farmer did not get returned, though I had spoken to him earlier in the week. I hunted in the meantime, knocking down 18 barn pigeons and various starlings, blackbirds and a couple crows. All with the early production, Swift 4-12x scoped HW55 with the gen2 10.2 gr. JSB Exact 4.52 Heavies at 550 fps (too heavy for this old 10 meter match gun but very accurate and a good ballistic coefficient).

Around mid-afternoon I phoned a relative of the farmer. The relative told me the farmer had sold and was moving to Texas. The farmer had been renting the land from the relative. The relative and the farmer didn't like each other. The relative assumed I was a buddy of the farmer and she told me to get off the farm right away.

I told her I'd be off in minutes, and was.

### **15 ACRE FARM:**

I left the 50 acre farm and drove about ¼ mile to the 15 (20?) acre farm, which had some pigeons, along with a city yuppie in a new McMansion across the street. The city slick had walked over to the 15 acre farmer and told him, "I don't know what you do here, but when the wind blows in my direction, it sure smells. I don't like it and I want you to do something about it."

In my area, this kind of person with their big, fancy houses on little 5 acre ranchettes and their country-intolerant attitudes are part of the reason, new livestock farms can't get permits, poultry farms get denied permits and forced to move or shut down. My area is fun of empty, shut down family farms.

This 15 acre farmer raised a handful of cattle as a sideline. Too little land to make a living at it, he had a day job in the nearby city.

The 15 acre farmer was the father of the relative controlling the now shut down 50 acre farm. And as friendly and welcoming as the 50 acre farm relative was not. Alas, the 15 acre farm, despite having about 30 or so pigeons hanging around, was too close to a well-traveled road, and the hostile city yuppie in the McMansion to make it a good day hunt site. I hung around the rest of the afternoon, able only to get a few pigeons.

Finally, I thanked him and promised to do a future night shoot and went home.

## **1,000 AND 400 ACRE FARM HUNT:**

### **1,000 ACRE FARM:**

On my next farm pest hunt, I was able to get out the house earlier than usual. So I did a quick crow hunt of the nearby 1,000 acre vegetable farm. Brockley, lettuce, cauliflower, strawberries and sometimes artichokes. This farm, though big, was a clean-farmed place, no livestock, and few pests. Just the occasional crow in the trees bordering the vegetable fields.

I got there shortly after 6am and stayed an hour, which was enough time for what little was there. In that hour, I cruised the veggie field edges, watching the trees.

I heard the crows before I saw them. Well hidden where they were perched in the field edge trees. The trees of the willow jungle, near the creek, not the oaks of the west slopes. The large, flat, featureless vegetable fields being in between.

Weather was a high, cool fog off the ocean and the wind was blowing west to east at about 10mph. I had my Beeman R7 with it's Swift scope at 12x magnification. My preference for farm pest hunting.

The nearest crow let me approach to about 25 yards. This farm doesn't get hunted much. I dropped the crow with a rested shot to the upper chest. All my shots are rested shots.

Front and back shots are the easiest way to drop crows and pigeons. Given the R7's low velocity, 8.4 gr JSB Exact 4.52mm, soft lead, round head pellets do not like to have to penetrate the tough, heavy wing feathers of broadside shots.

Would a pointed pellet be a better penetrator?

The downed crow squawked as it fell and suddenly I had a dozen crows circling above. I kept still after reloading. Crows landed in the same tree top that the downed crow had been in. Convenient for me. I held upwind an inch for wind and dropped two more crows.

Very doable shots at 30 yards.

After that, the rest of the crows wised up, flapped a few hundred yards off and lit in some other trees of the willow jungle. Didn't stop me though. I approached to about 30 yards under tree cover and the quiet little R7 dropped two more. The rest of the crows left.

I headed out, pausing only to shoot one more crow on my way off the farm. A bit farther at 35 yds, but holding 2" upwind of the crow, the wind drifted the soft lead JSB into the center of the crow's chest. The crow fell like the others had.

I was back on the highway and headed down the road to the 400 acre farm by 7am.

### **400 ACRE FARM:**

This farm has numerous cattle and a fair number of pigs, sheep, goats and a few horses. It is a nice mix of veggie, grain, hay, and livestock. Still a few miles out of city limits so given some luck, it should hold out for a number of years yet before succumbing to urban sprawl and turning into a housing tract. Normally, there are a couple thousand pest birds scattered about. Mostly blackbirds, with feral pigeons, and lesser numbers of starlings, crows and English sparrows.

Not this time though.

The young ground squirrels were still babies in the dens. I didn't want to shoot the parents. So, the hunt today was to be pest birds only. Thus the choice of my Beeman R7 as primary hunt gun. The backup was the Beeman R9 which was in need of re-zeroing it at 30 yds and re-trajectory plotting it, after removing the Paul Watts tune. Earlier this morning, I had wondered if I was missing some prime farm pest hunting by spending time as I did at the 1,000 acre veggie farm, instead of getting earlier to the 400 acre farm? True I had bagged 6 crows this morning at the 1,000 acre farm, but on one hunt to the 400 acre farm, about a year ago, I had so many blackbirds coming into the cattle pens area, that I just stood in one spot, resting the R7 on the tall camera stand rest, and kept pivoting in a circle, shooting almost as fast as I could. I was near swamped with flocks of migrating blackbirds to the point I ended the day with over 300 pests, the calm air assisting marksmanship.

Not this time. No cause to regret taking an hour earlier this morning to get the 6 crows at the 1,000 acre clean farm.

I got to the 400 acre farm a bit before 8am. Weather was high fog. Temp about 55°F. All well so far. But for two problems.

The wind and the birds.

#### **PROBLEM #1, THE WIND:**

Normally, the air is calm or near calm at the 400 acre farm until 11 or 11:30am. Then it picks up and blows the rest of the day, stronger as the afternoon lengthens. Not this time. Upon arrival, the wind was already blowing about 15 mph from NW to SE. The usual direction. Here, the inland farming valley I hunt is separated from the nearby Pacific Ocean by coastal mountains of about 2,000 feet in height. Except for here in the Monterey area, where there is a miles long gap in the coastal range.

The inland farming valley air heats up by late morning. The air over the ocean stays cooler. The cooler ocean air is drawn into and down the north to south-running inland farming valley, usually bringing fog and always bringing wind. A wind tunnel effect.

#### **LOW POWER BETTER THAN HIGH?**

Some airgun folks like higher powered airguns for farm pest hunting. But a lowly 6 to 7 ft/lb muzzle energy (M.E.) air rifle like the Beeman R7 or 10 meter target air rifle like the Weihrauch HW55 can be just as effective if not more so farm pest gun in a windy environment.

How?

First, a Beeman R7 or HW55 have a jointed, two-piece cocking arm. This may make cocking a little more effort than a one piece cocking arm as on a Beeman R1 or R9. But the advantage is that the jointed, two piece R7 and HW55 cocking arms mean that the customary long stock cut-out of the R9 and R1 is not required. So with no long stock cut-out slot, dust, chaff and grit is less able to get into the inner workings. Thus airguns with R7 or HW55 type cocking arms are a better choice in dusty environments.

Second, the slower the pellet flies, the easier it is to watch the pellet in flight. With careful trajectory plotting, the required hold-over/under for various ranges can be refined into a science. Just laser range-find the pest with the laser range finder.

Get the distance. Check the trajectory plot taped to the stock for the hold over/under. Make a careful, rested shot holding high or low per the trajectory table and voila! The pest critter is hit where one aims! One shot, one pest!

Given a 30 yard zero, my R7 and HW55's hit about 2 inches low at 40 yds. It is easy to hold 2 inches high, even on a starling, making these low power airguns nearly slam-dunk out to 40 yds. And on many farms, the pests are used to human activity enough to allow open approach to 40 yds.

### **TRAJECTORY CHARTS:**

I am perhaps one of the few holdouts to the use of computer programs that calculate and create airgun trajectory charts. Computer programs like Chairgun and others have many fans. I will guess for good reason. A few years back, I bought the program the A-Team was selling, but never used it, despite reading many compliments about it. Years earlier than that, I bought the FSI airgun trajectory chart printouts.

The FSI trajectory charts compared well with my real life results at the shorter distances, but my airguns tended to have the pellets drop off at the longer distances faster than the FSI charts predicted. So I started making trajectory charts which are quite accurate.

### **HOW TO MAKE AN ACCURATE TRAJECTORY CHART:**

How? Simple. No computer required.

First, get an airgun and a laser range finder. Chronograph the airgun with the pellet to be used. Get out to a range or other suitable place to shoot on a calm air morning.

Bring a large cardboard box on which you have taken a big, black ink marker pen to and made small bullseyes for ranges of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60+ yards, labeling each bullseye with the distance one must shoot it at (5, 10, 15, etc).

Get a rest to shoot from. I like a folding camp chair with padded armrests and an adjustable height camera stand with a piece of dense foam pad glued or taped to the platform where one would otherwise put the camera.

Adjust the camera stand height for the shooting position. For hold-insensitive springers like my Beeman R7, HW55 or AirArms TX200, I shooting sitting with a 3 point rest.

Meaning that (1) my feet are on the ground; (2) my left hand (wearing a padding glove) holds the air rifle forearm and is relaxed and at rest on the top of the camera stand rest; and (3) my right elbow rests on the padded arm rest of the folding camp chair. Not as good as a more secure bench rest setup, but it is light and portable.

For hold-sensitive airguns like my FWB124 (high hold sensitivity), my Beeman R1 (medium hold-sensitivity) and my Beeman R9 (surprisingly low hold-sensitivity), I shoot all the ranges in two positions. First I shoot all the distances using a two-point sitting rest position (same as the above 3 point sitting rest only the right elbow floats in the air), and then I shoot them again, at a fresh target face using a two-point standing rest position. In farm pest hunting, I normally walk about with my pellet rifle in my right hand or slung over my right shoulder and I hold my lightweight, camera stand rest, extended for standing position shooting, with my left hand. Most of my shots are two-point standing rested.

### **30 YARD ZERO FOR FARM PEST HUNTING:**

So with hold-sensitive airguns, first zero at the preferred distance. I like a 30 yard zero because when it comes to small target farm pests, if they let me within 30 yards, they are generally soon dead. Thirty yards, given a rested shot, is really quite easy on starling and better sized pests.

I shoot, it falls and another mark is made on the dimestore, shirt pocket, hunt tally and observations note book I carry.

But regardless of your zero distance preference, with a hold-sensitive airgun, shoot all the distances using a 2 point **sitting** rest. I like a 5 shot group at each distance.

Next, set up a fresh target face and shoot all the distances using a 2 point **standing** rest. Don't change the sights, after the rifle is zeroed, other than a windage adjustment if warranted.

Walk back to the former cardboard boxes (now target faces) and with a ruler or tape measure, measure where each group hit, as to how high or low from the bull.

Given the say, 30 yard zero, how high or low the groups hit (point of aim vs. point of impact difference) is your hold over/under measurement. See examples below. Write them down on a small piece of paper and tape to the side of your stock. I like the left side of the forearm.

Now you are ready to be a serious hunter. You shoot from a steady position to maximize your user accuracy. You get the distance for the shot with your laser range finder. You get the hold over/under amount from your custom, real world performance trajectory chart. After each hunt, chronograph your airgun. As long as the scope hasn't been bumped and the chronograph readings are little changed, the trajectory chart should remain good.

And you will never miss.

Well, um, ah, there is the little matter of the wind. In over 30 years of farm pest airgun hunting, when it comes to correct allowance for wind drift, I am still far from expert.

Every other aspect of airgun shooting can be made into a science. But wind doping remains an art. The stronger the wind, the less user-accurate the shooting will be.

### **SEEING THE PELLET FLY:**

Not only do low power airguns have a safety advantage on a busy, working farm, but when the pellet flies downrange slow enough for the shooter to see it travel, the shooter can then better deal with the wind.

Seeing the pellet in flight, the shooter can then see how much left or right (or up or down) the pellet misses the pest by. The shooter reloads and hits the pest with the following shot by adjusting the wind drift allowance as the missed first shot indicates.

Assuming the pest sticks around.

### **LASER RANGE FINDERS VS. BIG SCOPES:**

In the sport of Field Target (FT), distances to the target are determined by big, high-magnification scopes that range focus with sensitivity. But for hunting, big FT-suitable scopes are well, big. And heavy.

In hunting, the more weight you carry, the sooner you tire. The sooner you tire, the

sooner user accuracy drops off. A good night's sleep beats coffee on a hunt. When it came time to select a scope for my "new" (used) Beeman R9, it was a case of the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I looked through my spares kit. An old Beeman/Hakko M66r 2-7x 32mm scope? Nope. Too low power for my need to shoot small birds at longer distances and see poi. Swift 8-32x 50mm mil-dotted FT-suitable scope? Too heavy and long.

#### **MIL-DOTS:**

Mil-dot reticle scopes are in fashion these days. I have a couple of them myself. Yet I don't find them useful. I'm so used to estimating hold over/under and wind drift allowance by eye, that mil-dots do nothing for me. Mil-dots just add another layer of complexity to the process of shooting. Standard duplex crosshairs do it for me.

#### **SCOPE CHOICE FOR THE R9:**

So, I went with my spare Swift 4-12x 40mm scope. Part of the appeal of a Beeman R9 is its hunt-suitable characteristics of medium power (about 13 ft/lbs M.E.), medium size and medium weight. So don't add unnecessary weight.

#### **ONE PIECE MOUNTS OR TWO PIECE MOUNTS?**

The mount was of course, the one piece medium BKL mount. No scope stop pin, yet no scope slippage in over 300 shots.

All my pellet rifles used to have two piece Beeman/Sportsmatch mounts. But no more. Over the years, what I found was that these two piece mounts lacked the bump-resistance of one piece mounts. One piece mounts have more gripping surface and handled knocks and bumps without the scope getting off zero much better. The only two piece mount I will use, is the BKL two piece double strap mount due to its greater scope groove gripping surface. And



**Over the years, what I found was that these two piece mounts lacked the bump-resistance of one piece mounts.**



that only on my TX200 with its long length B&L/Bushnell 4200 6-24x 40mm scope.

But back to the 400 acre farm hunt:

**PROBLEM #2, THE BIRDS:**

Ground squirrels were off the menu for this hunt because the babies were still parent-dependent down in the den nests. It was birds or bust this hunt. And thus this hunt became a bust.

Normally there are pest birds scattered all over the place. Or if not that, there are big, cohesive if hard to hunt flocks of pest birds that can be chased around, and some individual pest birds that have strayed from the safety of the flock. Not today. The place was a pest bird desert. My lightweight Bushnell 6x25mm binoculars showed very few pest birds around the cattle pens, normally the best place for pest birds because the birds come to share the cattle feed (and poop in it). I saw no crows. Few pigeons.

No starlings. Only the rare black bird. Well, what with my schedule, I can't really choose the best hunt days.

It was hunt or quit. I hunted.

At least I did my best to hunt. I walked up and down the borders of the livestock pens. I checked out the line of young wind-break trees which had drip irrigation offering fresh water and convenient perches to pest birds. I hiked up slope to the livestock feed storage piles. And checked out the big, sheet metal storage buildings.

And how did it go?

I quit hunting by 11:30AM. Too few pests and too much wind (now about 20+ mph gusts).

The wind was blowing my R7's pellets about 3" at 30 yards. I had managed to wind drift pellets into 31 blackbirds and three barn pigeons. I also shot a starling by the pig



# Adventures in Airguns

Last updated: May 27, 2007

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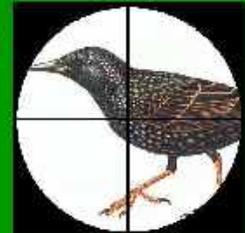
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Starling

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pens. Plus a couple token ground squirrels. The rest of the day, I was in the big storage building, zeroing and trajectory plotting the Beeman R9 (ref. below trajectory plot). Note how similar the 2 pt sitting and the 2 point standing trajectory plots are. This is a mark of a low hold sensitivity airgun and thus a hunt suitable airgun.

**R9 TRAJECTORY PLOT:**

**R9TK**

**7.9 gr cplite#5, 877fps**

**2 pt sit / 2 pt stand: rest,**

Fingertip seated

05 yds = -7/8" / -7/8"

10 yds = -3/8" / -1/4"

15 yds = +1/4" / +0.0"

20 yds = +1/4" / +1/2"

25 yds = +1/2" / +1/2"

30 yds = +1/2" / +3/8"

35 yds = +1/4" / +1/4"

40 yds = -3/8" / -1/4"

45 yds = -1" / -3/4"

50 yds = -1" / -1 1/2"

55 yds = -1 7/8" / -1 3/4"

60 yds = -3 1/2" / -3 1/3"

65 yds = -4 1/2" / -4 3/4"

70 yds = -6 1/2" / -6"

75 yds = -8" / -8"

80 yds = -9 3/4" / -10 1/2"

(1/2" ctc@80 yds, 3 pells)

(1 3/16" ctc@80 yds, 5 pells)

(3/4" ctc@65 yds, 5 pells)

(Groups generally tight core groups with shooter wobble fliers)

Now look at the below FWB124 trajectory plot. Notice how, despite the soft tune of the FWB124 and a lighter weight piston (factory piston is 11 oz), the 2 point sitting and 2 point standing trajectory charts differ. This is the mark of a hold sensitive airgun and thus not a good airgun for farm pest hunting where consistent hold technique is not possible.

**FWB124 TRAJECTORY PLOT:**

**FWB124**

**Ed Canoles 8.5 oz piston**

**7.9 gr JSB Ex Express 4.52,**

**Pellseated, ball, 777fps**

**2 pt SIT / 2 pt STAND: rest,**

05 yds = -1" / -1"

10 yds = -1/2" / -1/2"

15 yds = +0.0" / -3/8"

20 yds = +1/4" / -1/4"

25 yds = +0.0" / -1/4"

30 yds = -1/4" / -1"

35 yds = -1/2" / -1 1/8"

40 yds = -3/4" / -2"

45 yds = -2" / -3 1/2"

50 yds = -3" / -4"

55 yds = -4 1/4" / -5"

60 yds = -5 3/4" / -6 1/2"

(60 yds: sit: 2 3/4" ctc & stand: 2 1/8" ctc. All groups shotgun patterns)



A large cup of McDonalds coffee to keep me alert on the drive back and I was home by 5PM. Not a good hunt, but any hunt beats no hunt and the R9 had impressed me with its accuracy and how similarly the 2-point sitting and 2-point standing trajectory charts compared. Meaning this R9 at least, was not very hold sensitive. A surprise as I had always heard R9's were hold-sensitive. I planned to use the R9 on my next hunt here at the 400 acre farm. When I returned to shoot ground squirrels.

### **100 ACRE FARM:**

A three generational family vegetable (lettuce and broccoli) and livestock (cattle, horses, pigs, and a few goats and chickens) farm. Run by a farming family who welcomed me to pest shoot there about seven years ago. And was a lot more prosperous back then when gas and diesel weren't over three dollars/gallon, alfalfa hay bales weren't \$15 each and their modest cattle business was profitable enough to replace worn out farm machinery and vehicles without making the business run in the red.

It was time for another pest hunt there. I couldn't get away for the hunt, so I called upon my friend, James with his trusty, scoped .177 Beeman R7. I'd scout the place and set up a blind and James would be the shooter.

Pre-hunt, I drove over to the farm and checked things out. Super! The farmer had gotten in a fresh, pickup truck-sized pile of almond hulls (have bits of almond nuts in it) from the almond processor. Several hundred blackbirds were spread out all over the farm. In the veggie fields, in the shade trees, in the livestock pens and yard. But the fresh almond hulls (and broken nut meats) pile was really pulling them in. The farmer said he had gotten the new almond hulls just the day or so prior.

The almond hulls pile was only about 25 yards from the north end of the hay shed. A long, wall-less, sheet metal roofed structure where the 20 foot high stacks of hay bales were kept and used as part of the cattle feed.

While I was there, I built a hunt blind out of bales, having happily found some straw bales. The 3 string hay bales were about 120 lbs each. Thus saving James from having to waste prime early morning hunt time doing blind building. Blackbirds arrive shortly after sun up. As did the feral pigeons.



**While I was there, I built a hunt blind out of bales, having happily found some straw bales.**

On the hunt day, a couple days later, James did well in the straw bale blind, sitting on a camp chair and taking rested shots with his R7, using fingertip-seated 7.9 gr CPLite domes at about 560 fps. The hunting was hot and heavy early. Fading to only a few shots per hour by mid-afternoon when he called it quits. Typical black bird hunting at this particular farm. Good early. Lousy late. James ended the hunt with kills of about 80 blackbirds, a couple crows, a few feral pigeons, a few English sparrows and a few starlings. Plus the odd ground squirrel. Not bad for a slightly anemic R7, hey?

### **200 ACRE FARM, THERE AND BACK AGAIN:**

James is not only a good friend, excellent shot and safety-conscious hunter, but he has a great sense of humor and is nearly retirement so he can hunt more than me. So, I made him a hunting partner.

I have access to a 200 acre veggie farm, heavy on the strawberries that ground squirrels so enjoy. The farmer wanted ground squirrels shot and reported juvenile ground squirrels out of the dens. So it was time to do a serious ground squirrel hunt there. My other fellow farm pest hunting partner, Steve, was likewise tied up with work. Steve had been hunting the 200 acre farm last year and earlier this year, but just couldn't get away. So James and I drove to this farm to check things out.

Sure enough, juvenile ground squirrels were evident. James hadn't hunted this farm before, so I said hello to the farmer and we spent an hour driving all over the farm, not quite getting stuck in the soft, dry dirt, locating active ground squirrel dens. The place used to have a nice, grassy cow pasture and old, disused cattle pens. But that was before the e-coli bacteria hysteria.

Now, the farmer had had to get rid of his remaining cattle and had plowed up the former cattle pasture and cattle grazing range. Where most of the ground squirrels had been. The former cattle lands were being prepared to be planted in strawberries. Far fewer ground squirrels were in sight than last year. But it wasn't only the missing cattle and cattle pasture that were the culprit. Vegetable farmers tend to be less tolerant of ground squirrels and other pests than livestock farmers and ranchers. Fresh, new poison bait stations had been placed every 100 yards or so along the newly planted veggie fields. About a week ago, and so long enough to have poisoned most of the squirrels.

I let James do the hunting and he used his own .177 Beeman R9 to good effect, finding and accounting for 38 squirrels in places the poison bait stations had missed. James came back the next week for a follow up hunt but saw more poison bait stations and few remaining ground squirrels. He hunted all day for 18 ground squirrels. A slow, windy day of which the high point was his getting stuck in some mud in a remote part of the farm where AAA would probably never find him.

Lucky for James, five farm workers came by and got his car out of the mud.

Meanwhile.

### **WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS: More airguns:**

I haven't bought a new airgun in quite a while. Quality adult airguns, treated well, will last a lifetime and then some and my small collection of a Beeman R7, a Weihrauch HW55, a Beeman R1, an IZH60, a Feinwerkbau F124, and an AirArms TX200 Mk3 more than filled my farm pest hunting needs.

But recently things changed with recent purchases of a .177 Beeman R9, another .177 TX200 Mk3, a .22 RWS54, as well as the not quite as recent second .177 HW55.

Hamilton with an R9? After all these years of looking down at the R9 as an el cheapo R1? Will wonders never cease?

### **BEEMAN R9:**

The Beeman R9 is a down-sized version of the big, heavy Beeman R1 break barrel springer. Less gun in a smaller, more lightly built package. I was not in the market for a Beeman R9, new or used.

Yet, a Watts-tuned, Beeman R9TK, beech stock, was offered me, with a Sportsmatch one piece high mount and a ABO mil-dotted Weaver V16 4-16x 42mm scope. The "TK" being the designation for the former near-legendary Maccari done barrel-tunes in which he cuts, chokes, crowns and shrouds the barrel. In near-new condition. .

For \$350.

At that price, I had to buy.

The owner said it wasn't shooting accurately for him. Thus the good price.

I'm no tuner, but I can do simple stuff.

### **R9 PROBLEM DIAGNOSIS:**

With any airgun, particularly springers, a chronograph is a valuable airgun diagnostic tool. The most handy chronographs are those with indoor light features. Years back, I bought a chronograph with each of the two light shades sporting a built-in fish aquarium bulb type light. Thus allowing chronograph use indoors and on top a table or work bench. Airgun folks without their own chronograph are handicapped in being able to monitor airgun health.

Well, the owner told me that this R9 had been shooting 7.9 gr CPLites at 820 fps. I chronographed it. Fingertip seated cplites were doing 790 fps. Tune probably had about 1,000 shots on it max. So, it was possible the tune and spring had merely settled in a bit, at a lower velocity.

Too low a velocity? Well, 790 seemed acceptable to me. Years back, I had bought a blue laminate R9 from Maccari for a friend. It shot a consistent 750 fps with cplites in factory condition, other than a Maccari cut/choked/crowned/shrouded barrel and gave pleasing accuracy to the point the 750 fps was not bothersome.

### **R9 ERRATIC VELOCITY:**

Well, I started shooting my "new" R9TK. The trigger was light, quick and crisp. What a delight after years of trying to master the inferior trigger action of my FWB124! This was a gun that was a natural pointer and seemed to want to shoot well. Firing action was a quick, snapping action. Accuracy was decent enough with consistent 1.5" ctc, 5 shot groups at 50 yds, sitting on a camp chair with my camera stand rest.

More shooting, but targets and over the chrony only.

Oh oh! Velocity had dropped to 775 fps with 7.9 gr Crosman Premier Lites. More shooting and about 100 shots later, velocity dropped steadily to bottom out at 730 fps before rebounding to 740 to 750 fps. I had one chronograph session where the R9 started out at 805 fps and 30 shots later, was doing 740 fps.

## **R9 PROBLEM IDENTIFIED:**

So, I re-read Tom Gaylord's old R9 disassembly instructions and took it apart. Here's what I found:

Piston head had been lathed down into sort of an upside down cone shape in order to take a donut style Maccari blue Apex piston seal (or one that looked just like one). It looked to be the same Maccari piston seal he sold for the TX200. A nicely made, precise seal.

I had a spare Maccari TX200 blue Apex piston seal and pulled the old piston seal and replaced the old blue Apex TX200 piston seal with a new one. Worn seals are always a good place to look when velocity is erratic.

The R9, with the new TX200 piston seal shot the same, about 750 fps.

I also saw that of the 3 delrin buttons on the piston skirt (rear part of piston), the first button was too low, being flush with the metal of the piston. The second button was normal height and the third button stuck out noticeably higher than the second button. Causing metal to metal rubbing?

With a light, I could see that the top of the compression cylinder had a long wear streak, about 1/4" wide. The piston metal had been rubbing the compression cylinder wall. The button on the top of the piston skirt where the cylinder wear was, was the button so low it was flush with the piston, so it could not prevent this metal-to-metal wear. The piston button that protruded noticeably more out from the piston skirt than its fellow, was near the bottom of the piston.

Did the too-high piston button push the piston skirt off center and the too low button allow the subsequent metal-to-metal rubbing? Or did the previous owner over-tighten the scope mount base and squeeze the thin compression cylinder tubing of the R9 out of round, allowing the rubbing?

Whenever installing a scope on a R7, R9, FWB124 or other springer lacking the battle tank build of a Beeman R1 or HW55 compression cylinder, it is smart to do the following:

First, with no scope mount on the gun, chronograph and record the velocity.

Second, install the mount and scope.

Third, chronograph the gun again.

If the velocity is lower with the scope and mount, then the mount was over-tightened.

Use a scope stop and less force on cinching down the scope mount bolts. Or go with a BKL one piece mount. And try to tighten the scope mount bolts near the butt end of the gun, more tight than the mount bolts at the muzzle end of the mount. Reducing the chance of squeezing the compression cylinder out of true round.

## **THE FIX:**

The Watts worked over piston would no longer accept a factory piston seal. What I ended up doing, was to dump the Watts-ground down R9 piston and order a brand new factory piston with factory piston seal from Beemans (about \$70 all told).

## **HAPPY ENDING?**

So, any difference? You bet! Replacing the Watts tune R9 piston with a stock R9 piston, instantly jumped the velocity upwards about 100 fps, from about 760 fps to 870 fps with CPLites. No more velocity variations either. It has been hanging right in there, at 870 plus/minus a little.

Last chrony session had the 10 shot average at 877 fps with a only 6 fps extreme spread, with 7.9 gr CPLite#5's. Very nice and tight extreme spread!

It took a couple hundred shots to burn off the excess lube that theWatts-done piston had let into the compression chamber, but was done and velocity has stayed right about 870 fps.

And as a bonus, the R9 shoots quieter and no longer has that abrupt piston stop feeling. Piston slam?

And as an added bonus, accuracy has improved.

How improved?

I almost dare not say, least you think I'm exaggerating.

Despite my lightweight, folding camp chair and camera stand rest, when I shot my 80 yard group, I shot 3 shots and checked the group thus far. Three shots in a ½" ctc group?! Half inch at 80 yards? Talk about an accurate R9!

But that was a mistake. Such a good group was still only a 3 shot group and I had two shots to go for my standard 5 shot group. I really, really didn't want to blow it, so naturally fell apart under the pressure and pulled off on the 4th and 5th shots. My incredible 80 yard group now was just a "good" 1 3/16" ctc group. Sigh!

But it was my fault. Not the R9's. The first 3 shots were when I pulled the trigger with a perfect sight picture and so got the ½" group. I pulled off the last two shots. Couldn't handle the pressure.

So, here the R9, given a better marksman than me, is capable, of 1" or better 80 yd groups! A keeper or what?!

#### **R9 SCOPEMOUNT:**

A minor problem was that the Beeman/Sportmatch one piece scope mount stop pin did not protrude far enough down into the R9's scope stop pin hole. And due to the thin walls of the R9 compression cylinder, the pin holes in the R9 receiver are quite shallow anyway.

Not a big deal, I just tapped the Sportmatch's stop pin so it extended to the bottom of the shallow R9 stop pin hole. But the stop pin was narrow and the recoil force started it pushing a small indentation into the R9 stop pin hole's rearward side.

I pulled the Sportmatch mount and installed a BKL one piece medium mount instead. The chronograph showed no change in velocity, with or without the BKL mount, so I had not over-tightened it. Back on went the Weaver 4-16x 42mm scope and several hundred shots later, the scope and mount have not moved.

I was eager to try out my "new" R9 on an actual hunt.

#### **BACK TO THE 400 ACRE FARM:**

##### **GROUND SQUIRRELS:**

I was seeing juvenile California ground squirrels near where I work, thus clueing me in that it was time to do a serious ground squirrel hunt. Last time at the 400 acre farm, I had seen enough ground squirrels, all adults, to make it worth a return for squirrels, though few pest birds had been present.

##### **UP EARLY:**

Ground squirrels come out of their burrows later than do pest birds such as crows, starlings, blackbirds, etc. So no reason to get to the farm early. Yet, I was parking my car by the big storage shed at 6 AM.

Why?

The 400 acre farm owner had taken the sheet metal siding off two of the big storage shed walls a couple years back. Unfortunately the up and down wind walls. Turning the shed interior into a wind tunnel as this area is almost always windy from late morning onwards. Happily, earlier this year, the farmer had put the siding back on. Unhappily, he has not put the doors back on. There are two big doorways at each end of the big storage building, for a total of four doors. Each doorway big enough to drive a semi through. All wide open.

Previously, one of the two doorways at each end of the building was blocked off, making the shed interior a nice, wind-free 60 yd indoor target range for me to zero and trajectory plot in.

I had previously switched to a less desirable target shooting location down in a mostly wind-sheltered ravine nearby. But last year, the farmer put pig pens in the sheltered ravine. Right where I was doing my target shooting. Oops.

So happily, the walls were now back on the big storage building. Unhappily the doors were left open and the afternoon wind blows through.

#### **MORNING CALM:**

I was there at 6 AM only because the early morning air is normally calm and I needed to zero and trajectory plot my rebuilt, late production .177 caliber Weihrauch HW55 breakbarrel. The seller had had it Paul Watts tuned. It was shooting 7.9 gr CPLite#5's about the same speed as my .177 caliber Beeman R7 was shooting 8.4 gr JSB Exact 4.52mm pellets at, despite the HW55 using a longer, heavier wire spring and having a longer compression stroke.

So I took the HW55 apart and took a look at the Watts tune.

#### **PAUL WATTS TUNED HW55:**

The HW55 was shooting CPLite domed pellets at about 610 fps, with easy cocking effort. A good speed for starlings and blackbirds, but a bit more power would be nice for pigeons.

Inside the HW55 was not a HW55 spring. Instead it had a Beeman R7 mainspring. A shorter, lighter spring. The R7 spring was on a Watts steel guide, nice and tight so no spring vibration. A heavy steel spacer/guide, est. ½" long, was on the piston end of the spring.

The piston seal was not a HW55 piston seal but looked like a Maccari blue Apex TX200 donut style piston seal, but smaller. The head of the piston had been lathed down to take the TX200 style piston seal.

Radical alternation of the piston, of an out-of-production airgun like the HW55 is a risky thing to do. Particularly if anything goes wrong. Particularly doing such without the owner's knowledge or permission, explaining how the machining work would make the HW55 piston unable to use factory HW55 piston seals (or Maccari HW55/R7/HW50/R8 piston seals).

Even a fairly rash guy like myself, when I wanted to experiment with a lightweight FWB124 piston, I didn't alter the factory piston. FWB124 being another out-of-production airgun warranting caution before changing factory parts to other specs.

### **WHY A BEEMAN R7 SPRING IN A HW55?**

The reason for the R7 spring became apparent. The piston had been sleeved using thin brass sheeting.

With the HW55 piston sleeve (ala R9/R1 style), a HW55 mainspring no longer would fit inside the HW55 piston. The sleeve had reduced the piston I.D. too much. So a smaller R7 spring was used instead.

The R7 spring dragged and resisted a bit as I pulled it out of the piston. The piston sleeve was a rectangle of thin brass but where the two sides of the rectangular brass sheet, bent into a cylinder, came together, they overlapped by a small amount. Maybe a millimeter. Forming a raised ridge on that one side, running the length of the piston sleeve..

The R7 mainspring rubbed with notable friction against the raised sleeve seam ridge. Unnecessary friction robs power and I pulled the sleeve. I put Beeman moly grease on the TX200 style piston seal sides, careful to not let any grease get on the piston face. I put a smear of moly grease around the delrin buttoned piston skirt and put everything back together, keeping the R7 spring, and shot it over the chrony to see if velocity improved.

### **GOOD NEWS:**

The good news was that velocity with CPLites increased from 610 fps to 650 fps. And with a R7 spring at that!

### **BAD NEWS:**

The bad news was that the HW55 was now dieseling badly. A small cloud of black smoke joining the pellet with every shot. After each shot, breaking the barrel and looking up the bore at a bright light, I could not see the light. The post-shot barrel was so heavy with black smoke I couldn't see even to the muzzle.

About 100 shots later, the heavy dieseling still continued..

### **WHY THE SMOKE?**

Well, there is a reason for everything. Time to check the piston seal.

I took the HW55 apart and paid attention to the piston, moving it up and down the compression cylinder manually. The piston traveled the up and down the compression cylinder easily. Too easily. The piston seal was undersized and a clean q-tip ear swab on the inside of the compression cylinder and visual examination with a flash light showed a too thick coating of grease/oil on the cylinder walls, causing the chronic dieseling.

A bigger piston seal was needed.

### **HOW TO FIX?**

Well, now what? I called Beeman and they didn't have any HW55 replacement pistons. The tuner had ground down the piston head to take a TX200-style donut seal. I had spare HW factory and Maccari R7/HW55/R8/HW50 piston seals but the piston would not take them any more.

Now what? The Watts seal was too small. Normal HW55 seals could no longer be used.

I emailed Hans Weihrauch directly. The response was polite but told me to order through Beeman. Nothing yet, yea or nay from Beemans. Hopefully they will be able to find a replacement HW55 piston yet.

### **WVED SAVES THE DAY:**

Well, a happy ending, thanks to Ed Canoles, "Mr. Custom Piston" or WVED as he appears on the Yellow/Fun Supply/Kitchen Airgun forum.

Ed Canoles had previously altered my other HW55 piston to take an o-ring piston seal. The o-ring sealed piston did not diesel due to WVED's penchant for precision, and had upped velocity with 10.2 gr JSB Exact 4.52 Heavies from 540 with a factory piston seal to 580 fps with the o-ring piston seal.

Best of all, Ed designed his work to be reversible. I can later change it back to a factory piston seal myself. Brilliant! Innovative, precision, yet reversible work..

Lucky me. WVED is so unknown, that I got about a one week turn around, despite his non-airguns day job.

Well, WVED promised to take a look and I mailed him the Watts-altered HW55 piston.

### **HAPPY ENDING:**

In a week, I had the HW55 piston back. WVED had used his analytic, machining and silver soldering skills to create a new piston head that fit precisely, even more so than the original piston, the factory HW55 piston seal I had included. Very precise, neatly designed work.

Typical Canoles.

He also trued the piston rod (found it to be out of true). The guy doesn't miss a trick. And polished the piston too.

I had a Maccari HW55 piston seal but the one I tried was a little oversized and I was in a hurry to get ready for a hunt, so I put the factory HW55 parachute seal back on, saving the Maccari seal for later when I had time.

A light smear of Beeman Moly grease around the piston seal sides. Same for the delrin buttons area of the piston skirt and back went the piston into the compression chamber. Tighter sealing with the HW factory piston seal, but smooth.

Without the piston sleeve there was no particular reason to continue to use a R7 spring. I had a Maccari HW55 tune kit using a bronze guide with the aircraft valve wire springs from a few years back. In went the kit and back together went the gun.

### **RESULTS:**

After some warm up shots, the remaining excess chamber lube was burnt off and I set up the chronograph. 660 fps with 7.9 gr CPLites. Nice! No longer as light cocking as with the R7 spring, but still pleasant and a better farm pest gun now.

I put the G&R 3-12x 42mm scope back on the Beeman/Sportsmatch one piece, high mount, droop-adjustable mount that had come with the gun. Stable at 660 fps, 50 shots or so later, it was ready to be 30 yard zeroed and trajectory plotted to 60 yds.

### **BACK TO THE HUNT:**

So, for reason of this classic, non-recoilless, break barrel, former Olympic 10 meter springer match rifle, now a farm pest gun, there I was in the old, cavernous storage building, setting up a temporary target range, at 6 AM. The building was empty but for a house-sized pile of livestock feed (almond hulls) in one corner and some hay bales near one doorway.

Outside of the storage building, a scoop loader was filling the farm livestock feed truck. Piles of livestock feed were stored outside, next to the storage shed, on the big concrete-covered area. A pile of salad discards, a pile of carrots, a pile of silage, stacks of hay bales. Only occasionally did the scoop loader enter one of the big, open entrances on the north side of the building to get a scoop of almond hulls or more hay. The loader operator saw me. I waved and set up my target range out of his way.

No electricity in the building. Daylight now but dim inside. I unrolled a couple hundred feet of outdoor extension cord, plugged it into the live outlet in a smaller sheet steel shed nearby, noting a couple pigeons staring down at me from the rafters. In the big shed, I leaned some 2"x 8"x 6' planks against the far south wall to be the backstop, leaned the large sheet of cardboard marked with black ink marker bullseyes, and turned on the spotlight work lamp to shine on the target face. Now I was ready to zero and trajectory plot.

The target face was about 3 feet by 3 feet, having been two sides of a large cardboard box the day prior. Range-labeled black bulls, courtesy of my ink marker pen, for ranges of every 5 yds, from 5 to 60 yds were easy to see in the bright lamp light.

With my Bushnell 500 laser range finder, I measured off 30 yds and set up a robust, folding camp chair with padded arm rests. Bought from Costco for about \$15. The Samsonite adjustable camera stand rest (from Circuit City) with the cut piece of high density foam padding on it's top platform was the rest for my left hand. Sitting in the camp chair, my right elbow rested on the padded arm rest. What I call a 3 point sitting rest.

By 8:30am I was done zeroing and trajectory plotting the HW55. Twelve bulls total had been shot, each with a five shot group, from 5 to 60 yds. With a small tape measure, I measured the amount high or low the groups were from the small black circles I had penned. Measuring the difference between point of aim (poa) and point of impact (poi), gave me a trajectory chart to tape to the side of the forearm.

Then in hunting, I would use the Bushnell laser range finder to get the distance to the pest and a quick glance at the trajectory plot told me how high or low to hold.

See below for HW55's trajectory chart. My 60 yard, 5 CPLite group was 1 5/8" ctc. Nothing to be excited about, but decent enough.

### **HW55-new**

#### **3 pt sit rest**

#### **7.9 gr CPLite#7,**

#### **Pellseated, 660 fps**

05 yds = -1"  
10 yds = -1/4"  
15 yds = +1/2"  
20 yds = +3/4"  
25 yds = +1/2"  
30 yds = +1/3"  
35 yds = -1/3"  
40 yds = -1 1/8"  
45 yds = -2 1/2"  
50 yds = -4 1/4"  
55 yds = -6 3/4"  
60 yds = -9 1/3"

It wasn't hunting really. Not as far as these naïve little juvenile squirrels were concerned. It was killing. Just killing. No glory. Nothing to be proud of. Just doing farmer-desired pest liquidation.

### **THE REST OF THE HUNT DAY:**

Today's hunt was to be a ground squirrel-only hunt. Which was a good thing since yet once again, the farm was all but vacant of pest birds. Normally there are a couple thousand blackbirds and starlings, and a couple hundred feral pigeons, and a couple handfuls of crows scattered around the farm.

Well, the pest birds weren't here last hunt here, several weeks ago, when I worked hard and walked a lot and still only bagged 31 blackbirds. And they still weren't here. Very few pest birds.

But the juvenile ground squirrels were out and about.

There weren't a lot of ground squirrels since this farm puts out poison bait stations, but enough to hunt.

### **WEAPON CHOICE:**

I put the HW55 back into the cheap, black plastic hardcase and got out the R9TK.

Firstly, the R9 shooting 7.9 gr Crosman Premier domes at 875 fps gave me a 60 yard or so effective range versus about 40 yds for the 660 fps HW55. Second, the wind was only growing stronger, giving the nod to the more powerful airgun. And third, I had to cover hundreds of yards between shots at ground squirrels and the R9 was lighter to hike around with than the HW55 match rifle. And lighter than my AirArms TX200 underlever springer.

The Beeman R9 had only the standard, old style, featureless beech stock on it. No grip checkering or any other features, but it's amazing accuracy and low hold sensitivity more than made up for the lack of an eye candy stock. My FWB124 has an eye-catching grade 4 walnut stock on it. But performance has its own beauty. And as a hunting sporter, my FWB124 is inferior to my recently acquired R9.

### **WALKATHON GROUND SQUIRREL HUNTING:**

The ground squirrels were few and far between, maybe averaging one per every 300 yards. So the R9 slung over my shoulder, Bushnell 500 laser range finder and Bushnell compact 6x25 binoculars looped around my neck, and comfortable jogging shoes on my feet, I set off down the lanes providing access to the various areas of the farm. For now, the cattle pens and pasture roads.

The wind continued to blow from the NW. The hunting was simple. I simply walked up and down the farm roads, mostly where the livestock enclosures and pastures were.

Neither looking much to the left nor right. My target was the high visibility ground squirrels that had tunneled under the farm lanes and the cattle feed troughs along the lanes. Squirrels out in the adjacent barley fields were out of sight in the 12" to 15" barley plants. Squirrels in the upper cattle pasture could wait a different day. They tend to be few and shy anyway. I just wanted to clean out the ground squirrels most evident to the farmer, hopefully forestalling his putting out poison bait for them. A slow death was the poisoning.

Juvenile ground squirrels were out and about the den entrances here and there. Small, naïve, and innocent, they were easy prey. Usually one or both parents were around, watching over the young as they explored, fed, sunned themselves and played, chasing and wrestling with each other. Spook distance of the adults was about 50 yards on average. For the juveniles, spook distance was more like 30.

I walked at a fast clip until I spotted ground squirrels along the lane, up ahead. Then I would slow down to a casual cow's pace, moving slow and smoothly without the quick movements that catch the eye. I was dressed in my Orchard Supply Hardware tan utility shirt, pants and wide-brimmed cowboy style hat, I did not stand out visually either.

Probably looking more like a misplaced building custodian than a hunter.

When about 50 yds from the squirrel(s), I knelt down, using the camera stand, adjusted for kneeling and sitting shots, I took careful, deliberate aimed shots, holding as per my trajectory chart told me for elevation and per my best guess for windage. The R9 rarely missed.

I would take out the ground squirrel parents first. Then little juvenile ground squirrels no longer had the protection and guidance of the parents. They continued to play or if they popped down the den entrance upon my shots, they were soon back up. I rarely had to wait more than five or 10 minutes before the young, little squirrels re-emerged.

Some dens would have no evident juveniles. Just an adult or two. But most dens had 6 or more young out around the den entrance. I'd line up two at once and put them both down with one cplite.

It wasn't hunting really. Not as far as these naïve little juvenile squirrels were concerned. It was killing. Just killing. No glory. Nothing to be proud of. Just doing farmer-desired pest liquidation. The only justification being for this version of Spring hunting was that a quick death via shooting was more humane than a slow death caused by repeated feedings at one of the poison bait stations.

I found myself looking down at the bodies of the little juveniles and apologizing to them. There is a reason why Spring hunting of game animals is not generally allowed. In our country at least, the concept of fair play is traditional. Letting baby and young animals grow into young adults at least, before making them fair game, gives them a chance to experience and enjoy life a little. And a chance to learn survival skills.

But from the farmers' viewpoint, they are a pest causing economic damage.

Possibly health hazards too. The ground squirrels, even the juveniles, had a lot of fleas.

#### **CROWS:**

Just a couple hundred yards on my westward leg of my walkabout hunt outside the cattle pens, I looked left and saw a lone crow sitting on one of the concrete cattle water troughs. It had come in for a drink.

Range to the crow was 40 yards per the laser range finder. With the 6 to 7 ft/lb M.E. Beeman R7 or Weihrauch HW55, I would take careful, precision shots, doing my best to place the pellet in critical spots to compensate for the low power of such pellet rifles. Now with the much more powerful, yet still very user accurate Beeman R9, the crow didn't stand a chance. The cplite hit it so hard, central upper chest right where I had wanted, that it didn't even twitch as it fell in place.

#### **BULL:**

Unfortunately, it toppled over right into the cattle water trough where the cattle drank. To leave it there would foul the water. I had to climb the fence and retrieve the crow.

Yet more unfortunately, the group of curious but gentle heifers in this cattle enclosure had a sizeable bull with them. Horns were cut, but still definitely an adult bull. I shed my rifle and gear to give me increased agility and speed and climbed into the est. 60 by 100 yard enclosure.

The bull was a young adult bull, not an old crotchety bull and I reached the cattle water trough and pulled the floating crow out before the bull made up its mind what to do about me. The bull decided it didn't want me in with its heifers and started for me. Moving faster than I had entered, I was back over the fence and out.

If it had been an old bull, one of the massive ones, I would not have dared enter. I would have had to ask one of the cowboys, who enter the enclosures on horseback, to remove the crow.

### **MORE CROWS:**

As I walked briskly in big loops around the farm, pausing only for the periodic ground squirrel shots, walking miles, half way down towards the west end of the farm, I saw crows.

The crows were off to my right, a couple perched on a the fence of a cattle pen and a half dozen more walking about, down on the cattle-hoof trampled bare dirt of the pen. Range to the nearest crow was a mere 35 yards. The cattle enclosure fence mostly put me out of sight. The crow didn't act like it saw me. Or if it did see me, it didn't care as they were familiar with the farm workers who fed the cattle and fixed broken fences, etc. Lucky me, the shot to the 35 yard crow was directly into the wind. He dropped in place. The other crows didn't notice. The next nearest crow was also directly upwind, at 40 yds. A little tougher shot and what with the 20+ mph wind, my hit was a little off. The 40 yard crow fell from the R9's hit, but squawked.

Immediately, there flapped in another half dozen crows. All upset and cawing loudly. One landed on the fence post nearest to the downed crows. Forty yard shot and I didn't miss. The rest of the crows didn't land and soon enough left.

Smart birds.

### **WEARING OUT SHOE LEATHER:**

My morning walkathon hunting consisted of big loops along and around the cattle enclosures and pastures to the south half of the farm. That is where I saw and got some crows, along with ground squirrels.

In the afternoon, after tying the chin strap of my wide-brimmed hat yet tighter to try to defeat the unceasing effort of the increasing winds to make me chase it, I switched to big, walkathon hunting loops along the cattle yards and pastures to the north half of the farm.

I shot a few ground squirrels here and the occasional one there. Lot of walking and I'd repeat the loop so to come back again to shoot the squirrels I missed the first time. Again, mostly singles and doubles with the occasional den surrounded by little juvenile squirrels, that I then mowed down with the capable R9, using a kneeling or sitting rest to escape some of the wind.

Blown dust was something near-fierce. Post hunt, it took about 30 minutes to dig most of the dust out of the nooks and crannies of the R9. The cans of compressed air used to blow dust off electronics like computer components are handy for blowing dust off scope lenses and hard to reach parts.

At the far northwest corner of the farm, I walked by a dead cow that had been pulled out of one of the cattle enclosures and left laying out, awaiting disposal. Five turkey buzzards were on the scene. Four sitting on the dead animal, eating it. One perched on the nearest fence post. Happy for the eats, they let me walk by, about 35 or so feet away, just watching me.

## **PIGEONS:**

Here at the far northwest corner of the cattle area, with only a barley field between me and the neighboring farm, there was a runoff pond used to catch and hold runoff water from winter rains contaminated by cattle pee & poop. Definitely not water to drink or bath in.

On the other side of the pond, about 50 yds away, there were a half dozen ground squirrels moving around, up on the pond banks. They saw me but were willing to let me find a good place to sit, on the bank opposite them and adjust my camera stand rest for rested sitting position shots. The wind was in my face so lateral wind drift was only about an inch at 50 yds, but I held an extra inch high as head winds slow the pellets and make them drop faster.

A few more ground squirrels emerged, including some juveniles. I left none standing. Part of the job of farm pest control hunting. It is not sport hunting.

Just as I started the eastward leg of the big loop for this north half of the farm, a feral pigeon (barn pigeon a.k.a. rock dove) landed right in the middle of the farm lane paralleling the cattle pens (if a pen at least 3 times the size of the normal suburban residential lot is a 'pen'). Range was about 70 yards, but it didn't mind me opening walking to 50 yards whereupon I set up a rested kneeling shot and shot it.

A couple more pigeons flew over the dead bird and landed nearby. So, holding right for the wind, which for the angle involved meant holding about 4 inches upwind of it, I shot my second pigeon for the day. I bagged them as the farm manager was happy to have them.

This side of the farm was where the feral pigeons were. A group not far away of 15 or 20. A single there. A pair a little further. Another group of a dozen or so, scattered about to one side, pecking at stuff in the dirt, in the enclosures with the cattle.

I was focused on squirrels so unless the pigeon was right in the paved farm feed truck lane so I wouldn't have to climb a fence to retrieve it, I passed them by. Few squirrels were on this side of the farm though.

## **A GOOD DEED THAT FLOPPED:**

The farm road was straight and narrow and gently sloped uphill. At its eastern end, a couple white, boxy, double wide house trailers sat near the cattle corrals, where cattle can be loaded onto or off a transport truck. A few years ago the house trailers weren't here, but had been brought in for the Mexican farm workers and their families to live in. Allowing on-site residence.

About 60 yards south of the two house trailers, was another cattle effluent catch pond. Pond was about 50 yds across.

The Mexican families in the house trailers had dug up the native wild grass on the flat between the trailers and the pond, and had planted a garden of about an acre in size. I counted about 20 ground squirrels (adults and juveniles) living in dens in the est. 25 yard wide strip of remaining fallow grassland between the garden, with its rows of young green veggies sprouting, and the pond shore.

A dog on a long lease was staked out between the garden and the squirrels. The farm manager drove by and said ok to my idea of trying for some of the squirrels that threatened the worker garden. I leaned my R9 up against a fence before I approached the nearest double-wide. A Mexican woman field worker was just driving off to go to work, her husband being the cattle feed truck driver on the farm. She didn't speak English, but her 13 year old son did the translating, as he was learning English in school.

With the parents at work, the 13 year old was in charge of his 3 year old brother, a cute little guy who could climb fences with some skill and much enthusiasm.

The 13 year old volunteered to show me where to hunt the squirrels. The 3 year old followed. The squirrels were spooky and though I saw a couple at 35 yards, from the fence behind the trailer, I didn't get any clear shots. I wondered why so spooky?

The 13 year old led his baby brother back to the trailer and emerged with a .177 caliber Gamo break-barrel. It was kid-sized and not a magnum Gamo. I could stand behind the 13 year old and watch the pellet fly. Iron sighted, or I should say plastic sighted as plastic was the main component.

The 13 year old, closely followed by the 3 year old, followed me around to the other side of the pond. Everyone with low shoes on, we all sat down on the far side to pick grass seeds out of our socks. I set up a sitting rest position with the ground squirrel dens from 45 to 60 yards away. I had a good view of multiple dens.

A few blackbirds landed on the thicker parts of the pond surface. The 13 year old shot at them. At his request, I shot several. Ranges about 25 yds. Not hard despite the winds. But where were the squirrels?

After 30+ minutes and still the ground squirrels had not come back up out of their dens, the 13 year old mentioned that not only he shot at them, protecting the garden, but one relative had a .22RF he used and another had a firearm shotgun.

Well!

Small wonder I had only gotten a couple misses at 60 yard squirrels in the last hour here. I had wanted to look good and score points with the farm worker families by eliminating the ground squirrels threatening their veggie garden, but the squirrels weren't cooperating. I got none.

After an hour, it was 4 pm and I figured I had one more hour of hunt time. Uphill and east of me about a quarter mile, was the old, big storage sheds where I had done the early morning target session. There were often a few barn pigeons in the shed and buildings and the wind-sheltered ravine with a few squirrels down below.

I helped the 3 year old with removing grass seeds from his socks and shoes, and paused every so often to do the same for myself. Definitely low jogging shoes in tall, dry, range grass wasn't a good idea.

Giving up on the ground squirrel dens near the farm worker double-wides, I headed upslope towards the big storage sheds. But not alone. The 13 year old and his 3 year old brother with me. I felt responsible, what with their parents at work. Wasn't quite the ticket for efficient hunting though. The 13 year old hadn't hit anything with his small Gamo break-barrel, and I wanted to find him something within his capabilities.

We finally arrived at the big shed. There were a couple pigeons up in the rafters. The

13 year old had a very good game eye and chased them about, inside the big storage building. The two pigeons obliged by merely flying from one high rafters perch to another, staying inside the building. The 13 year old, in time, hit one pigeon, though not too seriously. The pigeon declined to fall. So, I walked the kids to a nearby small, sheet metal shed. Instead of the ceiling being about 15 yds up, the small shed ceiling was only about 5 yds above. Two pigeons were perched on a rafter above our heads. The 13 year old took careful aim and his anemic Gamo neatly dropped a white pigeon. Pretty. Pretty birds, but the farmer doesn't like them roosting above and pooping on the machinery and supplies below.

The 13 year old swelled with pride. I gave him a tin of pellets as he was about out of his small plastic box of Crosman pointed.

We circled below the big storage building, to look for ground squirrels near the pig pens in the wind sheltered ravine. But the wind was everywhere today. Including a good breeze blowing through the wind sheltered ravine. Little around. Just a few ground squirrels up on the west-facing hillside. I hit one ground squirrel and missed two others. A few starlings were hanging around the pig pens. I shot one and missed others.

The wind blew yet stronger.

The farm workers smiled at the sight of our unlikely trio, as we walked back to the family house trailer, next to the aged cattle loading dock pens. I did a final de-weed seeding of the little 3 yr olds shoes and socks and promised the 13 year old, another tin of pellets, after giving him most of my CPLites from my pellet belt pouch.

More pellets were in my hunt kit box, back at the car, about a third of a mile away. I left the kids at the house trailer and fast walked along a farm road, back to the car. It was 5:30pm and I had planned to leave by 5. Anything with kids takes more time than one would otherwise think.

Back at the car, I hurriedly put away my hunting gear and wrote up a day's kill tally to give to the farm manager. He was standing nearby, next to a circle of farm workers. We all waited for him to get off his cell phone.

The 13 year old and his 3 yr old little brother appeared, not having wanted to await my return to the house trailer with the promised tin of pellets. A cluster of other small, Mexican farm worker kids soon gathered. I counted 9 including the two that had hunted with me. Ice cream bars from the little freezer cart of the Mexican vendor were a dollar, so I gave the 13 year old a ten with instructions to buy for all of the kids, when the vendor returned.

The farm manager was still talking on his cell phone. The farm kids were being supervised, more or less, what with a half dozen farm workers gathered here, next to the horses corral area, so I gave the manager my kill tally, and drove home, bucking the wind all the way.

### **HUNT SUMMARY:**

The lack of pest birds was compensated for by huntable numbers of ground squirrels, what with the juvenile ground squirrels emerging from the den nests. Despite the non-stop stiff winds, 70 ground squirrels, 4 crows, 3 starlings, and 11 pigeons were taken. All with the .177 caliber Beeman R9TK putting out 7.9 gr Crosman Premier Lites at 875 fps at the muzzle.

The wind limited shots to closer distances. The ground squirrels were shot at ranges (in yards) of 50, 15, 25, 55, 50, 50, 30, 45, 40, 35, 40, 47, 50, 35, 35, 35, 35, 34, 50, 50, 50, 20, 25, 8, 9, 37, 35, 35, 36, 35, 38, 37, 37, 38, 37, 38, 35, 35, 37, 41, 41, 40, 41, 41, 30, 30, 36, 20, 50, 18, 34, 20, 10, 5, 51, 22, 60, 35 and a couple denfuls shot at ranges of 30 to 40 yds.

Feral pigeons were taken at ranges of 21, 20, 40, 45, 20, 45, 45, 34, 41, 41, and 40 yards. Note how few shots were taken past 50 yards, despite the R9's capability to do so. The wind limited the shots, although the juvenile ground squirrels and the pigeons allowed closer approaches. The juvenile ground squirrels because of their innocence and the pigeons because they had not been hunted and were used to people. And almost all the longer shots were taken on ground squirrels which were along the wind-protected, lee side of the two foot high and yards long, concrete cattle feed troughs. With me shooting from a rested sitting or kneeling position to get the pellets to fly close to the ground. Keeping the pellets traveling low, near the ground, got the wind protection of the lines of cattle feed troughs.

We had serious wind issues and with the wind, came the dust. The R9, rangefinder, binoculars and everything else, including me, got a good coat of dust.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED:**

(1) The used Beeman R9 proved to be much less hold sensitive than my current and previous FWB124, and thus the superior hunting pellet rifle. My FWB124 makes a better casual target and plinker than it does a hunter.

In dusty environments, a Beeman R9, despite the long cocking lever cutout in the stock, is going to be a better farm pest choice than an Airarms TX200. Although my TX200 Mk3 at 920 fps with CPLites has a power and range advantage over the R9 at 875 fps, and less hold sensitivity, blowing dust and chaff, bits of hay, etc have easier access to the TX200 internals than to the R9 internals. Dust and other wind blown stuff should be kept out of airgun internals.

The 20 or so ground squirrels near the farm workers garden by the house trailers were too spooky to be comfortable with me within 50 yards.

My thinking is that my full power TX200 Mk3 would let me set up a sniping position a bit further, at 60 or even 70 yards. I might use it instead of the R9 next hunt here, but only if the winds are less. The idea is to set up just outside the squirrel spook distance.

What is spook distance? It is what it sounds like. Spot a ground squirrel or other pest. Walk towards the pest until it becomes spooked. Measure this distance. Repeat several times. Then be sure to take shots prior to getting inside the measured spook distance, assuming the pest sees you coming. Otherwise, hunt from a blind. Out of sight. Out of mind.

(2) Be less sensitive to pain and suffering of pests. Because I didn't want to shoot adult ground squirrels with dependent babies down in the den nests, I dragged my feet on squirrel shooting the 200 acre veggie farm for all of April and half of May.

But I did send my friend James, with his own R9, over to the 200 acre strawberry and veggie farm the next day, after my hunt at the 400 acre hunt.

James did well to get just 18 ground squirrels. Robert Hamilton, California

We were dismayed to find the farmer having put out 25 or so poisoned bait stations for the ground squirrels, and in the process of putting out another 50 poison bait stations. The farmer told me, "Well, I just couldn't wait for you guys."

That is how it is with the veggie farmers in my area. Forcing two unsavory choices upon farm pest hunters like me. Shoot parent ground squirrels in the early Spring and be responsible for the dependent babies dying a slow, miserable, painful death.

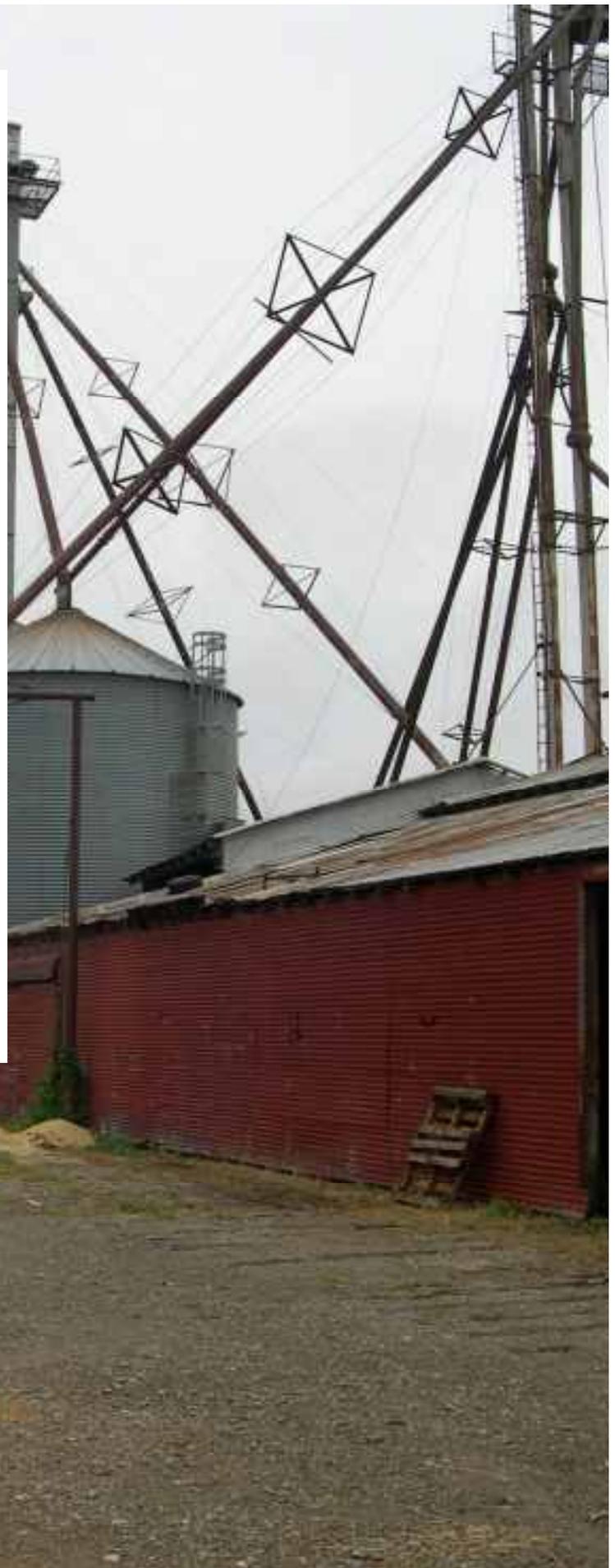
Or don't shoot them. And the farmers then put out poison bait and the babies die a slow, miserable, painful death.

Remember, farm pest control hunting is a form of hunting. Hunting is a sport with the pleasure of the challenge but the responsibility of clean, quick kills. I do have to look myself in the mirror the next day.

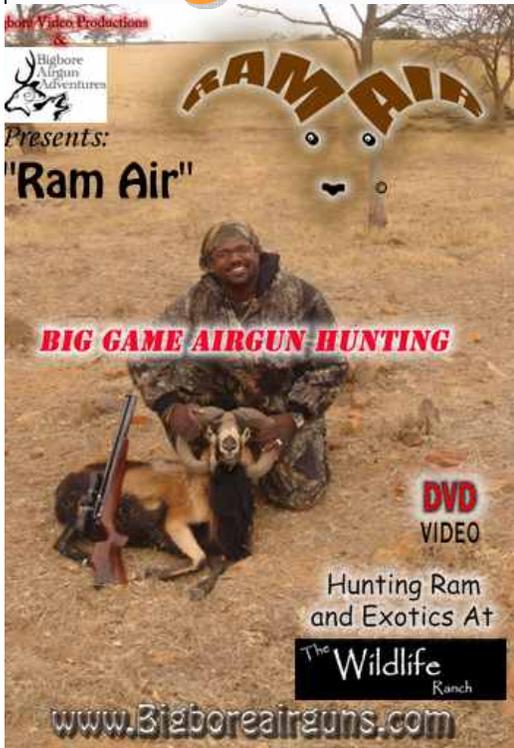
Cruel, slow deaths dehumanize us.

Solution? Shoot the adult squirrels to the maximum pre- and post-breeding season, to reduce pest numbers to the point the farmer does not judge it worthwhile to do poisoning.

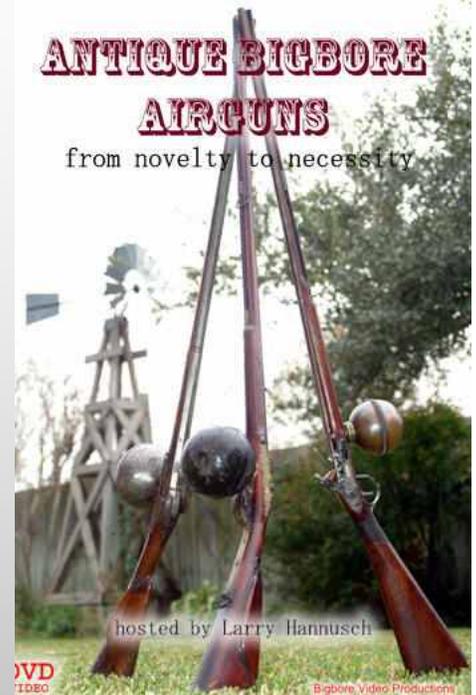
Good hunting to you all!



# Big Bore Video Productions

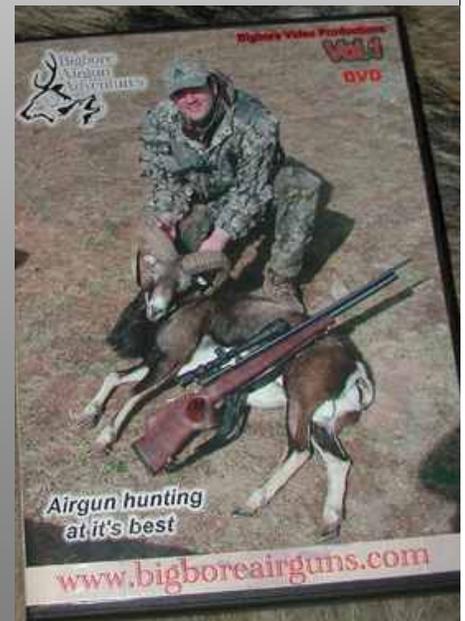
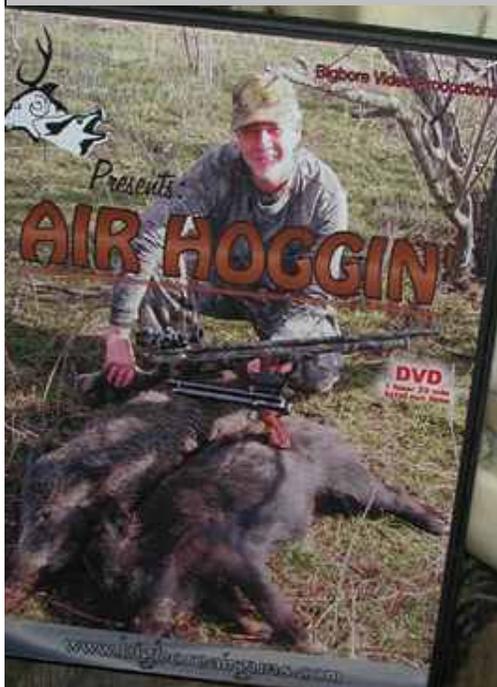


A few years ago, big bore airgun hunting pioneer Eric Henderson started production on his Big Bore Airgun series, which now numbers four volumes comprising mixed exotic hunts, hunts for feral hogs, and the two newest releases feature ram hunts and a documentary on antique big bore airguns.



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!**

# Getting in Some Exercise

## Does a hand pump make sense for you?

### One airgun hunter shares his views on the use of a hand pump for charging his hunting guns

When an airgunner decides they want to shoot a pre-charged pneumatic, one of the decisions they are faced with is how to charge the gun. The options boil down to a high pressure air tank, or a hand pump..... Both offer both advantages and disadvantages.

The plus side is that a pump is less expensive than a tank set up, and gives the

Airgunner freedom and self reliance. The down side? Filling a gun manually is going to give you a cardio workout, especially when hunting in a hot climate.

Which is better? Depends on your needs, for me it is optimal to have both. I use my full sized tank when heading out for a day of target shooting or plinking. I use a small "buddy bottle"

when using a big bore on a hunt. This gives me a number of refills and easily gets me through a day afield.

But when traveling, especially by air, it is much easier to leave the tanks behind and rely on the hand pump. Plus I don't need to worry about finding a place to charge when arriving at my destination, I can go out



*Most of my guns take about 130 - 160 strokes to charge up to between 2800 - 3000 PSI. This is fine for hunting, not as good if target shooting where you'll have to recharge several time during the day!*



and start hunting. If I think about it, a single charge will usually get me through an entire hunting trip. If I'm going on a trip where something going wrong with my gear will be hard to fix and can ruin the trip, I'll bring a hand pump as a back up to my tank, and a springer as a back up to my PCP.

# Camouflage Do's and Don'ts



## Do

- Do select environmental match
- Do cover hands and face
- Do use background cover
- Use the wind to advantage

## Don't

- Move around or fidget
- Ignore hunter orange regs

# The Big Bore Air Rifle...

## Not Just For Big Game Hunting



**Stephan Boles**

Big bores have been around for a long time. As far back as the 1400's. Everything that I've read about the big bores of the past (and present for that matter) have been about how powerful they are and how they took big game. Even the famous *Lewis and Clark* air rifle was looked upon as a big bore. Meaning that he took mostly big game. I began wonder to myself "Are the big bore air rifle's accurate enough to take small game?" How about at longer ranges like 80-100 yards?. Is it even possible to hit a one foot by one foot target at 100 yards with a big bore?. After thinking about this, I decided to see for myself.

Living in Las Vegas for a while, gave me the opportunity to hunt the vast open desert. When I say open, I mean wide open. The kind of openness that makes the sky seem closer to the ground. With miles upon miles of desert before and behind you. If you're not careful, you can get lost out there and with the temperature getting up into the 120 degree range, you could get heat stroke in short order.

I've been very lucky and had at my disposal a Quackenbush Brigand 9mm with a 20" barrel (one of his first rifles) and it had a nice Leopold scope and a beautiful wooden stock. I used 9mm shocks. They are 90 grains and the Quackenbush Brigand was pushing them out at close to 850 fps. (Big Bore Bob rubbed on it a little). The next rifle I used was the .50 cal Career Dragon. This one is the old model with the bolt handle. It's a big heavy gun. That can push a 200 grain slug at around 625 fps. Some people have gotten them up into the 750 range, I

The  
**AMERICAN AIRGUN HUNTER**  
Jim Chapman's Hunting Log

New Articles

[The Webley Patriot](#)

[South Texas Night Hunt](#)



[I am currently testing and hunting with the first of the Webleys being built in Turkey. This gun will be taken along to South Texas for a heavy workout on a variety of small game!](#)

[Airgun Hunting in the Lone Star](#)

[Air Powered Scattergun](#)  
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[Pig Hunts in 2007](#)

[2007 Airgun S](#)

wasn't that lucky. The next was a Career Fire 201. Although it looked plain, but man could it shoot. Almost as good as a Quackenbush, ...almost. They say that beauty is what beauty does, with that, I must say that this rifle is beautiful! Pushing a 90 grain, 9mm shock waves out at close to 900 fps. The last one, The Very powerful LA .505 cal Quackenbush. A beautiful rifle! Hands down, but it's made to hunt, and hunt it does. It will push a light .275 grain Maxi Hunter to 450 fpe!.

I knew it would take me a few months to really put the rifle's through their paces, so I took my time and started out with the Career Fire 201. After getting the rifle zeroed, I headed out to my spot. As I filled the gun I put 10 shock waves in my pocket

and I was ready to go. I have to first tell you a little about the area I'm hunting in. It consists of seven big rolling hills that stretch over 3 miles long. If you wanted to, you could go off to one side and "get lost" out there. Just make sure you bring a lot of water. I have hunted this area for about three months before and the jackrabbits know to stay far away from me. If I get close to one, he will bolt and maybe stop about 70-80 yards out. They will sit there for about 5-10 seconds and then they are off again for another 50 yards or so. If you shoot at them and miss, they will run a good 200-300 yards before they stop. So make sure you connect on the first shot.

All in all, the big bores work very well on Jackrabbits in the open spaces of the desert.

Putting a shock wave up the tube and pulling the cover back over the opening, As I made it to the top of the second hill, out of the corner of my eye I saw a big jackrabbit bolt. True to form, he ran about 70 yards and stopped. I already had my shooting stick on the ground and the rifle braced against it with the scope and cross hairs on him. Not knowing the real range then, I put the cross hairs on the black tips of his ears and slowly pulled the trigger. BOOM! I could almost see the shock wave hitting home. It hit the Jackrabbit right in the eye! . The rabbit jumped up about a foot in the air and came down flat, nothing moved . Upon closer inspection , the scene was gruesome! The shot went in one eye and took half of the rabbit's head on the other side. There wasn't anything remaining on that side. Like I said ... Gruesome!. That day, I took a few more Jackrabbits. Most pretty gruesome, but I did hit one at 108 yards and he was out like a light.



Next, I took out the Quackenbush 9mm Brigand . Now, this is one smooth rifle! And very accurate. I took it to the range and after the 3rd shot , I was zeroed. I shot it five more times and at fifty yards, you could cover the spot with a quarter. It was a very hot day, about 110 degrees and my truck started to over heat. It was hunt or stay with the truck until it cooled down. Well, you know what I did so, I put a few bullets in my shirt pocket and determined to get at least one jackrabbit. The area this time was more flat. Less brush and very dry. You could feel the dust crunch between your teeth. When the ground is flat, you can't see far out that well, so you have to be very quiet and walk really slow. After about an hour of this. I looked up and saw a jackrabbit looking at me from about 30 yards. I said to myself " What a lucky break this is" and put the rifle to my shoulder. The rabbit seemed to know what was going on and bolted upon seeing me raise the rifle. He stopped 45 yards from where he was . I had the cross hairs on him already. When he stopped, I could just barely make him out through the brush. I put the cross hairs on the only spot I could see which was his chest. This rifle had a very light trigger and I just barely touched it and BOOM!. The Jack jumped and took off running about 5 yards and fell over kicking. Dust was everywhere . When I picked him up, I could see that a hole the size of a dime had went all the way through him. He was dead and didn't even know it! That was the only rabbit I took on that trip. I was glad to get back to the truck and take my truck to the shop.

Next, I tested the Career Dragon .50 cal. This is a monster of a gun. Everything seems to happen in slow motion with this rifle, but let me tell you, it just seems that way. When I took this gun to the range I brought along an old full face motorcycle and sat it out 50 yards. Once the rifle was zeroed, I put in a 225 grain slug and went for a shot at the helmet. I aimed just a little bit above the helmet, maybe 3" and pulled the trigger. I could see the slug on it's way to the helmet. The helmet went flying about a foot off the ground and about 10 feet down range. When I got to it, there was a clean hole all the way through it on both sides. I had my son with me and it was getting late so we went for a two hour hunt on my " hunting grounds".

It was a hot day and in the evening , jackrabbits love to come out and eat and play around after being in the shade all day. My son took a nice rabbit with his Beeman S1. We were on our way back to the truck when my son said "Dad, look!" pointing to a hill about 50 yards away. It was a large jackrabbit with ears in the air. I said " go for it son" he tried but couldn't quite make it. I put the cross hairs on the top of the jacks' head and pulled the trigger. I could see the 200 grain bullet take flight, on it's way to "lay low" ( sorry Ron) the big jack .Upon impact,. The jack almost exploded ! It was to gruesome for pictures. I even kept my son back from seeing it too.

The " Big Daddy" of them all, the Quackenbush LA 505. This rifle is all business, nothing personal . When you load up one of those 275 grain Maxi Hunters. You "pity the fool" that gets hit by one of them. I had a nice scope on it and was zeroed in less than 10 minutes. Now, this rifle has some recoil to it . So, I had to grip the gun a little tighter. This time, I went to the left of my standard seven hills, found a nice place that had water coming out of the rocks. As I looked around, I saw a nice size jackrabbit taking a drink . He saw me and froze. He was 67 yards away. For some reason I was shaking. I couldn't keep the cross hairs on him. I took a wild shot and missed. but the jack didn't move. I bent my head down and loaded another Maxi Hunter and looked up just knowing that he was gone, but, he was still there. This time, I was calm and the cross hairs were steady and I pulled the slowest trigger in could muster. The big gun gave a loud BOOM and the sound of the bullet hitting the jack sounded like hitting wet paper. The jack just fell in the water dead. Looking at him, there was a hole the size of a half dollar all the way through him. On the way back, the wind picked up a bit but I was still able to take another one at 45 yards. That big slug bucked the wind very well. You know, the big bores are not that much different from .22 cal pellet gun when it come to accuracy and you have a lot more power behind that bullet too.

All in all, the big bores work very well on Jackrabbits in the open spaces of the desert. I'm sure you will find that yours will do the same. So, take those big bores out of the closet or in the back of the safe and take them rabbit hunting. You will not forget it anytime soon.

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# Tree Squirrels

## Using Spring Piston Air-rifles

Jim Chapman

### Spring Piston Squirrel Rifles

Spring-air guns are probably the most familiar of the adult air rifles and have been around for many years. They generate power using a piston propelled by a spring under compression. Cocking the rifle, using either a break barrel, side lever, or underlever cocking mechanism, causes a piston to be drawn back in a cylinder drawing air into the cylinder and compressing a coil spring. Pulling the trigger releases the piston, causing the spring to move forward and move a large volume of air through a hole into the barrel, propelling the pellet down the barrel.

There are several manufacturers of high quality spring piston air rifles; European rifles are the benchmark of excellence for these guns with companies such as Theoben, Webely, BSA, Weilrauch, RWS, and Diana producing some very powerful and finely crafted hunting guns. More recently the Chinese manufacturers Xifeng, BAM, and other factories in the Peoples Republic have started to turn out fairly high quality copies of many of the most respected of the European designs. They tend to copy older versions and do not pay the attention to detail that the Europeans do, however the quality and performance is quite acceptable and the selling price substantially lower than the originals. There are many reputable importers selling these guns online; Compassco, Fun Supply, and Best Airguns to name just a few that I've dealt with personally.



Before taking a new rifle to the squirrel woods, you'll need to cycle a few hundred shots through it, both to familiarize yourself with the gun and because springers need a thorough break-in before they shoot at their . Before you start shooting a new spring piston rifle check to make sure the screws attaching the action to the rifle are tight, and

bestcheck at regular intervals as they can vibrate loose resulting in a marked degradation of accuracy.

Spring air guns generally have fairly heavy recoil that originates from the movement of the piston. Some people say that springers are hard to shoot accurately because of this, and in truth they often are more difficult than PCP or CO2 guns, but with the right hold and some practice they produce excellent results. Another issue related to the recoil these guns generate is that they are very rough on scopes. Be sure whatever you put on top of a springer is purpose designed for the guns or it will be shaken apart before you ever get your first squirrel in the bag. The springers I use for squirrel hunting are the Beeman C1 in .177, Beeman R1 in .177, an RWS Model 34 and Model 36 (both in .22), and a Chinese manufactured Xifeng B-19 in .22. All of these rifles are powerful and accurate and have proven effective in the field for me. As a matter of fact the C1 is my all time favorite springer and my fall back gun – it is deadly accurate and puts even a big fox squirrel down at 40 yards with authority. For me the most negative aspect of springers is that the most powerful ones tend to be very big and heavy, which aren't the best characteristics when creeping through the dense woods all day. One other downside which warrants mention is that spring piston guns cannot be left cocked for a long period, as doing so will cause damage to the spring and can result in significantly reduced velocity, and therefore power, being delivered on target. When hunting from a hide I'll wait to cock the rifle until needed, but when sitting out in

the open wearing camouflage this requires too many “big” movements. In this case I'll cock and load the gun, but discharge it within an hour and re-cock if necessary. Perhaps I'm being over cautious but none of my guns has failed me yet. On the plus side, these guns are self contained requiring no filling equipment. They are simple and straight forward to use, and can be purchase in many sporting good stores (and even some discount chains) across the country. They are less expensive than most PCPs, and no peripheral equipment needs to be purchased. Speaking of cost, I should mention here that even a mid quality air rifle generally cost more than a production .22 rimfire – and this along with the performance specifications of these guns should dissuade any newbie from thinking that they are buying a toy!



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# Hunting Regulations

This column will look at the airgun hunting laws in various jurisdictions across the country

There is a patch work of regulations pertaining to the use of airguns for hunting across the country. In some states such as California and Arizona, airgun regulations are specifically identified with clear statements on how and when they can be used. Indiana states that squirrels may be taken by any method during the season, leaving the door open for airgunners to use their tool of choice. Many other states allow these guns to be used, but are not as clear in the wording of their regulations, leaving interpretation open to local enforcement officers. There are a couple of states that are clear in spelling out that airguns can not be used for hunting of any kind, luckily these misinformed jurisdictions are in the minority. Most states will allow pest species to be taken by any means, including airguns. Let's take a look at a couple of my favorite airgun hunting destinations, California and Texas.



California: Allows the use of gas powered guns for the taking of small game animals, including rabbit, squirrel, quail, and turkey. It is stipulated that when hunting turkey the caliber of the airgun must be .20 caliber or larger. Non game species such as sparrows, pigeons, starlings, ground squirrels, coyote and jackrabbit may also be taken with airguns. California is my favorite airgunning state, because in addition to the intelligent regulation pertaining to airguns, there are literally thousands upon thousands of acres of public land to hunt with them.

Texas: Does not allow the taking of any game animal with airguns, but does allow the taking of exotics. Therefore you can take rabbit, ground squirrels, prairie dog, coyote, bobcat, feral hogs, rams, and other non-indigenous species. You cannot take squirrel as they are a game animal in most of the state, though in certain areas they have been delisted and can therefore be taken with air power. Texas is my destination spot for big game airgun hunting.

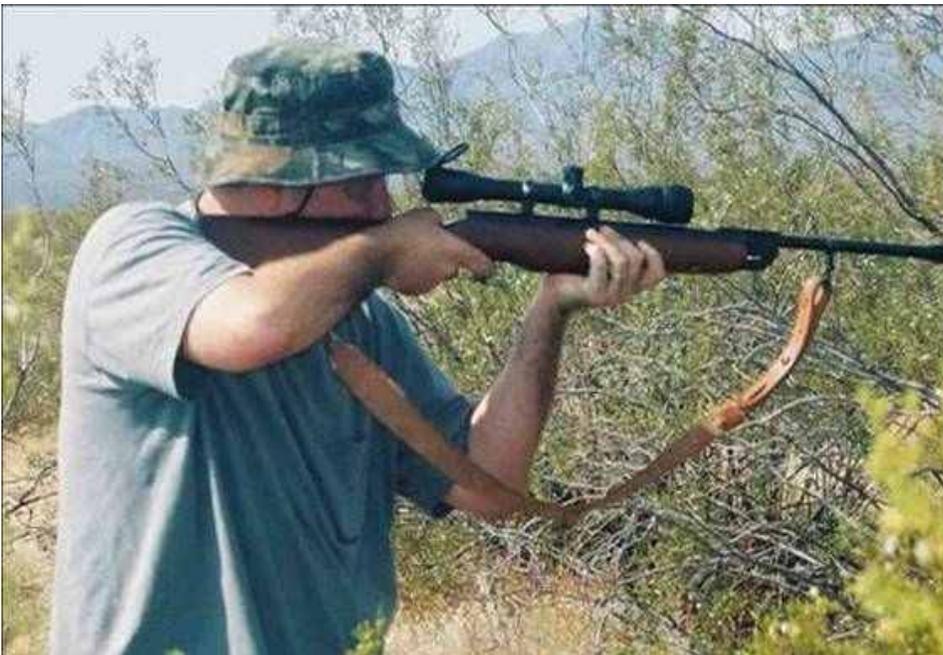
The best advice that I can give you is to get a hunting license, read the regulations, know the regulations, and live the regulations. Call the enforcement branch of your fish and game department (or whatever they are called in your neck of the woods), and ask for clarification. If you can get this information in written form, either a letter or a print out of an email, it's not a bad idea to keep this on hand when you head out to the woods!

# Beeman/Webley C1

## A Classic Hunting Springer

When I started hunting with high powered air rifles back in the eighties, it pretty much meant going to a springer. Even today, with the plethora of moderately priced precharged pneumatic airguns to choose from, there are still attributes of springers for which I think most serious airgun hunters will want to keep at least one in their hunting batteries. Even though I mostly use PCPs these days, I still like to shoot my springers. There is one gun in particular that I continue to spend a lot of time afield with every season ... my Beeman C1 Carbine.

**Jim Chapman**



The reason that the springer remains a viable hunting gun is that they are fully self contained, reliable, powerful, and while not usually as accurate as a PCP, can still offer very good accuracy. The reason I don't like springers as much is; that because they are self contained with the charging mechanisms integral to the gun they tend to be quite large. This is especially true of the magnums. My first magnum air rifle was a Beeman R1 in .177; this is a great weapon in its own right being very powerful and very accurate. I spent a lot of time in the high desert hunting jackrabbits with this gun, often hiking several miles in the course of the day. Even with a good sling, you knew this gun was present ... It was a heavy load!

Then one day I was looking at the Beeman catalog and noticed the C1. It was advertised as being powerful, accurate, compact and light; all of which called out for further consideration. I have to say that the gun did not resonate on an aesthetics note at first; the stock looked like it came off of a shotgun or a Winchester lever action carbine rather than the finely crafted, pistol gripped stock that my R1 wore. But it did look compact, so opting for function over form I ordered my first C1 .177. When the box was delivered to my house, I quickly cleaned the gun, mounted the scope, sighted in and fired a couple tins of pellets through it before loading up and taking off for a weekend camping/hunting trip in the Mojave. By the time I'd returned home I was in love with this gun, not just the performance but the initial doubts I'd had about the aesthetic qualities of the gun had been replaced by an admiration for the purposeful nature of the design.

Over the last twenty years I have used many airguns from almost every manufacturer, for almost every type of airgun game under almost every conceivable condition. I have twenty or thirty in my gun room right now, and new ones come and go at a constant flow rate. Several guns which were my favorite at a given point in time lost favor, and were traded or sold, but I've had that original C1 for a couple decades now. And as I move through this brief article I'm going to explain why this gun will never leave my collection, I'm sure one of the talented airgun smiths will be called on to work his magic at some point, but that will be the only time it'll be away without me!



**Robert Beeman told me that this gun was specifically designed to meet the needs of the airgun hunter**



In an email conversation with Robert Beeman a few years ago he told me that when he designed this gun, it was specifically with the airgun hunter in mind. He wanted a gun that delivered adequate power and accuracy, could be brought quickly to shoulder, and was light enough to be carried around all day long. Even when the idea was first presented, it meet with some resistance due to the unique design ... it just wasn't what most airgunners thought of when they contemplated a Beeman designed, quality airgun. But Dr. Beeman knew what was required by the active hunter, and pushed ahead with production of his design anyway.

Most people know that Beeman imports the high quality airguns from Europe that are built by Weilrauch, Theoben, and Webley (to name a few), but what they may not realize is that in the days when Dr. Beeman owned the company he had a very active hand in the concept and design stage of the guns ... far more than simply stamping his name on the barrel! As a matter of fact, the Beeman C1 Carbine was so labeled even when it was sold by Webley Scott in the UK. Mine is marked with the San Rafael stamp, which gives it a special historical perspective within my collection.



I feel that I am in a well situated position to comment on whether Beeman achieved his goal; going back through my hunting logs I can say that I've taken literally hundreds of rabbits, ground squirrels, pigeons and starlings with this gun. Besides the original you'll see pictured throughout this article, I have owned three others and carried this gun hundreds of miles in deserts, mountains, swamps, and plains. I have shot it in boiling hot sunshine in the middle of the Mojave and in the freezing cold Utah Mountains up to my tail in snow. I've used it to pop the squirrels raiding my bird feeders, and to supply rabbit for the pot in deer camp. And in the rest of this article I'm going to give you some empirical data from the bench as well as anecdotal observation from the field to support my position that the Beeman C1 is one of (for me *THE*) best hunting springers ever built.

The Beeman C1 Carbine was built for Beeman, to his specification, by Webley & Scott of the United Kingdom with a production run from the mid eighties into the early nineties. The gun was originally chambered in .177 and .22, though I once saw one advertised in .20. I'm not sure if this gun was a production gun, the add a typo, or a modified example; but if I see one again I'm buying it as I think it would be the perfect caliber for this handy little carbine. The barrel length is 14" and the overall length is 38 ½" with a weight of around 6 pounds. The trigger is single staged with a pull of about 4 lbs on my gun, and while I would not extol the triggers virtues, it is well engineered and functional. The stock is cut from a plain piece of beech with a walnut stain, and is the strikingly different component of this carbines design. There is no pistol grip, with the straight lines running from the butt to the fore grip being reminiscent of a shotgun. Some of my shooting mates in the past have loved the feel of the gun and some have not. But for me, it feels better than any air rifle I have ever shot .... Especially when shooting offhand. This rifle digests several pellets well, with Dynamite Nobel's Superdomes and Exact Diablos being its favored ammunition. These pellets are projected at velocities in the mid eight hundred feet per second range, producing clover leaf groups at 25 yards. The cocking effort is fairly light even with the short barrel, but the universal brake I placed on my gun provides a convenient cocking handle making it easier still. The safety is conveniently positioned on the rear right side of the barrel, where it can be easily flicked on or off with the thumb of the trigger hand. I do like the fact that unlike the R1, the safety is not automatically deployed when the gun is cocked. I don't like this set up on a hunting gun, as I don't want to have to worry about the safety on a quick follow-up shot.



I brought my C1 out on a bright sunny day to see what it would do from the bench. I should mention that a few years ago I had the gun tuned, which resulted not only in smoothing out the action (which wasn't bad to start) but generating an additional 20-30 fps. I've been shooting this rifle in the field for so many years that I didn't feel bench testing was really something I needed to do, however I knew that if I didn't have some empirical data the technophiles reading this little love letter to the C1 would come after me! Shooting this rifle with Exact Diablos from a supported position at thirty yards, I was able to consistently place five shot groups into a 3/4" with the occasional group clover leafing the target. This gun can definitely out-shoot me in the field, and while I'm not in any way a champion marksman, I am not a bad shot either. The C1 does everything I want from a hunting rifle. The gun shoots Exacts, Superdomes, and CPs well, producing average velocities of 844 fps with the 10.3 grain Exacts, generating around 16 fpe.

As Dr. Beeman related; this gun was designed to be a hunter, and that is where it shines. The light weight and compact size make the gun a pleasure to carry all day long. The C1 is quick to bring into action from any shooting position, and points well. As a matter of fact this rifle fits me better than any other rifle, air arm or fire arm, in my rather large and constantly growing (to my wife's chagrin) collection.

I have found the accuracy of this rifle under hunting conditions to be very good, allowing me to pick off starlings at forty yards all day long. And the gun produces the power to take larger game at this range as well; I've shot innumerable jackrabbits with my C1 at the same range with very decisive kills. I normally take headshots, but even when forced to take a chest shot the killing power is very good.

Dr. Beeman wrote on his website that the Beeman C1 Carbine has gained an almost cult following amongst knowledgeable airgun hunters. The fact is that there is no perfect rifle, and as the title of "The Best" hunting springer is a very subjective one indeed, there can be no correct answer. However, I can say that if (heaven forbid) I had to give up all but one of my spring piston air rifles, I'd still be heading out with my C1 for a longtime to come. In that same thread of dialog mentioned earlier, Dr. Beeman wrote to me that he was saddened to see the company which bears his name decide to cease production of this great little carbine. It seems that after many years production, some people still just didn't get it .... I'm glad I found out about the C1, though I wish I hadn't let the other three slip through my hands!



# Five Great Hunts That won't break the bank

## Jackrabbits in Nevada

Hunters that can get out to the vast tracts of Mojave desert in Nevada, will find acre upon acre of Blacktail Jackrabbit terrain. Jackrabbits have no seasons, no limits, and importantly can be taken with airguns. This is one of my favorite hunts, add an extra day or two on your next trip to Vegas, and drive up north until you see a patch of BLM land you like .... And go for it!

## Hogs in Texas!

OK, you'll have to pay here. But if you set up a hunt with Eric Henderson's Big Bore Adventures it'll cost you a couple hundred bucks all up to hunt feral pigs in Texas. He can even supply the monster airgun you'll need to bring home the bacon.

## Coastal Ground Squirrels in California

There are big tracts of BLM and National Forest land along the California coastal range that allow hunting. Sometimes these animals are found individual or in small groups, other times in small towns. They offer a lot of shooting and a lot of challenge. Try Padre National Forest, San Bernardino National Forest, or the high desert BLM tracts.

## Squirrels in the Midwest

In most Midwestern and Southern States there are many wildlife areas and National Forest that permit hunting. Most are used for deer and turkey hunting with the squirrels left untouched. Long seasons, high populations and generous bag limits add up to a lot of fun. An accurate high powered air rifle, camouflage clothing, and a call your set for the day. Better bring all your woodcraft along, these aren't the park fed bushytails you see raiding the bird feeder!

## Nutria in Louisiana

Nutria escaped from fur breeders and have spread their way through the coastal waterways. Early morning and dusk is a good time to shoot these megarats. There are many wildlife management areas and private properties that you can find to shoot over, without too much effort. Check the season and regs where you'll be hunting though. It's a bit ironic that these pesky rodents have a bounty and a season simultaneously!

# Photo Gallery

Phil is the ultimate Urban Hunter chasing down these monster Philly rats with his Air Arms S400 ERB in .22 caliber. He finds the Beeman Kodiak heavy 21 grain pellets



Steve Vines Diana/RWS Model 48 is a very dependable, no-nonsense, hard hitting air rifle. in 22 caliber. Morgan adjustable pad, Paul Watts shroud, ju point & shoot.



This BSA Techstar belongs to Jack Ludlam. He says "it's been a great gun for small and large game, it has accuracy and power all in one package"

18" barreled Stealth with cast aluminum grip and MILSPEC PES moderator (legal here!) Parker Hale bi-pod. Shot with 18 GR EXT pellets. Both Pheasant and Rabbits were prepared for cooking within an hour of shooting and greatly enjoyed!



Legal Quarry in UK



A customized 2240 CO2 pistol with a detachable shoulder stock. You can do a lot with this inexpensive platform.



Here is a pic of some squirrels my father-in-law (Jimmy) and I got hunting in Indiana last years season. The rifles are a QB78 22cal HW barrel with bulk extension I built just for hunting small game and

***Airwaves*** continued from last page

One afternoon, Eric and I had a few moments of downtime from hunting bigger game, and Eric decided to do some filming and asked me to do the shooting. Looking at the gun rack, I noticed that Jim had left his Prairie Falcon behind while he was out on a stand waiting on a warthog or bushbuck. So I grabbed up the Falcon and a pack of pellets, and we made a beeline for the sheep pens. Approaching cautiously, we sat down where we had a good view, and I did some estimating of ranges with the scope, and settled in for some pest shooting. Eric was behind me and was ready with his camera when the first bird came flapping in, landing in an abandoned sheep pen to peck at the left-over food. I eased up the Prairie Falcon, and when Eric said he was ready to film, I eased off the safety and carefully lined up the shot. It was a great setup, with the light just right, the pigeon only 20 yards away.....everything was just right.

Placing my finger carefully on the trigger, I began taking up the tension, waiting for the Falcon to send its deadly load hurtling towards the unsuspecting pigeon. And sure enough, the expected discharge came with the quiet whisper of a modded airgun.....and nothing happened! The pigeon just kept pecking away.....I had missed! No way, this couldn't be! I just couldn't have missed this close.....and on film!

I quickly cocked the gun again and repeated the procedure.....with the same results! Looking down, I muttered under my breath something that Eric didn't quite hear, so he said "What did you say?"

And to my everlasting chagrin, I had to admit, on film, that I had forgotten to load the multi-shot magazine. As Forest Gump says.....stupid is as stupid does! My only hope is that Eric somehow erased that particular bit of filming.....but somehow, I think Eric is slowly, but surely, compiling an airgun bloopers edition of his video series that will one day star yours truly in one of the dumbest mistakes that a hunter can make.....forgetting to load his gun!



# Airwaves

At the end of some of my favorite outdoor magazines, there always seems to be a humorous or touching story about hunting....perhaps a confession of a faux pas that really amuses the reader, or maybe a story that tugs at the heart strings of those of us who enjoy the outdoors so much.

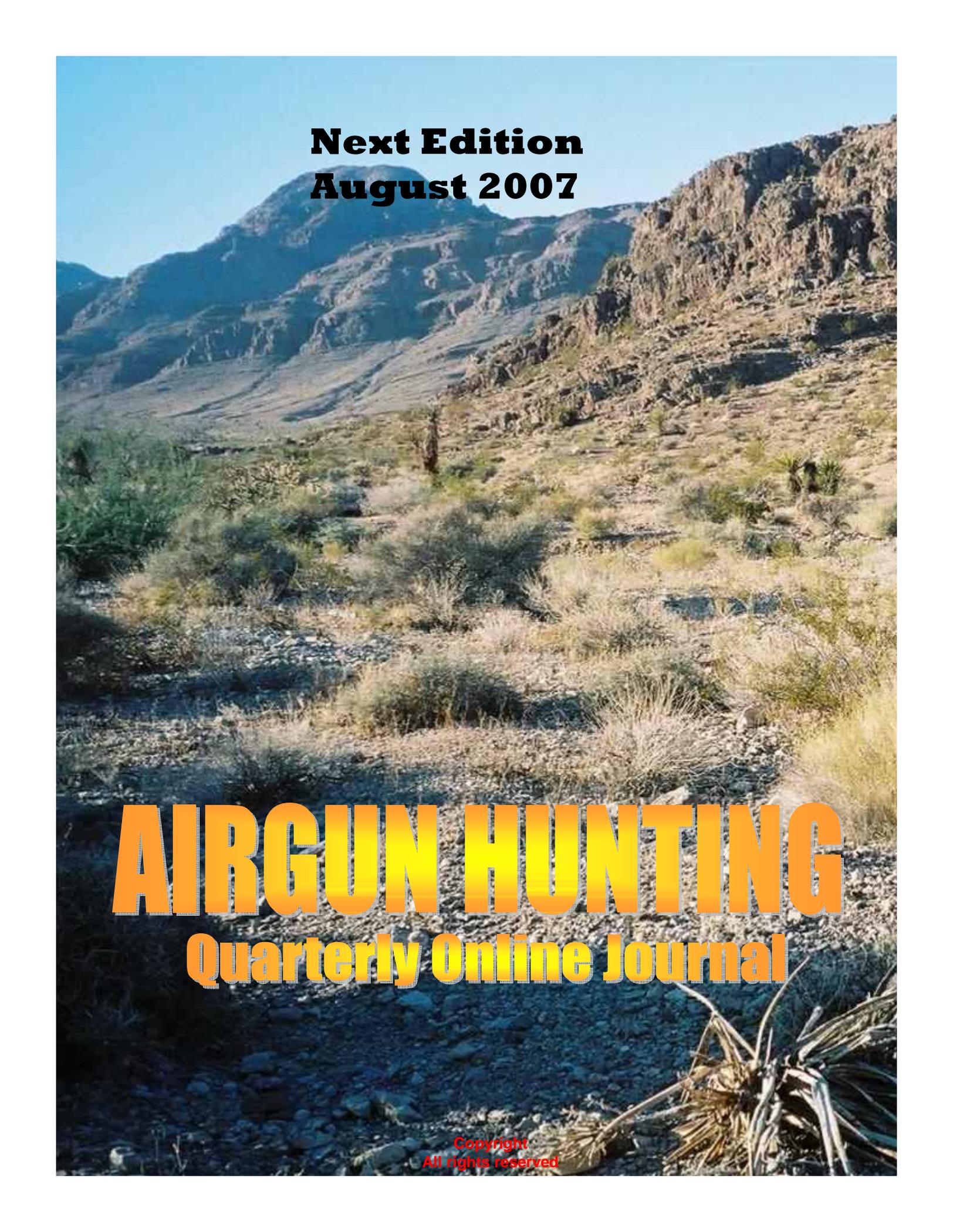
So in the spirit of such articles, I will close out this first publication of the online Airgun Hunting magazine with a confession of sorts. It is slightly embarrassing, but it is our ability to laugh at ourselves that keeps us humble, and I continuously find myself inadvertently keeping myself humble!

Last year, during the summer of 2006, I was able to accompany Jim Chapman and Eric Henderson on a trip to South Africa for an airgun safari. We had an absolutely wonderful time hunting with our bigbore airguns and a few smaller bores as well. On the grounds of Hounslow Safaris, we pursued springbok, duiker, kudu, vervet monkeys.....several species that made hunting there very special. But from time to time, we had an opportunity to shoot pigeons and dove around the sheep pens as they came in to peck at the discarded food left over by the livestock.

*Cont'd on preceding page*



**Randy Mitchell signs off on our first edition!**

A photograph of a desert landscape. In the background, there are rugged, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky. The middle ground shows a valley with sparse, dry vegetation, including various shrubs and a single tall, thin cactus. The foreground is a rocky, gravelly path or clearing with some low-lying plants. The overall scene is arid and sunlit.

**Next Edition  
August 2007**

# **AIRGUN HUNTING**

**Quarterly Online Journal**

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