

The Hunting Calendar



Summer is a great time of year to shoot some nanny tahr for the freezer

COMPILED BY ~ JOHN BISSELL, JAMIE CARLE, NEIL PHILPOTT, ROY SLOAN, PAUL STENNING AND GREG DULEY

With Christmas here and everybody on holiday, a lot of hunters will be out and about collecting venison for the freezer.

The days are long and the nights short and it can be very hot in the mountains, especially up high with no shade. Lunchtime siestas are an important component of getting enough sleep to hunt hard at the productive times of the day during summer. Don't kill yourself in the heat and then be half asleep when animals do begin to move. This is a prime time to harvest some fat animals, especially if you're wanting to get sausages made. Fat venison means you won't have to add other animal fat, which can overpower the venison flavour.

Red Deer Everywhere

Most hinds will have calved by now, but you won't necessarily see them. They plant their young while they feed for the first month of their life, and won't have them at foot until later in January. The hinds will be needing the best of feed to produce milk so you'll see them in all the easier prime spots, especially if grass is available. The yearlings and spikers will largely be out on their own, and can be seen wandering around and feeding anywhere, anytime.

The stags are well into their antler growing period and will be fully formed by late January, but don't be fooled into thinking they are hard until early next month. They stay out feeding longer as

their velvet progresses, making them an easier target. They will begin stripping later in February. If you want to shoot a trophy one day, leave them alone at this time of year unless it is obviously a cull animal.

By now the feed will be well away even at high altitude and a lot of animals will have followed it up. The stags especially, will have found the best annual alpine feed areas that grow flat out this time of year, unfortunately making them easy targets for the choppers. In the Tararuas and Ruahines the place to be hunting is the leatherwood zone and tussock up high. The heads of side creeks running up towards the alpine zone are also a good bet. The choppers may have changed things a bit but there will still be deer out in the open gaps



This stag is missing bey tines and will never make a trophy. Rick our designer with a fat Red stag whose fore quarters and trimmings will make superb sausages!

and slips feeding up on the smorgasbord of alpine vegetation. The first and last half hour are your best bets. Don't use them for traveling to your hunting area or back to camp. Bush hunting in the valleys can be tough at this time of year due to noise, but up in the high beach forest the moss keeps things nice and quiet. Now is when the river flats and clearings really come into their own. The grass everywhere is now sweet and fresh. Some of the scree and slip country especially on the drier eastern side can get too dry if there's little rain, in which case the slopes away from the dry Nor'wester will have better feed.

The Haurangis can be a hard place to hunt as they are well covered in bush. Focus your hunt on creeks and slips if the bush is too noisy. Cicadas will usually help drown out some sound for you.

In the lower country bordering farmland, the best shut up hay paddocks with no stock for competition are the deer magnets.

The Southern Alps

RED STAGS

Assuming that an area hasn't been affected by wild animal recovery operations (WARO), cast your eyes across open basins and headwaters above the 1300m (otherwise hunt bush fringes). Given the warmer time of year, north facing slopes aren't necessarily the most productive.

A stag's whereabouts will largely depend on the weather (if it's recently been rough look to the warmer slopes; if it's stinking hot look to the shaded areas). During the velvet season you will often find stags higher than expected throughout the day. Bear in mind they will generally bed down during the mid part of the day, so be thorough in your glassing because it'll be difficult to pick up movement.

Again, the males will be grouped together, so now is an excellent time to evaluate head quality against one another – particularly as they approach their full growth before hardening in February.

RED HINDS/YEARLINGS

By now the hinds should have well and truly dropped their fawns and kicked last season's yearlings away. Hinds will continue to remain lower in the catchments as they conserve their energy and tend to their newborn; feeding in and around river flats, clearings, and hard against the edge of slips or along bush fringes. The yearlings will be in similar areas.



Early on you may not see the calves as the hinds will have stashed them in the bushes while they feed. By the middle of this period they will be up and running with their mothers.



**FOR NEW ZEALAND
MADE CUSTOM
RIFLE BARRELS...**

Contact the team at True-Flite NZ Ltd
We aim to exceed your expectations!

www.truefliteriflebarrels.co.nz
Telephone: 06 8683450
Email: trueflite@yahoo.co.nz

SIKA

Through January you'll find Sika almost everywhere as summer growth has reached to even the highest areas. Animals will utilise the open country extensively and often lie up in the barest of cover or just in the tussock. Before long most hinds will have their young in tow but it's not unusual to see late fawns dropped well into March. Stags will be getting fat and lazy and become more vulnerable the closer they get to stripping their velvet. It is rare to see Sika stripped before the end of Feb though antlers may be fully formed in some animals. Most stags are in the company of at least one other animal when encountered in the open and sometimes anything up to a dozen stags can be seen together where animal numbers are good. Animals will camp up in small pockets of bush or scrub often a long ways from the bush proper.

In the bush where animal numbers are lower, stags are more likely to be on their own or with maybe one other stag. The first and last three hours of light this time of year are the high percentage hunting times, even more so than the rest of the year.

During the middle of the long hot summer days, find a good lookout and watch some clearings while having a rest. You can take turns having a siesta and glassing, and you will often pick up a bonus animal this way. Bedded animals get up every hour or so and have a change of position, giving you a chance to spot them if you're looking. Animals should be in prime condition now and at their best for eating.

Scout/Guard - 5 Mega Pixel Trail and Security Camera.



Smallest Trail Cam Ever
130 x 80 x 50mm

Sharp and Clear colour pictures by day. Black and White pictures after dark with Infra-Red LEDs.

Fast Trigger Speed -1.3 sec
Records both still photos or video clips to SD Card.
Compact and Affordable.
Also available in Green.
1 Year Warranty.



Available through our website:
www.nzhuntingadventures.com
Email: a.j.productions@actrix.co.nz
Ph/fax: 07 854 6022

FALLOW

Fallow like all deer at this time off the year have similar needs - mothers feeding babies and the bucks growing antlers. This is the best time to pick up some venison for the freezer. The mothers have kicked out their juveniles and the animal's fat content is on the increase making the venison good eating. Blue Mountain Fallow are feeding back in the bush and scrubby faces and gullies. Hunting these semi open areas can be very productive. More so than any other deer that I have hunted the fallow are creatures of habit - if you see them in an area you can bet your bottom dollar they will be there again same time next year. The Greenstone is still closed to hunting but the animals can still be seen out in the open valley floor. Again a great time for the camera.

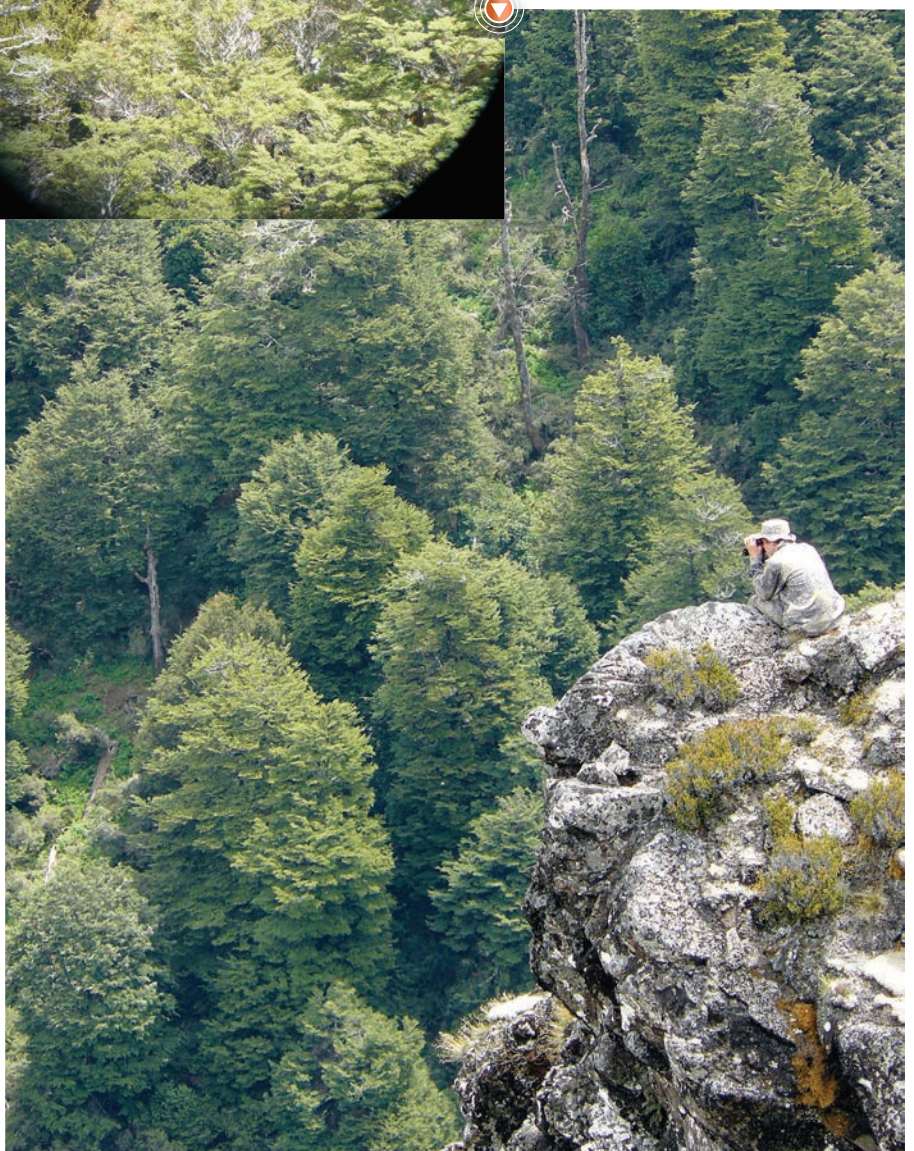
WHITETAIL

Whitetail are very much like the Fallow. One interesting thing about these animals is their antler growth. They tend to drop them July-ish but are only starting to harden up again around the end of February

- for animals with such small antlers this is a very long period of antler growth. I have shot bucks in the second week of March only just starting to rub up their antlers.

MAIN PHOTO - Find a good lookout while you're having a siesta in the middle of the day

INSERT - This is what you might spot, a deer having a rest the same as you!





If possible leave the stags alone while they grow their velvet

RUSA

Hunt the early morning and late afternoon till dark. Slips, clearings and anywhere there's grass. Sit in a good vantage point where you can watch as much good country as you can but be prepared for long shots. Bush stalking is hard work as mostly the underfoot conditions are dry and noisy making getting close to unsuspecting animals difficult. Most stags will have cast, but you'll still find the odd one that hasn't.

SAMBAR

Unless you like eating sambar meat, and a young animal is the likely choice if you do, then leave them alone this time of year. The hinds will have young at foot and the stags are in velvet antler.

WAPITI

With Spring well and truly over in Fiordland the animals are on the tops feeding. Of our deer species the Wapiti bulls grow the largest antlers so need to maximise their daily food and trace elements intake. The Wapiti have a



A siesta is an important part of hunting this time of year, for everyone!



very dangerous habit of climbing high for their food which makes them an easy target. Unfortunately some hunters like to take advantage of this and shoot them in late velvet without any regard for the future of the herd. Shooting the best bulls in February is like a farmer sending his stud rams/ bulls to the works just before putting them out with the ewes/ cows – pretty dumb! The cows are feeding young and will be out on the tops as well, so it's a great time for photography!

CHAMOIS

Bucks will continue to remain solitary during this time of the year. Young bucks may still hang out with the does, but the mature bucks will most certainly be solo. Cast your eyes above 1300m across rocky promontories, kinks in spurs where they can look down either side of the spur for danger, and in that belt of monkey scrub (particularly on the West Coast). They will generally bed-down for the day between mid morning and mid afternoon, so approach your hunting area early or return later in the afternoon.

During hot spells chamois will tend to bed down on cooler (south facing) slopes so as to avoid overheating. On scorching days it pays to look into crags that still retain a bit of snow or ice. Often chamois are found in and around these snow chutes where they can cool off.

Does and kids will tend to hang out in groups and will often feed amongst steep faces where there are ledges to eventually bed on. It is quite common to observe young chamois playing in the tussock and snow chutes (much like newborn lambs and calves do) during this time of the year.



Jamie Bells' New Caledonian Rusa Hunting operation has been bought by Experienced New Zealand Alpine hunter Colin Murray and his wife Alison.

Colin will be working closely with Jamie for next season's Hunting and the wonderful New Caledonian hunting Experience will remain the same.

Hunts can be booked through Colin in New Zealand and Jamie in Australia. Other hunts in New Zealand and Australia are also available.

The new Company will be named : "Belle' New Caledonia Safaris"

Please contact Colin on :

Home : 07 850 5354

Mobile : 0274 987 872

Email : colin.bellesafaris@xtra.co.nz

BULL TAHR

If you didn't capitalize on the opportunities to obtain a bull in November, you still have time in December and early January but it won't be as easy as before. Tahr are not difficult to work out, and like clockwork, the bulls will move down slope in the evenings. They'll be in their full summer coat, which is a very pale brown (beige). As we approach the month of February, expect the bulls to climb higher into the bluff systems and resume more "mountain goat" like characteristics.

NOTE: Bear in mind that while there are similarities / overlaps with the elevations of Red deer, chamois, and to some degree tahr, it should be noted that it is not often that you will see all three species in the same part of a catchment while hunting. So try and apply these tips to the relevant areas. For those just learning, the following summary can be used as a guideline.

- **Deer are generally found on not-so-steep slopes**
- **Chamois are generally found on semi-steep slopes**
- **Tahr are generally found on very steep slopes**

WATERFOWL

With most of the Mallard ducklings now airborne or soon to be, it is time for the adults to go through the moult. This normally happens during early January but can for some stretch through February. The drakes are generally the first to moult along with non breeding hens followed by the rest of the hens once they have abandoned their broods. With Paradise Shelduck the adult birds will moult while raising their young but large groups of juvenile birds in their second year which don't breed till the following spring will congregate around suitable larger water bodies to go through the moult. This is a critical time for our gamebird species as the moult can take up to a month. For a short period while they grow new wing feathers they will be flightless and will have limited flight for a longer period. Their feeding options will be reduced and unsuitable climatic conditions such as a dry period or drought can result in a higher mortality than normal. With mallards, such conditions can also effect the survival rates of the juveniles learning to fend for themselves during this period.

While our ducks grow new feathers to prepare themselves for the year ahead, we should also be thinking and preparing for the



Chamois will be in their striking tan summer coat

approaching season. We should visit our hunting spots and check for any work that is required whether it be on habitat enhancement, mai mai construction or repair. Get this work done before the ducks congregate into their late summer and autumn routines which ideally we don't want to disturb!

By late January early February both sub adult and adult Canada geese will have completed their moult. Along with the new season's young, they will be congregating in suitable areas keen to put on condition that they lost during the moult. This is easily the best time to have good success hunting Canada geese in areas with an open season. Be sure to do your groundwork thoroughly and ensure you use tactics that will result in the maximum harvest possible. There were several thousand Canada geese culled in the lower South Island last winter, let's do our best to ensure our hunting efforts result in less culls being needed next winter!

One of the delightful Christmas sights of waterfowl - Paradise ducklings on a stream



Manufacturers and retailers of Quality outdoor products

Gun Bags

Available in 4 sizes - super shotgun, shotgun, shifle & rifle. Five outside fabrics - canvas, green PVC, yellow PVC, camo & black - Full length zip.

Two outside pockets. Push padded lining.

Inside length:
Rifle - 111cm,
Shifle - 121cm,
Shotgun - 131cm,
Super Shotgun - 141cm.



Chaps

Leg Protection Chaps - available in youth or adult sizes (also extra long and/or wide) Heavy duty, waterproof, ripstop canvas. YKK zip up outside of leg. The leggings convert to a butterfly cape.

Canvas Bags

Canvas Bags - The Carpet Bag, Backpack, Pikau, Tuffall, Gear Bag & Bullet Holder (for both shotgun shells and rifle ammo) are made from ripstop waterproof canvas. Double stitching & high quality zips & sliders feature. Some bags are fitted with grab handles, extra pockets & drawstring liners.



273 Busby Road RD1, Katikati
Phone 07 549 2230 • Fax 07 549 2430
email: info@penguindirect.co.nz
www.penguindirect.co.nz