

## LAKE HAWEA HUNTING SAFARIS New Zealand



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Well..... it sure is good to be home from the hills, with a dry roof over head, the fire warming my back, a hot shower, electric kettle and electricity in general. 2011 has been the season of wind and rain, thankfully the snow only bothered us a couple of times but that *wind and rain* made for some trying alpine hunting conditions.

Still, we have done well, so rather than ramble on I thought I would let the below pictures tell the story of our 2011 hunting season, although we still have one rut hunt to go with further hunters arriving in spring. The menacing volcanic ash cloud from Chile has postponed this weeks hunt as no one can get to NZ, so I have had a little time in the office.....

Michael Truman arrived February 12 and the hunting began, those summer bulls can sometimes be a problem to find, but we caught up with an old boy at last light on the second last day.



With no whitetail hunts booked for 2011 the red deer roar/rut was the next event on the calendar. Our private land red deer area offers 55,000 acres of private land hunting. With only one road in, the homestead situated in the middle of the main valley and a very strong landowner who loves his deer we have a very exclusive free-range area.

Pat and Larry Stratton arrived and the red hunting began.

Larry had first shot and he did it well on day 2 taking a mature 12 point stag as he was heading up to a high open saddle with his hinds and toward the cover of beech forest for the middle hours of the day.



Photo: Pat Stratton.

Late that same day Pat and myself spied a huge stag rutting away up high in a side valley. I'd hoped his hinds would lead him down during the night and they did. As we waited pre



dawn with stags roaring on all sides the plan came together, after a frantic search in the bracken fern for a retreating, roaring stag.



Pats stag illustrates everything you could want in a wild red stag, long tines, heavy beam, good length and perfect symmetry. On official measure the stag went 40 inches long by 40 inches wide, a perfect royal red stag, a trophy of trophy's.

Pat has hunted NZ over five decades and seen many changes, he turned to me and said "Chris this is just like it was over forty years ago."

We then ventured on the Rangitata River, Pat had not hunted tahr for a very long time but he re started his tahr hunting career with a big trophy bull.



Back to the red deer country we went with new hunters Iain Kemp and Stephen Byrne, well they were new but old hunters, Iain on his second hunt, Stephen on his third.

The week before, we had glassed a nice stag and named him the rock stag as he would feed out of the bush each evening and rut on a rocky knoll making him very difficult to approach.

Day 2 of the hunt saw Iain and myself climbing with the down draft that pre dawn offered, straight up underneath the rock stag. His hinds began to bark and as dawn broke the deer broke too, Iain managed a nice shot down hill of his knees at 180m and the rock stag was his.





5.30 am the next morning Clark walker (Clarky) and Stephen were climbing in the dark toward a face which held around 60 red deer. Iain and I were at the bottom some 1.5kms away waiting for daylight with binoculars ready to watch the action unfold above.

Clarky had done well, he and Stephen were in position, at the same level as the lower members of the herd as shooting light came on. Clark singled out a long 12 point stag and was making preparations for a shot when he looked away down over his shoulder to see a huge stag working hard against younger and lesser stags to hold his 16 hinds and get them to the safety of the bush.

With Stephen in toe Clarky parted the main herd sending deer, barking, roaring and panicking in all directions to get Stephen within range of the big stag away across the face. From the bottom we watched the first shot miss, then the second take the stag angling in through the ribs to his boiler room.

Stephen from Scotland had taken a free-range red stag that many in his homeland would not believe possible.



The stag carried a beam over 40 inches, with 14 points and massive, heavy tops, his right tine broken and body badly scarred from recent battles.



The next hunt was perhaps the biggest adventure for 2011 a trip to fiordland, that remote south western corner of New Zealand renown for its harsh but beautiful environment.

Brothers Wal and Joe Estermann were back, Wal for his 4<sup>th</sup> hunt, Joe for his 3<sup>rd</sup>. They wanted to try something different and they wanted to tick the box saying they'd hunted fiordland, so in late April off we went. At the same time Rex Sandford (guide) was taking another hunt for me further up the west coast with Henning and Grete from Denmark. Rex doing a great job helping Henning take a chamois buck and a 12 yr old bull tahr!

Our target species was elk/wapiti, although we had realistic expectations, this was a trip to virgin country on the outskirts of the wapiti range. All was well for day 1 & 2 we got our first crack at a fiordland trophy, a big chamois buck, although he scampered around a couple of bullets from long range.



The night of day two a storm arrived and stayed for 4 days, smashing two of our tents, making for some rough worrying nights, for if we lost another tent things were going to get uncomfortable very quick.

Iain Kemp had accompanied us on the trip as a non hunter and Dave Young as a second guide, we all got to know each other well passing the days holding our little camp together and sitting under the tarpaulin.



Finally after the weather turned to the south and snowed on us on the 5<sup>th</sup> night it began to clear up and allow us to hunt.

We saw 9 deer in total hearing two wapiti bulls bugle about 1.5kms below our camp, that was a highlight as the eerie call echoed up the valley toward us. We also sighted a young wapiti bull in the basin below our camp, but he was a long way from being mature carrying a head of only 6 points.

A tough trip, but one that all who took part in will never forget!





From left: Chris, Joe Estermann, Dave young (Guide), Iain Kemp, Walter Estermann.

Alex Hoppen was back with his mate Chris, unfortunately the rain was also back for our next hunt. Alex and Chris were after chamois and the weather was after our hides and offered us very limited hunting time. Alex did take a nice buck 9 and 1/8 inches and Chris eventually got a shot at a chamois also, but it didn't quite come together for him. The guys held a great attitude in trying conditions; just one extra fine day and results would have been different.





For the next week we were doubled up with two wilderness hunts heading to the west coast. Rex was all set to take hunter Markus and his girlfriend Gabrielle from Germany when a tragic event at his neighbours occurred late the night before. Rex's skills were needed at home, so Dan Curely thankfully arranged some time off his normal work at very short notice to take the hunt.

After a quick sight in session at Rex's place we left in convoy for the west coast to meet the helicopter, which would lift us into our hunting areas.

I was hunting with Peter and Ernst from Denmark, they turned out to be fine fellows, again enduring a huge amount of poor weather on their hunt. Although day 6 when the weather finally broke the tahr streamed out of the hills and both hunters took well deserved trophy bulls, we left 4 trophy bulls within range to watch from the bluffs above as I skinned the trophies. A beautiful fine day in the heart of the Southern Alps.



Chris and Peter with Peter's 12 inch tahr. Photo: Ernst Petersen





Peter and Ernst with Ernst bull tahr and .280 Ackley improved Remington rifle.

Dan only had limited days to work with and could not wait out the rain, he did the business nicely with Markus shooting two bull tahr. Thanks Dan for jumping into the breach and coming up with the goods!

Markus is pictured below with one of his wilderness trophies.

Photo: Dan Curley.





It was straight back into the west coast wilderness with Iain and Damien Ohara from Australia. This turned out to be one of the best hunts we've ever had. By nightfall on day 1 we had 2 beautiful trophy bulls on the ground, on 12 and 1/8 inches, the other 12 and 4/8 inches, both with healthy horn bases.

With the number of bulls around it was clear there was a good chance for both hunters to take a second trophy bull. Damien succeeded in taking an impressive second trophy, 12 and 3/4 inches, with a wide spread. Iain also took a second bull around 12 inches.

I took some exceptional video on this hunt, perhaps the best that has ever been recorded on public land, heading for camp one day we stumbled across a nanny and a kid in a creek bed, before long 3 trophy bulls appeared at 30m and they hung around for half an hour whistling and stamping their feet at us, one of those moments in life you perhaps only see once. Iain and Damien were bagged out so, we left the bulls to be, Iain managed some great still photos.



Eight year old trophy bull tahr. Photo: Iain Ohara.





Above top: Damien's first bull 12 and 1/8 inches, with typical big dark west coast face, below Iain's first bull 12 and 4/8<sup>th</sup>'s, in remarkably good shape after a 150m free fall.





Damien's 2<sup>nd</sup> trophy bull, with heavy wide horns and fantastic cape. Photo: Iain Ohara.





Trophy bull photographed by Iain Ohara through the spotting scope from camp at 700m

You will see that video footage on the DVD Bucks n Bulls 4 (out late 2012). Or snippets of it on our youtube links.

Doug Mills from Australia was next in camp, airline delays and foul weather (again) saw us miss the first 2 days of his hunt on his quest for tahr and chamois.

Back to the west coast wilderness and on the first day of hunting a 250gn projectile from his 338 met a nine year old 12 and 4/8ths bull tahr at 260m and a fine trophy was his.



Later a very difficult and long shot at a chamois I judged to be 11 inches, saw us leaving a big one in the hills for next time.

Alan Bowman of Australia arrived in early July for a free-range tahr hunt. The weather at last was all blue skies, with the challenge that lay ahead we needed everything possible on our side.

Alan's hunt was different; really different he wanted to take our premier game animal with his bow. I knew we were missing out on the bow hunting market, Antonio Lara editor of Australian Bow hunter offered to place an add for me, 12 months later Alan arrived to take on the challenge I laid down with the add and arrow a bull tahr.

From day one I could see Alan was the real deal, grouping arrows on a target at 40m better than many could do off hand with a rifle. Now all I had to do was get us within 40m.....

We managed a stalk on day one and two, to within 40m of multiple trophy bulls but things just didn't quite come together. Day 3 after a 2 hour stalk we got the drop on the big boy below, from uphill at 25m Alan placed an arrow in behind the last rib and through the into



the vitals, severing the heart of a bull quartering away. The bull was in his eleventh year with longest horn 13" 3/8ths long, the best tahr we'd taken all season! Well done Alan and well done to me too I reckon! I'm never really one for the record books but this may be the biggest bow shot tahr by an Australian, Douglas score 43 6/8ths. What a way to finish the 2011 rut.



So now I look forward to our spring tahr and chamois hunts and the 2012 season that follows.

The next big project is our new house/lodge being built at McCarthy Rd Hawea Flat where our family has been since the 1880's. Construction started late June and we hope to be in by Christmas.

Between now and our spring hunts I'll be busy with the off season job of filling the truck with firewood to supply nearby Wanaka and taking day hunts for hunters passing through town.



# As for the next big thing on the horizon, my best mate and Guide Lewis Reid is launching his first book titled “The South Pacific fifteen, I did it my way”. The story of Lewis’s 23 year dream to take the south pacific 15, free-range. The story and pictures have been edited by Erroll and Lynn Mason, it is one helluva read! (Will be on sale via our website early 2012).

With our dedicated team of guides we have open dates available on all species, if you want to hunt specifically with Chris we can make that happen too, come and see us in 2012, the animals are out there and we know where to find them!



[BUY NOW](#)

Visit us at the Wild Deer Expo, Bendigo Australia, [4-5 Feb 2012 at booth 207.](#)







Above top: Bronwyn McCarthy with a trophy of her own, below: Chris McCarthy, eyes and camera ready in the South Islands, west coast wilderness. Photo: Iain Ohara.

## **Chris McCarthy's Lake Hawea Hunting Safaris NZ**

Email Chris and Bronwyn at [chris@hawe-hunting.co.nz](mailto:chris@hawe-hunting.co.nz) for our 2012 hunting rates and detailed info.

Visit our free videos at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ChrisMcLHHS> (updated with new uploads end of July 2011).

Visit our website or purchase our DVD's at: [www.hawe-hunting.co.nz](http://www.hawe-hunting.co.nz) (fully revamped as of the end of July 2011). **Feel free to forward this report on: photos and text all rights reserved Lake Hawea Safaris.**