

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

WITH GUN AND RIFLE IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

Roughly speaking, the Australian Bush may be divided into three zones—the big timber or forest lands, the mallee flats, and the desert. In none of these regions is game predominant, but there are certain localities—generally the immediate neighborhood of permanent or periodical water—where animal life is more or less conspicuous after the barren and deserted stretches of wilderness which intervene. Nowhere so is this more noticeable than in the north, where one may travel for days without seeing any sign of life, except an occasional crow and the omnipresent flies, and then reach some creek or waterhole shaded by gum trees, having its surface covered with waterfowl, and its banks trodden down with the footprints of the animals which come there to drink.

That national animal, the kangaroo, naturally comes first in any survey of the zoology of the country. Though gradually becoming scarce in the more settled districts near the coast, these animals may still be met with in numbers in certain parts of the interior, and afford sport of a kind—that is, coursing on horseback or shooting with a rifle. The dog used in the former pursuit is a large and powerful greyhound, which hunts by sight alone, following its bounding prey until the latter is exhausted, or "takes soil," like a stag in some pool. When at bay an "old man" kangaroo is a formidable antagonist, for with one sweep of its hind claws it can rip a dog up. A favorite trick of theirs when held up in the water is to seize each member of the pack in turn as it rushes up, and hold it under water until drowned. Following such a sport requires both nerve and horsemanship, for, although there are no hedges or banks to get over, the intervening scrub and fallen logs, with an occasional wire fence, provide obstacles sufficiently difficult to give the most ardent rider that spice of danger inseparable from hunting.

With a modern high-velocity rifle neither the kangaroo nor its smaller relative the wallaby present difficult marks. But, as a rule, the only weapons obtainable in the outback bush districts are Winchester and Sniders of obsolete pattern, and with these it requires careful stalking to get within range. The professional hunters, who kill these animals for their skins, make a practice of camping near a waterhole and shooting them as they come in to drink. Kangaroo flesh, like that of all marsupials, is eatable enough, but extremely tasteless, without flavoring of some sort. Soup made from the tail is considered a delicacy with all colonials, though really very inferior to ordinary ox-tail.

Another marsupial, the possum, is common in the big timber districts, especially near the coast. Its chief value lies in its skin, which makes, or helps to make (for it requires 14 skins for the purpose), a splendid rug. Some people aver that possum meat is not to be despised, but as it tastes strongly of eucalyptus, that is a matter of opinion. These animals are great thieves, and will enter a tent when the owner is absent or asleep and play havoc with the flour and sugar bags.

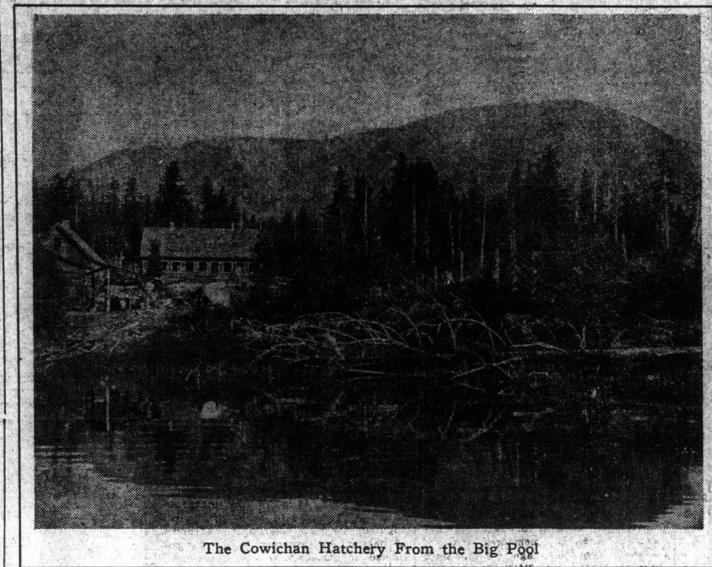
In that vast and thinly populated region known as the Northern Territory there is a certain district near the Daly river which has been—and, so far as I am aware, is still—the haunt of buffaloes, not cattle run wild from the stations, but real buffalo. There is little doubt that these animals are the descendants of a herd brought over from one of the Malay States, and are not indigenous to the country. They are very shy and wary, and the neighborhood they frequent is extremely rough and broken, so that even the half dozen men who eke out a living by the sale of buffalo hides only manage to kill a few every year. The method employed is to cut out a likely adult from the main herd, and then shoot it from the saddle, a feat requiring the finest horsemanship and skill imaginable.

To those who have only an acquaintance with the more settled parts of New South Wales and Victoria the animal life that teems about the big rivers and permanent waters in the Gulf country comes as a revelation.

A glance at the map will show that more than a third of Australia lies within the tropic of Capricorn, and is, therefore, under the influence of seasonal rainfalls. Sufficient proof of this improved condition of affairs may be had by noticing the wild aboriginals about the well-watered grassy lands of North Queensland, parts of the Territory, and Kimberley. They are fiercer, larger built, and altogether finer specimens of their race than the natives in the spinifex and scrub regions of the south. This may be put down as the result of a better food supply in the shape of an abundance of game, for the Australian black is practically a carnivorous animal pure and simple. Some ethnologists are inclined to the belief that these northern tribes are descended from Malay stock. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that a lack of anxiety about keeping the larder stocked has had a lot to do with their superior physique. It is impossible to go hungry in these regions, provided one has a gun and cartridges. Ducks swarm at every waterhole, and furnish splendid sport, apart from their value for the table, for they are just difficult enough to approach and shoot to give excitement to the business. There are many different kinds, but the teal is the commonest. The wood-duck, too, is plentiful. It is a strange instinct that guides these birds immediately after a heavy shower of rain to lagoons and clayspans that 24 hours previously were merely dry depressions in the ground.

But however good the duck shooting may be, the most important bird, both from a sporting and an edible point of view, is the "bush turkey," as it is called, a species of bustard, and bears no relation to the farmyard gobbler. It is to be found on the little salt bush flats in the neighborhood of water all over North and Western Australia, generally in pairs, and it is an axiom that a man will either bag the two or miss them both. A light small-bore rifle is said to be the best weapon to employ, though some men swear by a shotgun. Perhaps better still is a double-barrelled combination of the two. Should one be to windward of the bird when it is first sighted, it is only by making a long and cautious detour that it is possible to ap-

proach sufficiently near to be able to use the shot-gun with effect. If this desirable result happens without putting up the "turkey," a little manoeuvring will discover its mate nearby, who is less likely to be disturbed by the sound of the shot than the flapping of its consort's wings. Emus are common enough all over the cattle and sheep country, in those parts which are unfenced. They are not bad eating, but do not provide much sport, on account of the ease with which they may be stalked and shot, especially in the dry season, when they are rendered fearless by thirst. In fact, anyone possessing good weapons, however indifferent a shot, will never fail to make a good bag in a locality where game is plentiful, because the scrub in most parts supplies such excellent cover for stalking. Of course, there are times after a tribe of blacks have been hunting in a district, when both animals and birds naturally become wild and tax the woodcraft of the keenest shooter. Enormous flocks of pigeons of several species are to be met with in Northern Australia. Some of them are quite small, mere doves, in fact, and so pretty that it seems a shame to shoot them. The same may be said of the different parrots and cockatoos, which abound near the big gum trees bordering the creeks and rivers. The "galeas" in particular are beautiful, their plumage rivaling the rainbow in its rich colors; but, like most Australian birds, they are songless, and can only utter discordant squawks. Cockatoos may be eaten when nothing better offers, but it is advisable that they be boiled for at least eight hours, for they are uncommonly tough.



The Cowichan Hatchery From the Big Pool

And, I don't want to get into any controversy in the papers with any one, and thereby advertise myself, and all that foolishness. I just want to set down in plain, unvarnished English an extraordinary instance of the intelligence of a particular jacksnipe who happened to be located in that particular "neck of marsh" in the spring of 1889. Don't forget the year. As I said before, I didn't actually see the occurrence with my own eyes, but "Joe-Dad Jackson" saw it, and I reckon old "Joe-Dad's" word is as good as any man's in Indiana, and he's been a "pusher" out there in the marshes ever since he was a little boy. I suppose there isn't a hunter that ever tramped that country over in a pair of "hip boots" that don't know old "Joe-Dad"—ask Dick Turtle about that, or Sam Booth.

"Joe-Dad," he's about five feet eleven in his bare feet (never wore a sock in his life) and a slim built man for his inches. Clever? Well, say, there's a man that knows the marshes with his eyes shut and nine miles from camp the darkest night that ever blew. He could build a "blind" so natural that a man had to hoist a red flag over it to get back to it when he went out to retrieve a dead duck, it looked so much like the surrounding vegetation. Shoot? Why, he could shoot from either shoulder or over his shoulder, and I never saw him miss a bird in my life. And sober? He never even touched coffee or tea, let alone strong drink. And as for telling the truth, he could cut rings around George Washington and give George forty yards start. Sam Booth or Dick Turtle will vouch for that, easy.

Well, as I was going to say, I was down there at old Joe's cabin early one spring morning, but he'd gone to town for a load of shells, so I had to wait until he came back before I could make up my mind in which direction I'd go. The old man got back in about an hour, and before we started out he said he wanted to tell me about an adventure he had experienced with a jacksnipe at the bend near Patterson's creek, up at the end of Big Slough, where the creek runs into the marsh, north of Gadsby's. So I sat down and he told me the story. It ran

about like this, as near as I can recollect it: "I was gittin' me a mess o' bullheads out o' that west channel that slips into the marsh longside o' the blazed sycamore whar we camped fall before last, an' I wuz haulin' 'em in perty fast. They's a little patch o' marsh comes close up to the creek thar, an' a clump o' lily pads reachin' to shore. Some o' them pads wuz out in the water, an' some o' 'em wuz dryin' up on the edge. I allays used to jump snipe in that spot becuz they wuz a boggy spot at the end next to a stub willer that hung out over the water.

"Well, I'd been after 'jacks' that day and had fetched in an even forty. An' one I shot at and didn't git flew away with one leg a-hangin' down like a shot had cut it perty nigh off. It was the second bird of a 'double,' an' I reckon I held a little too fur under him, an' one of the upper shot in the charge jist glazed him.

"It was a warm, soft night, and the moon an' the stars wuz out, an' the gallinippers wuz singin' and buzzin' an' bitin' wuse'n pizen. Them Slab creek gallinippers is the biggest an' most ornery muskeeters in the world. You know them saw bills o' their'n? Five inches long and siffer'n barb wire. Ever once in awhile one ux 'em'd fetch me a wallop that put nigh knocked me off the log I was sittin' on. I wuz jerkin' in them bullheads an' cussin' the gallinippers when all uv a sudden I ketcht sight uv a jacksnipe settin' thar in the moonlight, not twelve steps frum whar I'm a-settin'.

"He wuz kind o' balanced on one leg an' the other leg sort o' fetched loose like, an' I sees in a minute that here's the 'jack' I jist tetcht that mornin'. Jist then I seen him swing out with his bill and ketch an all fired big gallinipper. He fetched the gallinipper in and shifted him fum his bill to his sound foot. Then, he reaches down and snakes out the gallinipper's saw bill an' lays it on a lily pad. In 'bout a minute more he reaches out an' lands another gallinipper, an' he gits his bill same as No. 1. He ketches five gallinippers an' gits them five saw bills o' their'n, an' then he quits on them.

"Bimeby the lightnin' bugs gits to shinin', an' I see old Mister Jack spearin' out an' ketchin' them, one at a time, an' hidin' 'em under a lily pad next to them saw bills. He gits about a dozen o' 'em, an' then he squares around an' begins operations.

"Now, I don't ask you to believe me, but you know ME. I hain't been in these marches all my life an' not seen a good many things. I've seen ducks an' varmints do some perty wise things, but I want to tell you this here jacksnipe made me open my eyes. He jist braced hisself by that thar willer stub, and first he pulls out the saw bills that he gits from the gallinippers. An' I hope I may die ef he didn't commence to saw off that crippled leg with them skeeter bills. You could hear 'em squeakin as they wuz goin' through the gristle. Bimeby the leg was sawed clean through, an' the part with the claw fell off an' left old Mister 'Jack' with one good leg an' the upper j'int of the other. The leg must have been bleedin' some, fer the next thing that bird did wuz to reach in under them lily pads and haul out them lightnin' bugs an' commence to cauterize the leg. Yes, sir; that's what he did. I reckon he must o' used up a dozen bugs before he wuz satisfied that he'd got it done right. I knowed, o' course, what he wuz up to, fer I'd had Dock Adams cauterize a sore thumb fer me once. And there wuz jist the least mite of sizzlin' when he set them bugs agin the place.

"After he gits all through he balances hisself on one leg agin an' shoves his bill under his wing an' goes to sleep. I slips up an' drops my hat on him an' grabs him. I tied him with a piece o' fish line an' took him home. I put him in an old bird cage, an' in the mornin' there he wuz, as peert and sassy as though nothin' wuz the matter with him.

"I gits to thinkin' a little myself, an' goes out to the barn an' pulls two or three hairs out uv old Bill's mane an' tail. I comes back to the house an' cuts off a lower j'int o' one of the 'jacks' I'd shot the day before, an' I measures it on to this here peg-legged 'jack' that I'd ketcht in the march the night before. After I gets the length all right I splices it on to him with horse hair an' glues it over tight an' strong, an' puts him back in the bird cage agin.

"I goes out into the garden and digs that bird more than five pecks us fishworms an' puts 'em into the cage in a tomato can filled with dirt, a little at a time. That thar 'jack' he practices standin' on that 'bum' leg an' spearin' for worms until he gits it down perty agin. Now, I can feel hisself almost as well as when he had his right props on.

"Now, I want to say that he didn't show any gratitude fer what I wuz doin' fer him. Not a darn bit. He jist hopped around as suspicious as ever, an' I could see plain enough he didn't want to stay in the cage.

"So one morning I jist took him to the door an' histed the door to the bird cage, an' out gits Mister Jacksnipe an' travels fer the swamp agin. Now, I seen that fellar twice after that, an' dog me if he didn't first jump an' then squat before I could shoot. O' course, I wouldn't a shot ef I'd knowed it wuz the same bird. But both times he let me pick him up an' smooth down his feathers an' pat him on the back. Seems like he knowed me, but didn't keer fer me.

"Finally I lost sight uv him, an' never seen him no more. Now, some fellers I've talked with about it said that they never would shoot another snipe ef they wuz me, but I kain't fig-



The Otter
By Sir E. Landseer

Sportsman's Calendar

AUGUST

The Salmon-troller's Month.
Spring Salmon and Cohoes all over the Coast.
One of the best months for Trout of the season.

ger it out thataway. I reckon that partickler snipe jist had the same sense that ever snipe's got, an' I don't see that they hain't all good eatin'. O' course, I'd had one shot at that bird an' I wuz satisfied to let it go at that. But I don't see whar I kain't go on shootin' 'jack' jist the same as ever, do you?"

I told Joe-Dad that his logic was good, and that he certainly had no reason to relinquish his favorite sport. There was nothing, of course, that was in any ways remarkable to any one who knew Joe-Dad's truthfulness in this narrative, but there are so many incredulous people in the world that I took the trouble the next time we went to town to get the old "pusher's" affidavit to the story. He willingly accompanied me to the office of the justice of the peace in the town, and I take pleasure in appending his affidavit to the statement which he made to me, as related heretofore:
State of Indiana, County of Shelby, SS.

Joseph J. Jackson, otherwise known as "Joe-Dad" Jackson, being first duly sworn, upon oath deposes and says: That he has heard read the foregoing account of the jacksnipe which amputated its own leg with the saw bill of the Slab creek gallinippers and afterward cauterized the wound by means of lightning bugs, as described and set forth in the foregoing account, and that the said statement is true of his, the said Joseph J. Jackson's, own knowledge. That the facts and circumstances of said occurrence are well and truly and faithfully recorded and are strictly true, and further affiant saith not.

(Signed) JOS. J. (X) JACKSON.
mark

Subscribed and sworn to before me this eleventh day of April, A. D., 1889.
George W. Dogberry, justice of the peace.
(Seal) In and for the county and state aforesaid.

Witness to mark of affiant,
ERNEST MCGAFFEY.

FIRST AID TO THE INJURED

Two Hartford City, Indiana, hunters witnessed a remarkable exhibition of bird sagacity and comradeship, while hunting on Bullskin prairie, north of the city. The hunters were out after jacksnipe and plover. They had good shooting and had started for their rig, intending to return to the city, when a large flock of golden legged plover swept into view from the southeast. It was the first bunch of golden-legs they had seen. They were flying low and the hunters waited, keenly alive to the fact that the migrants approaching are the swiftest of all birds and they could hope for but one shot. Six plover dropped at the discharge of the guns. One bird flew straight up after the manner of game birds, hit in the head. It rose a hundred feet above the plane of flight and then fluttered downward, apparently about to fall, yet struggling to maintain its flight.

Its comrades circled back and formed a compact body underneath the hurt one and carried it toward a hundred yards. The wounded bird tried it again and was again rescued from a fall and carried forward upon the wings of its loyal comrades. The hunters saw the plover circle back and carry the wounded one on their wings for the third time, before they were lost to view in the distance and gathering twilight.

Caller (to the lady of the house)—Perhaps, madam, you could get the roll of our society. The subscription is only £1 for a life membership.

Lady of House—What is your society?
Caller (impressively)—The Society for the Repression of Crime.

Lady of House—I don't think my husband would care to put his name down for any such thing.

Caller—Why not?
Lady of the House—Because he makes his living by crime.

Caller (starting back, horrified)—What! Is he a criminal?
Lady of House—No; he's a policeman.

"How did she raise the money to go abroad to study music?"

"The neighbors raised a subscription, I believe."

"Why are you crying my little man?"
"Cos Jimmy kicked me."
"Why don't you kick him back?"
"Cos it would only be his turn again."

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