

The BUFFALO

from Down Under

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #63 –

The Northern Territories of Australia, mostly between Darwin and Alice Springs, is vast and remote – and the enormous ranches there are called “stations”. This area would be on some folk’s ‘bucket list’, because of the many national parks -- and most especially Ayers Rock. But buffalo, water buffalo, was our reason for going there. These animals were brought in from Asia, as domesticated livestock, in the late 1800s; but today they are all feral, much like wild hogs in many states in the U.S.

One of my most vivid memories of this hunt is the rough roads and many dangerous gates. The rainy season runs October through April and as the water dries

up the buffalo and cattle tracks harden, making your teeth rattle when driving around in a Land Cruiser. And the wire gates – these were strung so tightly that one person almost couldn’t get the wire off the post by himself; and when you did – look out. Then, you had to close the same ‘tightly-strung’ gate. It was a great sense

of relief each evening, when we went through the last gate and drove onto a smooth road.

The hunting was ‘spot and stalk’, in the pastures the buffalo shared with the cattle. Early and late they were feeding in the open areas and during the mid-day they stayed generally out of site in the brush. The grass was short on the higher ground, but taller in the low areas that held water longer after the rainy season. My buffalo was in the tall grass.



The horns are about 45" in width, though the picture makes him look bigger. The gun is a Weatherby 460.

It was the last thirty minutes of light and the guide and I slid quietly through the grass, making our way to a lone bull, feeding and completely unaware of our approach. Sixty yards seemed like a fair distance for an off-hand shot; the grass covered his lower half, so I held slightly into it and touched off the 460. He showed no evidence of being hit, but ran over a slight rise and out of sight – now what?

"We walked in slowly, guns at the ready..."

I thought we should have waited for the truck to make the approach, but the guide insisted we walk right in. Wow, close to dark, tall grass and a wounded buffalo? We walked in slowly, guns at the ready; there he was, dead, the hunt was over. It was certainly an interesting hunting experience from ‘down under’.

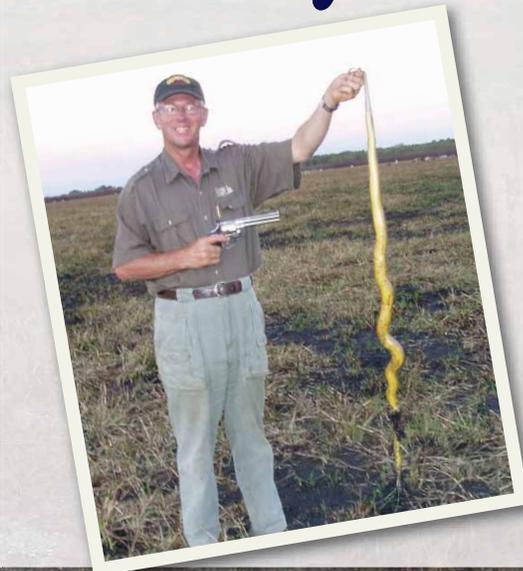


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Brenda with a nice buffalo, taken with a 300 Weatherby.



The Eastern brown snake is one dangerous critter – #2 in the world, by some accounts. This view is of his underside.