



# Deutschlander double



Stalking guide Paul Childerley takes a German client out in pursuit of an exceptional trophy-quality Chinese water deer buck and despite a genuine mistake doubles up in the process

**T**he Chinese water deer rut is often overlooked. It may not have the spectacle of rutting red stags locked in combat, or the impressive persistence of a roebuck chasing an in-season doe in a continuous circuit, but it is nevertheless a unique time in the English stalking calendar.

The rut is the most exciting time to stalk this species. I am fortunate to have some of the best water deer stalking in England, close by Woburn Abbey where the initial escapees settled into the countryside and founded the wild population we have today. The height of the rut is in December, and long-standing German client and colleague Jost Arnold had joined me for a weekend of sport in Bedfordshire. Jost is a top shot and an experienced hunter who always knows what he wants. He is a trophy collector who appreciates the unusual as well as the impressive heads, and completely trusts my judgement.

It was an extremely sharp morning as we carefully pushed through the frosted mustard game crop and crawled under the hawthorns to spy a field of winter wheat. I had regularly seen a huge-tusked buck holding ground on this field, and I hoped today we would come to terms with him. The Zeiss binoculars cut through the twilight to make out a buck some way out into the field, and 15 minutes later there was still enough light to confirm that this was indeed the buck we

were after. Without the binoculars we would not have known there was a deer in attendance. I cannot stress enough to fellow stalkers the importance of quality optics.

I had just made the decision to start to crawl in alongside the hedgerow, when the buck stood up. Glassing him quickly, I saw he was stamping in an agitated fashion. Soon after, the story unfolded. Another buck, sporting an equally impressive set of canines, came skipping in to challenge the old stager. He pulled up short and the confrontation began with the two bucks walking stiffly towards each other. They then took to a parallel walking display that would have impressed a pair of stags. At this point I took advantage of their commitment to the fray and motioned Jost to follow me quickly on the crawl.

It was a textbook crawl in to 150 yards, and as Jost deployed the legs of the Harris bipod I glassed both beasts once more. The old stager had obviously been a real scrapper in his time as his ears were well torn. The interloper's tusks had both length and circumference at the bases and would easily achieve gold medal status, as would the aging scrapper.

As I suspected, Jost was keen to shoot the battle-scarred veteran. All we had to do now was wait for him to stand and offer us the opportunity of a clear, safe shot. The territorial challenge was clearly



The CK Hunter is small enough to handle easily yet incredibly sharp and resilient

### Custom Knife CK Hunter

This is a well thought out knife, and it is obvious an experienced stalker has had a great deal of input into its design. The balance is perfect and it fits to the palm like it was moulded to be there. After straightening one's index finger against the back of the blade, it is extremely easy to make the initial incision for the gralloch. Indeed, one has so much control of the knife, all worries about puncturing the rumen are dispelled and unzipping the beast has been speeded up considerably.

A gut hook is the quickest option, of course, but they are so difficult to keep sharp after the blade becomes dull. Thankfully, the CK Hunter totally negates the need for a guthook. It is also very nifty in hand, performing admirably when bleeding out, opening up the throat and nicking the diaphragm during the gralloch. The short, sharp point makes cutting round the backside a doddle. Overall, this blade has improved gralloching time considerably. It is clearly well built, and will give years of service. At £125 it is well worth the investment.

For more information, contact Custom Knife on 02476 447192 or [www.customknife.co.uk](http://www.customknife.co.uk).

going to develop into a fight, and the old buck vented his frustration by issuing that strange, almost alien-like clicking sound. Film buffs will recall the film *Predator* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger – this clicking sound is not dissimilar to the one made by Arnie's alien nemesis in the movie.

Both bucks began swiping at each other's head, neck and shoulders, but the old boy was clearly the superior. The interloper turned tail and ran, hotly pursued by the old buck. Both soon stopped, but their range had now increased to 250 yards. However, I was confident of the big German's ability behind the rifle, and instructed him to take the left-hand one.

A momentary movement of position because of some burrs obstructing the scope saw Jost fit to the rifle with the commitment of a Stalingrad sniper. I picked up the buck in my binos and heard the moderated shot go off – but the buck remained standing. A quick scan to the other buck confirmed its demise. He had shot the wrong one.

Apparently the slight re-shift of position had left Jost mistaken when he refocused on the buck. Both were safe with a good backdrop, but he hadn't shot the intended buck. These trophies are not cheap, and I did have a number of top-end bucks still left to shoot.

What followed was one of the most surreal experiences I have ever known when out stalking with a client. We struck a 60-second deal in the field, shook it, and the second buck, still oblivious to our presence, was shot perfectly through the heart. Unbelievably, it ran back towards its deceased adversary and toppled over to lie next to it. You couldn't have imagined it.

There ended a most enjoyable morning's stalking. It had seen some precision marksmanship and a lot of fun in good company to produce two exceptional trophy bucks that will live long in my memory. ■

For Chinese water deer trophy and cull stalking, contact Paul Childerley on 07715 638934 or [paul\\_pskb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paul_pskb@yahoo.co.uk).

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Double up: After a true case of mistaken identity, Jost got the right one in the end