

Glazebrook

Inland Marlborough is a beautiful part of New Zealand and the Waihopai Valley in autumn is a beautiful part of North Marlborough. The deciduous trees that flank the river are a vibrant mix of yellow, red and orange and are an intensely bright colour. The drive in to Glazebrook Station from Blenheim is one and a half hours long but very enjoyable on the eyes, with vineyards, neat farms, and river scenery. The date was mid-April so from a hunting angle I was too late for the peak of the Red stag roar but right in the middle of the Fallow deer rut.

I had earlier met up with Poronui General Manager Steve Smith, and client Jarrod, at the Blenheim Countdown supermarket and after stocking up supplies followed them in my truck through the picturesque valley. They had travelled by truck and ferry down from Taupo while I had cruised up from Christchurch. They had been seven hours on the road, me four and a half hours but all of us were still hoping to get out for a hunt that evening.

First: some history. Glazebrook Station was bought in 2006 by the North American Westervelt chain of sporting lodges. It joined the other New Zealand purchases, which were Poronui Station and Kiwi Safaris. Steve Smith was made New Zealand General Manager, and he has since made the Poronui brand an iconic hunting label for all the New Zealand Westervelt Lodges.

Kiwi Safaris has since been on sold, and all

Glazebrook guiding is now done by Poronui staff or contracted guides. On my trip Steve was the guide, cook, and driver. A multi-talented man.

For the uninitiated to New Zealand, Poronui Station is near Taupo and has perhaps the greatest pure herd of free-range Sika in New Zealand, while Glazebrook Station is in the South Island and from a free-range perspective has good numbers of representative Red stag and Fallow buck, moderate numbers of pig, occasional chamois, and high numbers of wild goat.

Glazebrook will always be the Cinderella sibling in the Poronui stable, but like Cinderella there is more to her charms than you might think. In size it is huge: a 23,000-acre Marlborough South Island ranch,

which in another life earned its primary income from sheep and cattle. It now has no sheep, a limited number of cattle, and a management policy that encourages the managed growth of wild populations of several local big game species.

Hunters on Glazebrook earn their animals, as the terrain while scenically magnificent, is stalking wise very steep. Towering mountain peaks, scree slides, climbing valley faces, passes, gorges and extensive ridgelines are all on display. The vegetation is a mix of open grassland and low mountain shrubs, making progress around the north facing hills fairly easy, though patches of stunted second growth clothe the darker faces.

Glazebrook is at the head of the Waihopai Valley, nestled right up against the northern end of the Southern Alps mountain range. Mountain peaks dwarf three mountain saddles that lead into New Zealand's South Island interior and during my visit a passing southerly left a snowy cap on top of each.

Advertorial profile

Written By Greg Morton

The property is best described as long, narrow, and steep, consisting of two parallel rivers, the Waihopai and the Spray, running down either side of a central chain of hills. Most hunting occurs on the north facing central chain of faces and valleys. The narrowness of the property means clients are hunting from the time you drive through the gate as large amounts of free-range game live on the Waihopai River faces that rear up from the road. It can take a long time to get to the Lodge as new game is regularly sighted round each road corner. These hill faces have numerous gullies, gulches and basins running along their length and this is where deer, goats and pigs are often found.

The modern Lodge at Glazebrook sits on an elevated plateau jutting out over the intersecting headwaters of the Waihopai River and Glazebrook Stream, strategically placed to maximise views. The lodge features a main building with a spacious living area, dining room and kitchen. Four chalets offer guests comfortable private accommodations. From a free-range perspective Glazebrook offers kiwi hunters as good an accommodation/hunting package combo that can be found. Prices are:

3 DAY GUIDED HUNTING PACKAGE NZ\$1,350 pp (minimum 2 people)

Included is three nights Lodge accommodation, three days of guiding (2x1), all meals, house wine and beer, transfers from Blenheim Airport. Trophies are extra.

5 DAY GUIDED HUNTING PACKAGE NZ\$2,250 pp (minimum 2 people)

Included is five nights high quality accommodation, five days of guiding (2x1), all meals, house wine and beer, transfers from Blenheim Airport. Trophies are extra.



Glazebrook Lodge.

MULTI HUNTER PACKAGE NZ\$1,900 pp

(minimum 5 people)

Included is five nights high quality accommodation, five days of guiding, all meals, house wine and beer, transfers from Blenheim Airport. Trophies are extra.

Free-Range Trophy Fees are:

Free Range Trophy Red Stag (12 – 14 points) NZ \$1,500

Management Red Stag (10 points or less) NZ \$500

Management Fallow Buck NZ \$500

Wild Pig/Boar NZ \$100

Meat deer: NZ \$200

Wild Goat: Complimentary

I won't include chamois fees at this stage as numbers are still building.

Quality of free-range Red deer is good for the area, which means a representative New Zealand stag is on offer, though the Fallow buck by Douglas Score standards produce fair heads only. The odd Fallow buck surprises however as we would find out on my visit.

Good Red stags are 10-12 points with an antler length in the range 34-38 inches. Glazebrook free range Red stags are typically big animals, but often lack trez tines which is a genetic deficiency inherited from the original liberations.

A point worth noting about Glazebrook is that while the country is very steep, the footing under your boots is excellent. The ground is well grassed, and easy to grip, just on a serious angle. Smith has in part alleviated the steepness issue through putting in good, high country vehicle tracks. These allow his Kabuto engine braking ATV to safely drive clients up high, drop them off, and allow them and guide (if required) to work their way down on to game, and after the hunt continue down to the bottom of the valley where they are picked up. It is a tried and true method. Hunting opportunities also often present themselves during the drive up the tracks or descending down a track. The Lodge is located right in the middle of the top hunting area so game can surprise you virtually on the doorstep, and is often spotted as guests lounge out on the deck. All the game we observed hung out at the mid-valley zone so hunts required going up or dropping down; with sidling a good technique once the mid zone level was reached. Spot and stalk, and long range shooting (average 200-350 metres) are the norm, and good physical fitness is an essential asset.

On my trip travel from the front gate to the Lodge was slow as Steve and Jarrod were constantly stopping in front of me to glass new game. Positions were noted for hunts later in the week. The Lodge was finally reached and kiwi hunters will appreciate this place. Comfort sums it up. That evening we headed out for a hunt and just on dusk a management Red stag was spotted with three hinds. At 359 metres he felt pretty safe, so just eyeballed us disdainfully waiting to see if we tried to approach him. Steve dragged out his long range Sako equipped with an 18-power scope and offered it to Jarrod. He, like me, agreed with the stag's assessment of the situation, but Steve was adamant his rifle would do the business. Jarrod was talked into it, aimed just under the chin and the bullet dropped him cleanly with a neck shot. Lights out. The only one not surprised was Steve. He was so far up the hill it was dark when we finally reached the big nine pointer. It was the longest, successful shot I personally have ever witnessed.

Day two we had a cruise around the property and saw a lot of animals, though they were mostly high up on the faces. A couple of the best Red stags were royals, and one pig that escaped was a good boar. In mid afternoon regular croaking below us caught our attention and Steve and Jarrod stalked in on a big black Fallow buck holding four does. He was performing like a heading sheepdog, and would not allow any of the does to move into cover. His concentration on them however cost him his life as while chasing one doe he provided Jarrod with an open shot and down he went. He was a good management buck with one broken palm.

Day three saw me add a couple of eating pigs to the tally and later that afternoon Steve guided another client who had arrived that morning up the hill after a big black buck holding twenty does. The wind was gusting so Jarrod and I left them to it and went out on a photography foray.



Jarrod and 9 pointer.



Jarrod and big buck.

Author and pig.

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After dark we went back to pick them up and the result was a thumbs up. After a long stalk they had got in close and dropped the buck as he croaked his heart out. A monster for this area, the trophy had twenty points with long, solid palms. He was better than 200 on the Douglas score and the best so far shot free-range on the property. We went back the next day to headskin the trophy and I snapped a couple of pics of guide Steve carrying it off the mountain. The scenery in the background sums up the hunting experience on this property. Bad weather hit us overnight but the next morning, just before we left, I shot a meat deer for my freezer back at home.

The interesting part of hunting Glazebrook is that every hunting day is all about the scenery.

That is because you view it from the Lodge, view it as you go up the mountain after game, view it while you sidle hunt at the mid level, and view it as you go down when the hunt is over. As well as big game hunting, plentiful small game (hare and rabbit) sniping and limited brown trout fly-fishing and gamebird hunting (duck, quail) is on offer.

Contact details are: Poronui Hunting: Steve Smith, PO Box 1941, Taupo 3351. New Zealand.
Phone +64-7-384-2080, Facsimile +64-7-384-2054,
Mobile: +64 21 888 669, Email: steve@poronui.com,
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