

A STORY OF THE OLDEN DAYS

BILL BOWDEN . . . DINGO HUNTER

This article was contributed by Mrs. Florrie Munro of Caroonna, who has often written for "Dawn". Mrs. Munro said, "This is a true story of Bill Bowden's experiences at dingo catching. Bill is over 70 years of age but is still a very smart and active man."

In his early days Bill Bowden was a splendid stockman, and although he was only a quarter-caste aborigine, his ability as a tracker was hard to beat.

Once when we were rambling through the bush with him, he said to us, "How would you people track an emu?" We, of course, answered very smartly, "Get on its tracks and follow it."

"That is just what you don't do," said Bill, "for an emu always goes backwards to its nest."

That was just one example of his wonderful knowledge of the bush.

Best of all, we liked to listen to his stories on dingo catching, and we would crowd round him listening intently to every tale.



Bill said dingoes were very hard to catch unless you had all the cunning of a true bushman, and then went on to tell us of his experiences with a dingo bitch and her litter of eight pups.

It was just getting on to dark one day when he came across the nest with the eight small pups in it. The mother, however, had escaped and hidden nearby. Bill killed seven of the pups and then rubbed a mixture of honey and strychnine on the back of the survivor and took up a position nearby where he could watch.

After a while the dingo returned and tried to console the whimpering puppy by licking him all over. It was not long before the poison took effect and the dingo fell dead.

Many people had tried to catch this particular dingo killer without success, and there was a big reward on her which Bill duly collected.

At one time in the dense ranges between Bingara and Narrabri a particular giant dingo was playing havoc with a station-owner's sheep, killing and mauling many of them. The carcasses of the dead sheep showed that this dingo was killing just to get a small feed—a fresh sheep every time. Everyone in the district had tried to get him, but without success.

Eventually Bill and his mate, Walter Swan of Moree, decided to have a try, and set out for the district with about enough food to last them for a week. Days passed without any sign of the killer and then one day, just on dusk when their hopes of finding him were almost exhausted, their keen ears picked up a distant howl.

"I'll drive a few of these sheep ahead," Bill told his mate, "and you wait here up in this tree."

It wasn't long before the scent of the sheep attracted the dingo. There was the savage crack of a .32 rifle from the tree, a few yelps and snarls, and the giant killer was dead. This wild dog measured just over 8 feet from the tip of his tail to the tip of his nose, and one of the biggest ever caught in the district.

The jubilant station owner gave Bill and his mate £30 for the scalp.

