

HUNTING

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September 2020 | Tools & Gear

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**3 GREAT
HIKING
BOOTS**

Cash In on
FEEDERS

9 Must-Stock
RANGEFINDERS

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief / Hilary Dyer
 Copy Editor / Alex Headley
 Product Editor / Gordy Krahn
 Digital Editor / Dave Maas

CREATIVE

Art Director / Mark Kingsbury

ADMINISTRATION

Circulation / Holly Gensler
 holly.gensler@colepublishing.com

ADVERTISING

President/Publisher GVO / Derrick Nawrocki
 derrick.nawrocki@grandviewoutdoors.com
 Regional Sales Manager / Don Harris
 don.harris@grandviewoutdoors.com
 Regional Sales Manager / Mike Kizzire
 mike.kizzire@grandviewoutdoors.com
 Regional Sales Manager / Patrick Boyle
 patrick.boyle@grandviewoutdoors.com

NATIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Byers Media / Ken Byers & Toby Shaw
 toby@byersmediaonline.com

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EMAIL Holly.Gensler@colepublishing.com. Please include both old and new addresses.

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SAR USA

by SARSILMAZ

SAR USA blends Turkish engineering and cutting-edge manufacturing experience into every product they produce. The new Magic family semi-automatic and complete Turkish line of high-quality shotguns are no exception.

The new Magic semi-auto shotgun is Turkish engineering and performance at its finest. Featuring state-of-the-art manufacturing along with 140 years of engineering excellence, the SAR USA Magic shotgun is second to none. The Magic family features contemporary styling and is loaded with features.

- High-performance vent ribbed and slug barrels are machined solid steel drilled and honed
- Lengthened forcing cone for enhanced long-range shooting performance
- SPro® interchangeable Beretta/Benelli thread patterned compatible choke tubes (five included)
- Truglo sight for optimized shot grouping

The Magic also has a machined lightweight aircraft-grade aluminum receiver in a blued finish that has an extremely low coefficient of friction. The wood models have laser checkering for a textured gripping surface and genuine Turkish oiled-finished walnut stocks. It's the ultimate combination of comfort and optimal performance. The SAR USA Magic is also available in a 24-inch slug configuration with synthetic stock.

Available in 26- and 28-inch vent ribbed and 24-inch slug barrel configurations, the new SAR USA Magic shotgun is loaded with all the great features and benefits you'd expect from a high-performance shotgun.

To learn more about the Magic shotgun line or the complete product line from SAR USA by Sarsilmaz, please visit www.sarusa.com.



Chris Carlberg Joins Everest.com

Everest.com, the shooting sports and outdoor gear industry's first customer-centric, community-driven, multi-merchant marketplace, announced the hiring of Chris Carlberg as Vice President of Business Development.

As Vice President of Sales at Walther Arms, Chris dramatically increased stocking dealer and helped create the industry-first "Try Before You Buy" 30-day money back guarantee, which produced significant category growth. Prior to Walther, he was the Chief Operating Officer at *Guns.com* and held the post of Director of Business Development at Bill Hicks & Co. LTD.

Bill Voss, CEO and founder of *Everest.com*, states, "Chris' experience and relationships across the firearms and outdoor sporting goods industries are top-notch, and we believe he will be an incredible resource in our efforts to broaden the Everest marketplace and best serve our customers."

Chris will lead the business development efforts for the new e-commerce marketplace including engaging brands, manufacturers and retail partners, forming new synergistic relationships across all Everest programs and managing the company's internal sales team.

2020 NASGW Expo Canceled

The National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers' Board of Directors has canceled the 2020 NASGW Expo scheduled for October in Grapevine, Texas.

NASGW leadership has been monitoring the mounting cases of COVID-19 in Texas and the expanding travel restrictions throughout the country. Despite extensive planning and precautions taken to limit risk, leadership stated that the health and safety of members and the shooting sports industry is the top priority.

"As cases have continued to increase and travel restrictions are starting to expand, this decision is best for the health and safety of our members," said Laurie Aronson, NASGW Chairwoman. "We need to

protect our industry right now, and unfortunately that means canceling the NASGW Expo."

NASGW is looking forward to the 2021 Expo on Oct. 27-29 in Columbus, Ohio.

"For many in our industry, the NASGW Expo is their most productive event because it is very business focused," said Kenyon Gleason, NASGW President. "Unfortunately, bringing people together in 2020 is not the best thing for our association, our industry, or our country. This was a very difficult decision, but one that ultimately proved the most responsible course of action."

For current information regarding the 2020 NASGW Expo, please visit nasgwexpo.org.

Honor Defense Partners With Oxys for Church Security Training

Honor Defense has partnered with Oxys Tactical Training to provide customized training and support for church security.

OXYS is an Official Partner of the USCCA, and conducts professional courses for concealed weapons, women's defense, and offers private training. A feature of their practice is business and church security training and planning. OXYS will soon release training curriculum(s) specifically tailored to highlight the benefits, features and functions of Honor Defense to benefit church security.

"We are very encouraged to integrate their technical expertise into our training," said Don Emmack, lead instructor for OXYS.

Honor Defense pistols are built with more features than other CCW pistols. All firearms are ambidextrous and a key safety feature of no tools needed or pulling of the trigger for disassembly.

OXYS provides customized security training to business, religious organizations and individuals. Led by Don Emmack, a former law enforcement officer and USCCA/NRA certified firearms instructor, its "practical tactical" approach seeks to identify and implement the best training methodology to fit the needs of organizations as well as individuals.

SpyPoint Introduces Insiders Club

With its Link series of cameras and the new Cell-Link device, which can turn virtually any non-cellular camera into a cell cam, SpyPoint is innovating scouting and game management. The company is announcing the introduction of its new Insiders Club, designed to reward users with exclusive discounts and access to unique features as they use their SpyPoint cameras.

Membership in the club, which costs \$99.99 per year, enhances the company's multi-camera management system and gives members 20% off any photo transmission plan, full-HD on-request packages, and purchase of accessories on the company's website, in addition to free shipping on orders placed there.

Insiders Club members will also benefit from advanced scouting tools, like eight Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) filters that separate photos in the app into categories including buck, antlerless deer, boar, bear, turkey, moose and even a human activity filter that detects people or vehicles. This feature allows for more efficient sorting and viewing of photos transmitted by SpyPoint devices, including cameras from other manufacturers transmitted via the Cell-Link. Other benefits include 50 full-HD on-request image transfers, 500 cloud-based favorited images, 12 months of photo history, and unlimited devices on your account.

Members will also be able to enter monthly giveaways from industry partners. In addition to the on-

going monthly contests, the Annual Grand Prize, which in 2020 will be a 2020 Chevrolet Custom Trail Boss, 2020 Side-by-Side UTV and a 2020 14' single-axle trailer, will be given to one lucky Insider Club member after the end of the year.

The Insiders Club membership is designed specifically for owners of any cellular-capable SpyPoint devices, including the Link-series cellular cameras, as well as the all-new Cell-Link.

Consumers can learn more about the Insiders Club by visiting www.spypoint.com/insiders.



NSSF Launches American Red Cross Fundraiser

NSSF, the firearm industry trade association, has launched a fundraising campaign to benefit the American Red Cross. The fundraiser is the newest component of NSSF's Gun Owners Care initiative.

NSSF launched the Gun Owners Care initiative at the 2020 SHOT Show to gather the voices of the firearm-owning public and show our country American firearm owners are good people doing good things for families, friends, neighbors and communities.

"Our industry has shown exceptional generosity in the wake of the pandemic and other difficulties our country has been experiencing," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF President and CEO. "We've seen our manufacturers convert their plant machinery to make face shields and hand sanitizer, and their employees have fed first responders and stocked community food banks. All of us in the firearm industry care deeply for our home communities and our country, and we believe this fundraiser for the American Red Cross will show everyone how much gun owners care."

"The American Red Cross needs your help to deliver their lifesaving mission perhaps now more than ever," he added. "I'm asking everyone in the firearm industry to please join us in donating today."

In addition to monetary donations, which go di-

rectly to the American Red Cross when made through NSSF's GoFundMe page at bit.ly/NSSFRedCross, NSSF encourages members of the firearm industry to donate blood, also a desperate need for the Red Cross.

Hoyt Moves Launch Date of Its Flagship Bows

Hoyt Archery recently announced it would be moving its annual product launch of premier hunting bows from October to January. This represents a major shift for Hoyt and is expected to benefit its dealers, allowing them to maximize sales opportunities through the hunting season and the holidays.

"We realize the past few months have been a challenge for all of us," said Hoyt President Randy Walk. "Our evaluation of current market conditions and the need for retailers to maximize sales opportunities during this next hunting season is the key driver behind this change, and we believe this is the best decision in our effort to support retailers and the entire archery industry. Rest assured that we will continue our relentless efforts to design and produce superior archery products, and I am excited to get through the summer and fall selling seasons and finish 2020 as strong as we can. I am also confident we will rally as an industry and be prepared for 2021 as a year of growth and prosperity in archery." HR



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Know Your Products

Sales associates will flat-out sell more product if they know more about what they're selling — and customers will be happier with their interaction, too.

BY PATRICK MEITIN

During my days as a sporting-goods associate, I was top salesman more months than not for two years running. This isn't mere speculation, but empirically provable, as sales were closely tracked, and frequent performance evaluations were based on those numbers. We also made a small commission (incentive really) on all sales, plus end-of-year bonuses based on annual sales. Several promotions came my way in relatively short order due to this performance and significantly bolstered bi-monthly paychecks via commission money.

But I am not a natural salesman. I'd starve selling anything door to door or as an ad salesman for a print magazine. I'm inherently shy, perhaps even a bit antisocial. I will definitely take no for an answer, and it is not in my nature to be pushy when dealing with people.

So, how did I manage such steady sales? The answer comes easily, if not the means to carry it through: in-depth knowledge of nearly all products we sold. This arrived through decades of full-time outdoor writing and the detailed information that job provided. I could hardly have

penned, conservatively, 50-plus "equipment-roundup" features annually without gleaning some amount of insight — be that arrows or ammo, new bows or rifles, binoculars or rangefinders, stands or blinds and so on. I'd been immersed in gear minutia so long I could effortlessly quote grains per inch (gpi), inside diameters and the component specs on any arrow made; bullet design and muzzle velocities of common firearms ammunition; exit pupils, twilight factors and purging gases used for most optics brands — and on and on. This gave me an obvious leg up.

Truth be told, I was terrified to be thrust into that sales job, but the mortgage had to be paid. Yet that vast reservoir of product knowledge gave me confidence while interacting with customers and honestly answering their often pointed questions. My blunt honesty and encyclopedic insight into everything hunting put me in high demand.

Put yourself in a customer's shoes a moment. People contemplating parting with hard-earned cash to invest in something they will depend on to bring them success or increased enjoyment during recreational respite do



not want to hear a mealy-mouthed response to a question borne of very real concerns.

Imagine you are buying a new GPS, springing for, say, \$400.

“How does it work?” you ask. “Does it accept XMaps cards?”

“Well, I’m not really sure,” says the unprepared salesman, “Let’s look at the directions.”

This doesn’t exactly instill trust. If I wanted to read instructions, I would do so on my own time and avoid the inconvenience of having to drive to a store. No sale!

I understand my position is a bit unique. A sales associate can hardly be expected to invest a decade of slim pickings to become a “made man” in the outdoor writing dodge simply to elevate their sales pitch. But if you’re

going to sell the outdoors, you really need to study the products you are pushing to help provide informed sales pitches and, more importantly, put customers at ease with knowledgeable answers to their inevitable questions.

Yes, I understand this requires a bit more effort, namely time spent studying off the job. I was there, too — recall I made commission. So when confronted by customers interested in, just as an example, all that super-expensive (big commissions!) Thule car carrier/roof-rack gear we sold, I found myself sadly lacking. I lost \$1,000 to \$1,500 sales because I couldn’t answer basic questions or agree to install purchased product. So I studied. I volunteered

to attend a Thule workshop on one of my days off (when I should’ve been writing). I became the in-store Thule expert. It put more money in my pocket.

And yes, I also understand not all sales people earn commission, so the incentive for extracurricular activities isn’t as pressing. But no matter the job, I’ve always believed you should strive to be the best you can be. It makes you a more valuable asset; it can lead to promotions and makes your workplace more appealing to visiting customers. Those whose knee-jerk response is something to the effect of, “Yea, whatever, no one ever notices anything I do above and beyond,” are destined to remain where they are.

You don’t have to absorb all of this information overnight — you aren’t cramming for a school exam after all. Maybe start with something you find interesting, seeking to delve deeper into what makes those products tick. You might then move on to items that prove most popular in the department you are assigned to if you work in a

“Ask yourself where you are most lacking in knowledge, or think of specific product categories you find yourself unable to answer questions about.”

larger outlet. Ask yourself where you are most lacking in knowledge, or think of specific product categories you find yourself unable to answer questions about — maybe GPS units, optics, ammo or archery. Don’t be afraid to venture outside your comfort zone. Do you believe, for instance, I really cared anything about Swedish-made hipster roof racks? I’m a pickup truck kind of guy.



When I worked retail and offered this advice to work associates, the same people who could relate the plots of all the latest TV shows were generally also those who would tell me they didn’t have time to study products. I know, reading product brochures/instruction manuals and watching YouTube instructional videos isn’t as fun as the latest episode of your favorite Netflix show, but if you truly want to become a better salesman, it’s time well spent.

I also found it beneficial during slow days or downtime to simply handle product thoroughly. This is actually enjoyable for true gear junkies, and it gives you a good background should a customer ask for assistance installing batteries in, say, a predator-calling unit. After all, a love of the outdoors and the gear it inspires is likely what attracted you to this vocation to begin with. **HR**

↑ Your sales associates should be able to at least answer basic questions about the products you stock.

PRO STAFF

Patrick Meitin worked in various bow shops off and on while in high school and college. More recently he worked as a low-level manager in a regional sporting-goods chain as a salesman, employee scheduler and mechanize specialist. He has been heavily immersed in the archery and firearms trade for more than 30 years.



Hiking Boots

Hunters and non-hunters alike will come to your store shopping for boots. Here are three great options in a variety of price points.

BY MARK CHESNUT

While a comparison of hiking boots might sound somewhat out of place in a magazine for hunting retailers, the simple fact is a lot of hiking occurs during hunts of many types. In fact, for a typical upland bird hunt, way more hiking occurs than actual shooting of birds.

Also, those retailers who cater to hunters can increase their boot sales by offering boots to non-hunting hikers, a large market segment they might be overlooking. A recent report by the Adventure Travel Trade Association listed hiking as the most popular activity among adventure travelers. In fact, hiking jumped ahead of several adventure activities that had been more popular just 10 years earlier, including rock and mountain climbing, rafting, trekking, sea and whitewater kayaking and canoeing.

Equally impressive, the Outdoor Foundation's 2018 Outdoor Participation Report found that

hiking is now the fourth most-popular outdoor activity in the United States — right behind running, fishing and biking. Consequently, hiking boots represent a very lucrative profit center.

Before we look at a few boots, let's first explore some Hiking Boot 101-type information. Footwear in this category is generally made of textile with leather, suede or synthetic reinforcements that provide a support structure and add abrasion resistance. Hiking shoes are also popular, but we won't be looking at them in this review.

Several parts of these specialized boots combine to make them the outstanding specialized tools they are. From the bottom to the top, the outsole is nearly always made of rubber. The main feature of the outsole is the lugs — the protrusions built into the rubber to give the wearer traction in less-than-optimum walking conditions.

The internal support of a hiking boot is

critical for effectiveness and longevity. Shanks are placed between the outsole and insole for load-bearing stiffness and support. The midsole is what provides cushioning and makes a boot comfortable to wear on long hunts or hikes. Many midsoles are made of ethyl vinyl acetate (EVA) of varying densities, depending on the cushioning desired.

Lastly, the boot's upper is where you'll see the most difference. They range from synthetics like polyester and nylon, to nubuck leather, to split- and full-grain leather, along with combinations of those materials. The materials used in building an upper make a difference in weight, durability and other factors.

Now, let's take a look at three quality light-weight hiking boots in different price ranges. All would make great boots for hunters and hikers, along with great additions to your footwear inventory.

TIMBERLAND MEN'S WHITE LEDGE MID WATERPROOF

Starting with a boot that can be found for well under \$100 online and at some stores, the White Ledge is considered by many to be one of the best hiking/hunting boots for this price level. With a history of more than 50 years in the boot-making business, New England-based Timberland knows how to make a good pair of boots at a decent price.

Trail- and field-ready right out of the box, the no-frills White Ledge is obviously a budget boot based on the price. But it is one of the best quality boots in the under-\$100 price range. The White Ledge has uppers constructed of leather for both comfort and durability. Interestingly, with its seam-sealed construction, even though the boot has no waterproof membrane in the lining, users report it will still keep feet dry when hunting or hiking in wet morning dew.

At about 1.2 pounds per boot, the pair comes in at 2.5 pounds, placing them in about the middle of the pack for sub-\$100 offerings. The wide rubber outsoles are sufficiently lugged and have been touted by most reviewers to give ample grip in challenging ground conditions.

The White Ledge features thick padding around the ankle, making it comfortable to wear for long stretches of time. And with two upper and four lower rustproof speed-lace eyelets per boot, wearers can snug the boots to their feet quite well without having to worry about laces working loose.



“Retailers who cater to hunters can increase their boot sales by offering boots to non-hunting hikers.”

SALOMON X ULTRA 3 MID GTX

Jumping up to boots in the \$100 to \$200 range, the Salomon X Ultra 3 Mid GTX is one of the tops in that price range – or any price range, for that matter. Salomon has been making great hiking boots for 30 years, and its lightweight offerings are perfect for those hunters who walk long distances in their hunting endeavors. The company has pretty much perfected building boots that stand up to abuse on the trail, hence the tremendous following that Salomon enjoys.

Salomon boasts that the Ultra 3 “Brings running-shoe comfort to technical hikes, with sculpted linings and contoured heel cups that cradle your feet and minimize slippage during grueling uphills and epic descents.” For those who will be putting in a lot of steps, this boot really shines in the weight category. At just under 2 pounds for the pair, the Ultra 3 really cuts the amount of weight you’ll be dragging around on a long day of upland bird hunting or spot-and-stalk big-game hunting.

The boot’s leather upper is made to last, while the Gore-Tex waterproof bootie liners allow the wearer’s feet to breathe while also protecting them from the elements. At the same time, the Ultra 3’s Ortholite sockliners combine a specific Ortholite foam and contoured EVA heel cups for enhanced heel support.

On the outsoles, the Ultra 3 features a unique pattern combining two types of rubber for gripping the terrain more aggressively. Mud guards and integrated rubber toe caps provide durable protection from roots and rocks. The boot is available for about \$165.



LOWA RENEGADE GTX MID

Jumping up to boots in the over-\$200 category, we find an excellent boot in the Lowa Renegade GTX Mid. In the \$250 range from most retailers, the Lowa exudes quality while also looking like a million bucks.

Slightly heavier (2.5 pounds for the pair) than the Salomon, the Lowa is also a tougher, better-made boot that can take high miles and rough terrain in stride. Whether the difference in the two is worth an extra \$100 at the outset is completely up to the customer and his or her needs and budget.

The Renegade is Lowa’s signature boot model, and it’s not hard to see why. Comfortable and supportive, it is available in a wider range of sizes than many of its competitors, making it perfect for those who have hard-to-fit feet. Lowa’s lightweight Vibram outsoles have a unique look – they’re not as deeply lugged as some of the aforementioned choices, but they still do the job in rugged, treacherous terrain.

Those needing a waterproof boot that won’t let them down should also give the Renegade GTX a look. The all-leather uppers are treated with a water-repellant coating, and the interior of the boot features a Gore-Tex lining, which waterproofs the boot and also provides good breathability.

Last but not least, the Renegade GTX gets high marks in comfort by most who have worn the boot extensively. The boots’ full-length nylon shanks offer great support for long days on your feet, while the padded and gusseted tongues relieve lace pressure and keep out debris. **HR**



PRO STAFF

Mark Chesnut is a freelance writer and editor who has been a professional journalist for more than 35 years. An avid hunter and bird dog lover, he is also owner and editorial director at Red Setter Communications.



The Gateway to Selling More Rangefinders

Those retailers with well-stocked shelves and an intimate knowledge of the bells and whistles that differentiate one rangefinder from another stand the best chance of separating customers from their hard-earned Benjamins.



BY GORDY KRAHN

The laser rangefinder is arguably one of the most important equipment purchases a hunter will make during his or her lifetime. Whether shooting a compound bow, crossbow or long-range rifle, knowing the precise distance to the target while calculating and allowing for changes in elevation can mean the difference between a clean kill and a missed shot — or worse yet, a wounded animal. Rangefinders eliminate the guesswork often associated with unpredictable shooting situations, so hunters can concentrate their efforts on making a well-placed lethal shot.

But not all rangefinders are created equal, and buyers are often confused when faced with technical jargon and advertising hyperbole. Paying for only those features that are pertinent to specific hunting needs becomes paramount and good advice a premium. That's why it's important for hunting

retailers to be well-versed in those nuances that differentiate one rangefinder from another — the unique features that make a particular model or models the right fit for the consumer. For example, laying down extra cash for a rangefinder that can detect a deer in the next county is counterproductive if the buyer is exclusively a bowhunter. Money is better spent on bow-centric features such as angle compensation, finer calibration at close range and high-quality optics for discerning target animals from non-target objects.

Only the most informed and well-stocked hunting retailers will be best prepared to capture the moment — and those hard-earned Benjamins — when customers walk through their doors to kick the tires on the latest, greatest rangefinders on the market. So, with that in mind, here's a quick look at some new models you're going to want to keep front and center on





★ **BEST FEATURE:** Bluetooth Pairing

SIG SAUER KILO BDX

In January of 2014, Sig Sauer completed its move into the company's new facility in Newington, New Hampshire, and the following year expanded its product line to include suppressors, ammo, airguns and optics — including an extensive line of rangefinders. At the heart of this new headquarters is the state-of-the-art manufacturing floor, featuring an expanded machining production center, quality control testing facilities, and an indoor, multi-position test-fire range, which includes a 100-meter precision rifle range.

Featuring Sig Sauer's BDX technology, the Kilo BDX is a very advanced rangefinder. When paired with a Sierra 3 BDX riflescope, the onboard Applied Ballistics Ultralite calculator sends ballistic drop data via Bluetooth directly to the riflescope's BDX-R1 reticle, providing an illuminated holdover dot and wind hold. Users can download the free BDX App to setup ballistic profiles and synchronize custom profiles to their Kilo for exact ballistic solutions. Key features include LightWave DSP technology for fast, long-distance ranging, HyperScan for four range updates per second in Scan mode and RangeLock, which reports the last range result when ranging distant targets.

MSRP: \$1,039.99
CONTACT www.sigsauer.com



★ **BEST FEATURE:** Multiple Target Scan Mode

HALO OPTICS XLR1600 / XLR2000

According to Halo Optics, its creative process literally started with a lump of clay. "We held it in our hands to understand the intricacies of finger pressure points and the contours of a natural grip — so each rangefinder is an extension of the hand itself." From Angle Intelligence that accounts for slope to target to lightning-fast target acquisition and Scan Mode delivering up to four readings per second, Halo has checked every box for making quality rangefinders.

Halo Optics' XLR1600 and XLR2000 long-range laser rangefinders feature 6X magnification and premium glass, providing a crystal-clear view for rapid target acquisition and consistent ranging. Auto Acquisition technology delivers exact, nearly instantaneous range data with 1-yard accuracy and Angle Intelligence automatically calculates the horizontal distance to the target when shooting up or down in hilly terrain. Scan Mode allows shooters to lock in multiple targets at different yardages, greatly reducing the possibility of error. Both models feature an ergonomic design with a non-slip grip that can be operated with or without gloves and are made to withstand any weather.

MSRP: \$249.99/XLR1600; \$299.99/ XLR2000
CONTACT: www.halooptics.com



★ **BEST FEATURE:** High-quality Glass

KAHLES HELIA RF-M

A pioneer in riflescopes since 1898 and backed by a history rich in tradition, Kahles is known throughout the world for its quality optics — the first riflescope manufacturer to implement multi-coating on all air-to-glass surfaces in series production. Its new generation of Helia optics — including the Helia RF-M 7x25mm rangefinder — continues to set high standards for precision optics that operate in the most extreme conditions.

The Helia RF-M 7x25mm rangefinder from Kahles is ergonomically designed for simple handling and operation. It features a large field of view and is packed with hunter-friendly features — allowing the user to measure distances quickly while concentrating on the hunt. This unit is capable of easy and reliable targeting up to 2,000 yards while featuring exceptional edge-to-edge clarity and a wide field of view of 117 yards at 1,000 yards. The premium quality OLED display has five brightness settings and the battery life is 4,000 measurements. It also features Angle Compensation, Scan mode, as well as temperature and air pressure measurement.

MSRP: \$610
CONTACT: www.kahles.at

★ **BEST FEATURE:** Flightpath Technology



LEUPOLD RX-FULLDRAW 4 RANGEFINDER

A trusted name in hunting optics, Leupold & Stevens, Inc. is a fifth-generation, family-owned company founded in Oregon more than a century ago. It designs, machines and assembles its products in the USA, including rifle, handgun and spotting scopes, binoculars — and a full complement of laser rangefinders. Leupold's commitment to quality includes a lifetime guarantee and the promise that, "We design, build and test our products with a single-minded focus: to make sure they'll perform forever."

Leupold & Stevens recently announced the launch of the RX-Fulldraw 4, an archery rangefinder that calculates laser-accurate distances based on specific archery gear. Built with the bowhunter in mind, it features Archer's Advantage software, which uses arrow weight, arrow velocity and peep sight height to calculate extremely accurate ballistic solutions. And its Flightpath technology uses the same ballistic solution to determine if the arrow will clear obstructions between the shooter and his/her target. The RX-Fulldraw 4 delivers bright and clear images via its high-light transmission OLED display. Built to withstand the elements, it is 100% waterproof and extreme-climate tested with an easy-grip rubber armor and ergonomic housing design.

MSRP: \$714.99; CONTACT: www.leupold.com





★ **BEST FEATURE:** Dual Ranging Modes

NIKON PROSTAFF 1000I 6X20MM

Nikon has a long history — over 90 years — of making premium optical products for all types of outdoor pursuits. Using the latest technology and modern computer design, its optics achieve a balance of maximized light transmission, high resolution and razor sharp, aberration-free images. Nikon offers a full line of binoculars, riflescopes, rangefinders and spotting scopes designed to meet the demands of hunters everywhere.

Nikon's Prostaff 1000i 6x20mm laser rangefinder features ID (incline/decline) angle compensation technology — with a Horizontal Distance/Actual Distance display mode that can be easily switched depending upon the user's preference. With 1,000-yard maximum ranging capability, compact ergonomics and 6X optical system, the Prostaff 1000i is a great tool for hunting with rifle or bow. The user can choose between two different ranging modes depending on the situation. First Target Priority mode allows the user to range an object as small as a fence post while Distant Target Priority mode displays the range of the farthest target among a group of targets measured.

MSRP: \$199.95

CONTACT: www.nikonportoptics.com



★ **BEST FEATURE:** Value Priced

SIMMONS VENTURE

Since 1983, hunters and sportsmen have looked to Simmons for optical innovation and rugged durability at a great value. For solid, dependable optics at a bargain basement price, it's hard to beat Simmons' selection of riflescopes, binoculars and rangefinders — favored by hunters who don't care to pay for a host of features they don't need. Those who want a basic product that works and works well. Simmons optics not only deliver spot-on accuracy, innovative features and reliable performance, they're also built to last hunt after hunt.

Simmons is all about building high-quality products at an excellent value and its Venture laser rangefinder is no exception, offering versatility in the field or at the shooting range at a price that won't break the bank. It has a hand-friendly ergonomic design for effortless use and quick and accurate target acquisition and is equipped with Tilt technology that calculates true horizontal distances for steep angled shots — providing dead-on accuracy, every time. The Venture's high-contrast, clear display gives hunters an edge in low-light conditions.

MSRP: \$99.99

CONTACT: www.simmonsoptics.com



★ **BEST FEATURE:** Brush/Bull's-Eye Modes

BUSHNELL PRIME 1700

Bushnell has been a significant player in high-performance sports optics for more than 65 years — providing high quality, reliable and affordable products along with a commitment to outstanding customer service and strong retailer partnerships. Its product lines enhance the enjoyment of every outdoor pursuit — but none more prominent, perhaps, than its dedication to hunting and the shooting sports. This is evident in its quality laser rangefinders.

The all new Bushnell Prime 1700 rangefinder gives hunters and shooters the capability to range PRS (precision rifle series) distances with the touch of a button. Its large objective lens paired with an all-glass optical system transmits more light to the eye for a brighter, clearer image, adding critical time to the hunt at dawn and dusk. Fully multi-coated optics with ultra-wide band coatings provide bright, true to life colors, and angle range compensation accounts for changes in elevation. Brush mode ignores foreground objects — brush, tree branches, etc. — and provides distances to background objects only. Bull's-eye mode acquires the distances of small targets without inadvertently measuring background object distances.

MSRP: \$199

CONTACT: www.bushnell.com

★ **BEST FEATURE:** WindPro Technology



TRIJICON VENTUS

Trijicon, a leader in any-light aiming systems supplies the Official Rifle Combat Optic (RCO) of the U.S. Marine Corps and has partnered with government, state and local law enforcement agencies for decades. The company also creates aiming systems for shooting and hunting enthusiasts around the world — including riflescopes, red-dot sights, electro optics, iron sights and, most recently, a new rangefinder.

Powered by WindPro technology, the Trijicon Ventus measures three-dimensional wind velocities at multiple distances out to 500 yards and ranges real-world, non-reflective targets up to 5,000 yards, giving shooters and hunters previously unattainable data. The handheld device utilizes an advanced Doppler LIDAR engine and four collimated lasers sent out in a cone to measure wavelength interaction with dust particles at up to six different distances. Thanks to a fiber-optic collimated laser capable of returns through dust, fog, sleet and snow, the Ventus offers all-weather performance. This technology allows shooters to calculate for head, tail, cross and vertical wind.

MSRP: NA

CONTACT: www.trijicon.com





★ **BEST FEATURE:** Four Targeting Modes

VORTEX RAZOR HD 4000

Founded in Middleton, Wisconsin, in 2004, Vortex Optics produces a complete line of meticulously designed riflescopes, prism scopes, binoculars, spotting scopes, rangefinders and optical accessories. The company is laser focused on serving its customers and retailers, helping them succeed in the field and on the sales floor by delivering rugged outdoor optics equipment, setting standards that outperform the expectations of the average, the routine, the ordinary and at a great value.

The Razor HD 4000 laser rangefinder features four targeting modes – Normal, First, Last and Extended Laser Range – for any ranging environment and uses HCD (horizontal component distance) angle-compensated ranging technology to give bow

and rifle shooters the critical distance data needed to make accurate shots. It also has a LOS (line of sight) Range mode and a Scan feature. Optimized select glass elements deliver exceptional resolution and provide outstanding color fidelity, edge-to-edge sharpness and excellent light transmission. Anti-reflective coatings on all air-to-glass surfaces provide maximum light transmission for peak clarity and the pinnacle of low-light performance. ArmorTek scratch-resistant coating protects exterior lenses and Waterproof O-ring seals prevent moisture, dust and debris from penetrating.

MSRP: \$729.99

CONTACT: www.vortexoptics.com

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Mathews: Something for Everyone

Mathews Archery offers customization options, a variety of product lines and a new Switchweight module to give any customer exactly what they want.



BY ALAN CLEMONS

Mathews Archery began in 1992 when Matt McPherson created the company based on his first bow with Solocam technology. But the seeds to one of the industry's most successful archery companies began many years earlier thanks to McPherson's passion.

McPherson has been building bows for more than 50 years. He built his first stick bow when he was 10 years old and his first compound bow three years later. He couldn't afford to buy one. Innovation and determination guided him, along with a willing shop teacher in school who allowed him to create a bow. Although McPherson didn't know it at the time, his life's trajectory was set.

After founding Mathews Archery, McPherson was determined to maintain control over every aspect of the building process. Mathews sources the best materials and micromanages the manufacturing process to deliver innovation, quality and craftsmanship recognized by hunters and competitive shooters.

We talked with Caleb Parry, Communications Manager for Mathews Ar-

chery, about the company and its new flagship bow, the VXR, along with the Switchweight module system and new Silent Connect System.

HR: Thanks for taking some time to talk with us. Sounds like the new VXR has generated good response. What are you hearing on feedback and demand?

CP: Despite the factory being shut down for almost two months, we're having a great year with the VXR. Right out of the gate, people were really excited about the overall shooting experience the VXR provides. There is zero hand shock, it's deadly quiet and extremely stable.

Our patented Switchweight module technology, which was carried over (from 2019) has also continued to do well. Dealers really got behind Switchweight for its versatility and ease of use. The system allows them to set up a demo bow specific to any customer that walks through their door within minutes. That versatility also carries over for our customers. Say a hunter goes out West for elk and shoots 75 pounds, but he'll be hunting whitetails in



the Midwest late-season when it's much colder. He can throw on 60-pound Switchweight modules with just a change of four quick screws and he's ready to go.

HR: The new Silent Connect System looks interesting. How did that come about?

CP: One of our product engineers, Brandon, who works with Matt (McPherson) came up with the idea and used it during his 2019 hunting season. It's a simple but effective system in the field. We have two complementary accessories that go along with the SCS System — a bow rope and sling. The bow rope orients your bow parallel to the tree so you can easily pull it up without snagging limbs or brush. It has no metal or plastic components, so slipping it on and off your bow in the dark is quick and quiet. We partnered with Mystery Ranch on the sling. It's made of Cordura for durability, is extremely adjustable and has a non-slip pad so it won't slide off your shoulder.

“Each one of our brands has a specific purpose and fills a void or opportunity to do it better in the market.”

HR: The “Start Your Build” feature allows people to build and customize their bow. How popular is that?

CP: We started to raise awareness about our Bow Builder platform a couple of years ago, and it continues to grow in popularity. Our Bow Builder is one of a kind and allows customers to put their own personal spin on any of our bows.

HR: What's the most popular color or combination? Anything you guys see more regularly than anything else?

CP: The fluorescent and neon colors seem to be the most popular. It's not uncommon to go through



HR: Along with Mathews, you have Mission Crossbows, Mission Archery, Genesis Bows and Zebra Bowstrings. From youth to veteran, it seems everything is covered.

CP: Yes, our goal has always been to grow the sport of archery, and all of our companies do just that. Each one of our brands has a specific purpose and fills a void or opportunity to do it better, in the market.

final assembly and say “whoa” with some of the color combinations, but that's what's cool about it — no two bows are the same.

HR: Was the manufacturing plant kept up during the shutdown?

CP: We temporarily shut down for the health and safety of our employees, customers and community. During that time, we had a skeleton crew

making sure all of the machines were ready to go when our doors opened back up.

HR: With the impact of the coronavirus and popularity of the VXR, will dealers and consumers see new bows in autumn? Or will the VXR be it for the year?

CP: We will have new products, yes. Matt and our engineers have been hard at it throughout this pandemic. But we're also excited about finishing the year strongly with the VXR. It's been solid for us, and we hope the momentum continues.

HR: What's your favorite bowhunting memory?

CP: I'd have to say it was my first archery bull in Colorado five years ago. I was fortunate enough to harvest a solid 5-by-5 on an OTC backcountry hunt. My buddy JT and I struggled but stayed persistent, and it finally came together on the last day. I'll never forget the bull coming in and watching my arrow find its mark. It's an emotional roller coaster that I'll never forget. **HR**



How to Have Tough Conversations

Getting better at navigating difficult conversations with employees without damaging the relationship makes you a better leader.



BY QUINT STUDER

No one enjoys conflict and confrontation. We all want to be liked and accepted, and very few of us enjoy hurting people's feelings. However, as a leader you must be able to handle conflict or else you're not doing your job. You need to be able to hold tough and productive conversations with others and address conflicts that arise inside the business.

The goal with tough conversations is twofold. One, you want to solve a problem. Two, you want to do it without damaging your relationship with the other person. Remember that an organization is simply a network of strong, collaborative, mutually beneficial adult relationships. The better the relationships, the better the company. It benefits all leaders to master the art of resolving conflict while preserving great relationships.

The good news is that tough conversations can actually strengthen relationships and help both parties grow personally and professionally if you handle them the right way.

Before you go into a tough conversation, ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I being fair and consistent? It's important that you don't have one set of rules for one person and a different set for another.
2. Am I too focused on being right? Just because you may disagree with someone doesn't mean they are wrong. People have different experiences and points of view. Life isn't always about "right" or "wrong." When you have that attitude, you probably won't even listen to what the other person is saying.

3. Do I need to call in a witness, document the conversation or consider other legalities? Depending on the nature of the situation, you might. If you're not sure, consult an employment attorney or an HR rep if you have access to one.

Here are some tips for having difficult conversations:

Stay focused on preserving the relationship. It is possible to convey difficult messages while still treating the person with dignity, respect and empathy. This conversation is just one moment in time. If you damage the relationship, you shut down future opportunities for collaboration and innovation. Keeping this in mind should help you stay civil, focused and sensitive to how you say what needs saying. In fact, tell the person upfront that the relationship is important to you.

Consider that you might be wrong. Go in with an open mind. You're diagnosing, not condemning. You may not know all the variables causing the person to do the things they're doing. You might hear something totally unexpected



that shifts your perspective. You can be wrong. Knowing this and being willing to admit it is a sign that you're a strong leader. It will also help you be a better listener.

Before you call the meeting, get clear on what you want to say. Be sure you can express upfront what the problem is, how it's impacting others and what must change. Stick to these points and don't go off topic. Be prepared with hard metrics if you can. For example, "You've been absent 13 days in the past six months." Productive conversations are grounded in facts, not observations.



Schedule a time to discuss the issue, and give the person a fair warning beforehand. Otherwise, it gets blurted out in the moment and results in unfavorable outcomes. For example, say, "Chris, I'd like to chat with you about what happened at the store earlier this week. Can we meet tomorrow morning at 8?" This gives the person a chance to gather their thoughts and prepare emotionally for the meeting. Ambushing people or not being transparent about the nature of the discussion creates anxiety and breaks down trust.

Meet on neutral ground. It's usually best not to call the person into your office. This shifts the balance of power to your side and puts the other person on the defensive. It's better to meet in a neutral space, which sends the signal that this is a solutions-centered discussion, not a dressing-down from an authority figure.

Seek to be collaborative, not authoritarian. You want the other person to work with you to make things better. Outcomes are so much better when the person feels a sense of ownership for

"Ambushing people or not being transparent about the nature of the discussion creates anxiety and breaks down trust."

the solution. Ask positive questions like: How are you feeling about our partnership? What factors do you think led to this issue? Do you have any ideas about what both of us might do differently moving forward? Don't exhibit a "my way or the

what they meant. Trying to understand where someone is coming from is a way of showing empathy. It helps them accept what you have to say, even if it isn't what they wanted to hear. When people don't feel heard or listened to, it's upsetting. It damages relationships.

Keep things civil. Never yell, insult, threaten or bully the person. This should go without saying, but we're all human and emotions can get out of control. If things start to escalate, end the meeting and reschedule when you're both calmer. A single episode of bad behavior can tear down a relationship that took years to build. The person may appear to comply in the future, but there will be an underlying resentment that affects performance and outcomes. The issue will get lost, and the focus will be on your bad behavior. It's OK to take a break or come back later if you need to calm down. Remember, odds are good you'll still be working together.

End with an action item. Ideally, you and your employee will both have a task to do going forward. This way you can schedule a follow-up conversation to see if things have changed for the better.

Most people will never enjoy tough conversations, but

you can get more comfortable with them. People often find they are the catalyst for growth. They get people unstuck and moving in a positive direction. When you think of tough conversations this way, you may feel more inspired to get better and better at having them. **HR**



highway" attitude. It's good to listen to the other person's perspective and to compromise when you can. It shows the person you respect and value them. Might doesn't always mean right, and the loudest voice shouldn't always win.

When you ask questions, give the person time to gather his or her thoughts. Don't just talk to assert your point of view or fill up silence. This comes across as you steamrolling over the other person. This is especially important when you're dealing with an introvert who needs time to think before they speak.

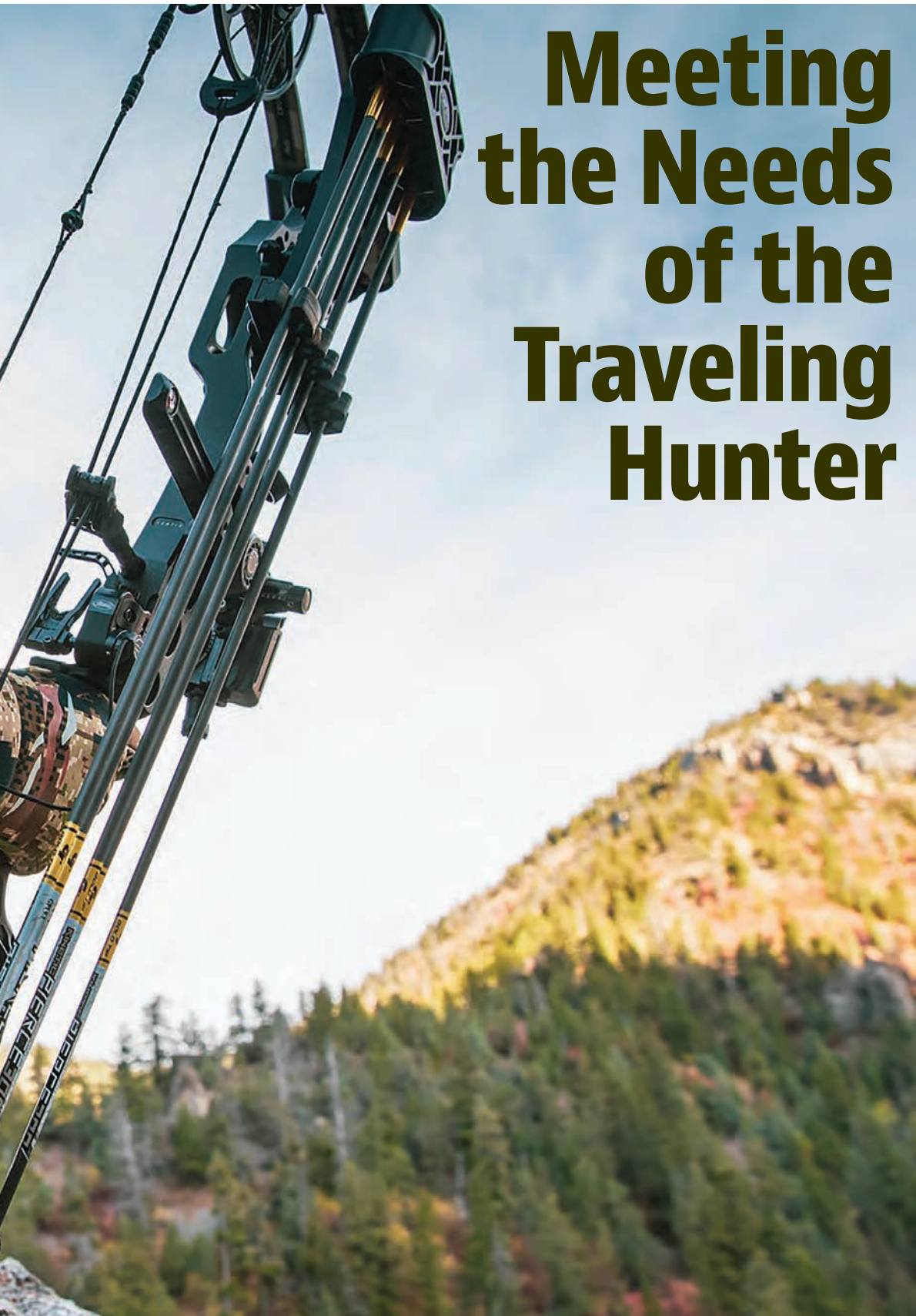
Listen actively. It's all too easy to spend your time calculating your response and not really listening. Try to stay focused on understanding what the person is saying, both verbally and nonverbally. Summarize what they are saying and confirm that what you think they said is actually

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Quint Studer is the author of *The Wall Street Journal* best-seller *The Busy Leader's Handbook* and the founder of Vibrant Community Partners and Pensacola, Florida's Studer Community Institute. He currently serves as the Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of West Florida. To learn more, visit www.thebusyleadershandbook.com.







Meeting the Needs of the Traveling Hunter

A wave of DIY public-land road trip whitetail hunters make their way to destination states each fall. Here's how to meet their needs.

BY BERNIE BARRINGER

Take your mind back to the mid-1990s, the early days of outdoor television channels. Imagine a deer hunter in Michigan, New York, North Carolina or Florida. He's sitting on the edge of his seat watching some soon-to-be hunting celebrity shoot a big buck in Iowa, Kansas or Illinois. And he's thinking, "I'll never see a buck like that around here in my lifetime."

There were more than a hundred thousand like him, and what was a curiosity in the 90s would become a movement just a decade later. Today, scores of whitetail hunters travel to the states that have become known as "destination states" among the throngs of hunters who travel outside their home state to hunt whitetails each year.

I've watched this movement in person and been on the front lines for years. I've blogged about it and wrote the book *The Freelance Bowhunter: DIY Strategies for the Travelling Hunter*. Others have grabbed onto the train as well. A group of guys started the YouTube channel The Hunting Public to chronicle their DIY public-land hunting endeavors and watched it grow to 200,000 subscribers and 40 million views in just over two years. This movement is on a roll and doesn't show any signs of slowing down.

Some states have increased the number of nonresident tags available to accommodate the growth of the traveling hunters; others make them wait in line to accumulate points. Several states have significantly increased the cost of nonresident tags to take advantage of the demand. Iowa tops the list of destinations, and despite the costliest nonresident tags and licenses, has long lines of hunters waiting to get in. For the best archery zones in Iowa, a hunter will have three to four years of applications and about \$800 invested in tags, licenses and preference points. For a whitetail deer tag.

But the tags aren't the most expensive



part of this endeavor. These nomadic hunters need gear. Specialized gear. And they are very hungry for information. While some nonresident hunters use the services of an outfitter, most are not willing to pay for them, or prefer the excitement and challenge that comes from doing it themselves on public land. These hunters do not pay up and use a week or two of vacation to travel and shoot does and forkhorns — they are loading their trucks and heading down the road with hopes of shooting a bigger buck than they're likely to encounter at home.

That's where retailers come in. Shops that can offer them information and the specific products they need can capitalize on this movement. Let's take a look at some of the equipment they may run across your scanner.

Lightweight, Mobile Stands and Sticks

Hunting on a deadline, such as a week's vacation, means hunting aggressively. It often means the

move of a treestand with the input of any small nugget of new information. A trail cam photo or buck sighting may not cause you to move your entire setup when you have the whole season to hunt, but traveling hunters need to roll with the punches and react immediately to changes. We opt for light, packable gear. We value a balance of weight and comfort with the emphasis on lightweight and uncomplicated ease of setup. Light, strap-on climbing sticks are popular since many public properties do not allow the use of anything screwed into a tree.

Climbing stands are popular with some hunters, but the trees in which they can be used are often limited in some locales. Some questions of qualification are needed before you sell someone a climber. I always have a pop-up ground blind along, and I suspect most others do as well.

Because of the typical long walks associated with penetrating public lands, harnesses must be simple and minimal; backpacks have a mini-

mum of essentials. Things like bowhangers and hooks are nice, but trend towards those that can attach to something without screwing into the tree.



Cameras and Camera Protection

The most important ways of gathering information during the ever-changing flow of the hunt involves trail cameras. It's common for me to have four or five cameras in the woods during a week-long hunt, and I'm checking them every day. Along with hunting pressure on public land comes increased potential for

theft, so not only do DIY hunters need the cams, but they also need ways to protect them. Cables are one way, but they do not really solve the real problem — the loss of information contained on an SD card. This intel can at times be far more valuable than the replacement cost of the camera. Steel safes, originally intended to protect cameras from marauding bears, keep the cameras and the photos safe.



Boots

Quality footwear is critical to a successful hunt. Few public lands allow the use of motorized vehicles, and the savvy hunters know that they must get away from the crowds to be successful. That typically means long walks through every kind of terrain. Crossing small waterways, muddy areas and thick cover laces with wait-a-minute vines are a normal part of most days. Boots must be waterproof, durable and comfortable. Those with sturdy lowers and neoprene uppers have risen to the top of the choices among DIY hunters.

Electric Bikes

Unless you've been living in a cave, you are aware of the growth in ebikes for hunting. The growth in use among DIY traveling hunters is unprecedented. When first introduced to them, I was very skeptical. I felt the price would be a huge barrier and didn't really see the value of riding over walking in most situations. Then I tried one. Then I bought one. Then I became a dealer of Bakcou electric bikes. The advantages are many, including minimizing of scent and quick, silent traveling.

They are a game changer for the public-land hunter where they are legal — and that's the part that's a little weird. The growth has been so quick and so profound that state game departments are grappling with the decisions on how much these





tools will be allowed. At this time, bikes with motors of 750 watts and less are not considered motorized vehicles on federal lands, and many states have adopted that standard. But this is a very general interpretation, and things are changing in several states. If you stock these bikes, you'll need to keep up on the regs.

Lures and Scent Control

The traveling DIY hunter has a sense of urgency in everything he does, and that includes an increased reliance on lures and lure dispensers. It's hard to find a better way to inventory bucks in the area than using a scrape dripper with fresh scent in front of a trail camera. Public-land hunters are adept at using them and relying on them, particularly during rut hunts (which includes the vast majority of DIY hunts in the Midwest).

This sense of urgency also means an increased reliance on scent-killing products that minimize human intrusion and scent signature. Hunting on a deadline often means aggressively pushing the edges of wind currents and stand locations. Traveling hunters are big consumers of scent killing sprays and ozone producing units.

Clothing Concerns

You climb out of your truck in the early-morning darkness and the sub-freezing cold hits you in the face. You're about to walk a mile over hill and dale and then sit still for five hours. What are you going to wear? This is a decision we have to make every day. Layering is the standard, and know-

“I’ve found that many hunters are somewhat loyal to specific camo patterns until they are headed on a road trip with a lot of time and money invested.”

ing which layers to use when is the way you win friends and influence sales. Merino wool base layers are popular because of their ability to keep in warmth even when damp with sweat. Mid-weight layers come next, and then, for long sits on stand, an outer layer that deters wind and snow or rain is essential. The more packable this stuff is, the better hunters will like it.

Vests and puffy jackets are popular for varying temperatures, and a good waterproof outer layer that can be stuffed into a backpack will save many hunts. Everything must be quiet! Once you've lost an opportunity to shoot a deer by drawing a bow in an outer shell that's noisy when cold, you'll never do it again. Know what works and pass this important information along to your customers.

I've found that many hunters are somewhat loyal to specific camo patterns until they are headed on a road trip with a lot of time and

money invested. Then they readily prioritize function over fashion.

Gear for Offbeat Strategies

The nature of these DIY road trips causes many hunters to think outside the box when it comes to strategy. While picking out the right tree and sitting patiently in a stand will always be the number one way to shoot a whitetail on public property, many hunters also employ some off-beat tactics in order to be mobile and strike quickly. This has caused a growth in the use of ghillie suits for hunting on the ground. Hunting from the ground may mean a natural ground blind of sticks and leaves, or it might mean plopping down on a fallen log or even sneaking through a bedding area at midday. More and more traveling hunters have a ghillie suit in the truck for just these situations.

Tree saddles have made a significant comeback in the past couple years. These allow the hunter to go up the tree and hang in a seat. They're certainly more mobile than the traditional treestand and a lot less weight to lug around. It remains to be seen how much traction this will get, but I can tell you the booths at the most recent ATA show that offered these devices were some of the busiest places in the building.

Information

Our traveling hunters devour every nugget of information they can get their hands on. Anyone traveling to a new destination needs intel; the shops that have someone who really knows the ropes will be their hero. The first time I went to North Dakota, I discovered every tree in sight was too small or crooked to place a hang-on stand. If I'd had someone to tell me that I should be hauling a ladder stand and a ground blind, I would have been very grateful to them. By the same token, don't sell a climber to someone headed on a hunt to Montana, where they're likely to be hunting from 300-year-old cottonwoods as big around as a Volkswagen.

Knowledge is the key to understanding the needs of the DIY public land hunter, and the best knowledge comes from experience. If you don't have someone on staff who has done some road trips, it might not be a bad idea to send someone on a couple so they can relate their experiences.

Any way you can help customers with research will enhance the relationship. Resources such as listings of state DNR websites, online mapping tools and nonresident licensing knowledge will make you a hero. When the traveling hunters walk in the door, understanding and meeting their needs will create trust, and there are few better ways to earn a lifelong customer than earning their trust. **HR**



2020 Shotguns for Waterfowl

Here's a look at this year's lineup of waterfowl-specific shotguns, with options for any budget.

BY HILARY DYER

Waterfowl hunters are serious about their guns. They tend to fall mostly into two camps: Those who hunt with a 30-year-old pump with all the bluing worn off, and those who choose a top-of-the-line semi-auto with the latest camo pattern and all the bells and whistles. Certainly, there are some hunters in between who will come into your shop looking for a Benelli Super Black Eagle III on a Remington 870 Express budget. Fortunately, this year's crop of waterfowl-specific shotguns has something for everyone.



Photo: Impala





1) BENELLI SBEIII WITH BE.S.T. COATING

The Benelli Super Black Eagle's reputation precedes it, and improvements to the line culminated in the Super Black Eagle III a couple of years ago. The SBEIII features Benelli's inertia action, a ComfortTech stock to tame recoil, an oversized bolt release, adjustable fit, and more waterfowler-friendly options. In 2020, Benelli added a proprietary BE.S.T. (Benelli Surface Treatment) coating designed to eliminate the problem of corrosion. Benelli is so confident in this coating (the company spent 10 years developing it) that it's offering a 25-year warranty on all BE.S.T.-treated parts on the SBEIII.

The SBEIII with BE.S.T. comes in 12-gauge with 26- or 28-inch barrels and a 3½-inch chamber. MSRP is \$1,999.

2) CZ 1012 SYNTHETIC BOTTOMLANDS

The CZ 1012 has been around for a while, but for 2020 it picked up a snazzy new (old) camo pattern: Mossy Oak's classic Bottomlands. The 1012 uses an inertia system the company says will reliably cycle a variety of loads – the same action CZ used to set a clay target world record in 2019. The 1012 Bottomlands has a 3-inch chamber and a 28-inch barrel, all at an attractive MSRP of \$749.

3) SAVAGE RENEGAUGE WATERFOWL

Savage joined the serious waterfowling world in 2020 with the introduction of the company's first-ever semi-auto shotgun. A single-piece, lightweight bolt carrier; self-regulating gas system that cycles all loads; melonite finish for corrosion resistance; oversized controls; chrome-plated reciprocating components; impressive adjustability options and, naturally, a camo finish makes this gun one to check out.

It's available in 12-gauge with 26- or 28-inch barrels, with a 3-inch chamber and an MSRP of \$1,549.

4) STOEGER M3500 WATERFOWL SPECIAL

A 12-gauge, 28-inch-barrel, 3½-inch-chambered inertia gun in RealTree Max5 with FDE cerakote – what more does a waterfowler need? The M3500 Waterfowl Special also has an oversized bolt handle and release for better handling by gloved hands, as well as a fiber-optic front bead. At an MSRP of \$849, this one should be popular with those champagne-taste-on-a-beer-budget customers.





5) MOSSBERG MAVERICK TWO-TONE

For the hunter on a budget, Mossberg's Maverick entry-level pump-action gun features dual extractors, twin action bars, positive steel-to-steel lockup, crossbolt safety, an anti-jam elevator and more. It also accepts Mossberg 500 accessories and parts if you have a need to mix and match guns for various uses. Two-toned models in bluing and Mossy Oak Treestand were introduced for 2020, in a variety of configurations, with fixed chokes. They come in 12- or 20-gauge, and a youth model is also available. MSRP for the 12-gauge is a bargain at \$259.

6) BERETTA A400 XTREME PLUS

This gun isn't new, but for 2020, a left-handed version is available. A top-of-the-line gun with multiple camo finish options, the A400 Xtreme Plus features an enlarged loading port, reversible safety, soft-shooting gas action, soft-comb stock, Kick-Off Mega recoil reduction system, extended charging handle, five included choke tubes, and more. It's chambered for 3½-inch shells and comes with 26-, 28- or 30-inch barrels. Price varies based on the configuration (of which there are plenty), but MSRP starts at \$1,750 and goes up from there.

7) REMINGTON V3 WATERFOWL PRO

This gas-operated 3-inch gun features Big Green's VersaPort system to cycle any load. It's adjustable for drop and cast and features an oversized bolt handle, bolt release and safety; a redesigned loading port for faster, easier loading; three extended choke tubes and a fiber-optic front sight. It comes in three different combinations of camo pattern and Cerakote, all with 28-inch barrels, in 12-gauge only. MSRP is \$1,230.

8) BROWNING BPS FIELD COMPOSITE

The Browning Pump Shotgun practically owns the higher-priced-pumps category, and in 2020, the company added a Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Blades model to the line. This gun features bottom ejection, rugged steel components, serrated slide release, tang safety, Inflex recoil pad, redesigned composite stock, oversized trigger guard, and more. The new Shadow Grass Blades version comes in 12- or 20-gauge with 26- or 28-inch barrels. The 12-gauge has a 3½-inch chamber to handle the largest loads. MSRP is \$779.





9) SAR USA SA-X 700

SAR USA is marketing a gas-operated semi-auto called the SA-X 700, designed in the Turkish tradition. It comes in 12- and 20-gauge with 26- or 28-inch barrels, with a synthetic stock and a durable black finish. It's chambered for 3-inch shells and comes with five choke tubes. Other highlights include an aluminum alloy laser-marked receiver, high-ventilated aiming rib barrel and a front fiber-optic bead sight. Designed to take a pounding in any weather condition, and with an MSRP of just \$666.66, the SA-X 700 should be easy to carry *and* easy on the wallet.

10) IMPALA PLUS

Distributed exclusively by Zanders, the Impala Plus is the latest Turkish-made shotgun to make a splash in the U.S. With features like a TruGlo fiber-optic sight, five stock adjustment shims, removeable comb riser, turn-and-remove bolt handle, triangular bolt release, high-pressure-treated barrel, a six-lug locking bolt, and a two-year warranty (warranty work done in the U.S.), it's not difficult to imagine American hunters embracing this 3-inch 12-gauge as a solid option for waterfowling, especially for the price. A variety of configurations are available in walnut, carbon fiber, assorted colors and five different camo patterns, with barrel lengths from 24 to 30 inches. MSRPs vary based on configuration between \$450 and \$700.

11) WINCHESTER SX4 WATERFOWL HUNTER

Winchester's had a lot of success with the SX lines, and the SX4 has been no exception. The Waterfowl Hunter model features back-bored technology for optimum shot patterns, a self-adjusting active valve gas system, drop-out trigger group for easy cleaning, hard chrome-plated chamber and bore, ergonomic stock with textured gripping surfaces, Inflex recoil pad, larger bolt handle and bolt release button, ambidextrous crossbolt safety and more. It comes in 12- or 20-gauge, with a 3- or 3½-inch chamber for the 12-gauge, and barrel length options of 26 or 28 inches. Three choke tubes are included, and the gun is decked out in Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Blades camo. MSRP for the 12-gauge starts at \$939.

11) WEATHERBY ELEMENT WATERFOWLER Max-5

Weatherby rifles speak for themselves – but do your customers know that Weatherby has turned its gun-making expertise toward shotguns in the past several years? Designed as a lower-priced alternative to the company's higher-end 18i, the Element pairs Weatherby's signature fit and finish with a clean-shooting inertia action in 12- and 20-gauge. It's adjustable for drop and cast and features a vented top rib, fiber-optic front bead, chrome-lined bore, dual-purpose bolt release, four choke tubes (three with the 20-gauge), and Griptonite stock with pistol grip and forend inserts. It's offered with a 26- or 28-inch barrel at an MSRP of \$699. **HR**



Should You Stock Feeders?

Everything you need to know about deer feeders.



BY DAVID HART

Baiting and feeding wildlife is big business. Americans spent nearly \$5 billion on bird and other wildlife food in 2016, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

There's no telling how much of that came out of hunters' pockets, but it's a safe bet they spent a lot of money. Feeding and baiting deer and other game animals is wildly popular where it is legal. A 2006 survey conducted by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources found that 94 percent of respondents used bait for hunting or to feed deer during the off-season. Most did both, providing food nearly eight months out of the year. All told, South Carolina hunters spent \$18 million on feed alone. It's even bigger business in Michigan, where bait and feed generated at least \$30 million in retail sales, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

From a retailer's perspective, that's a gold mine. Not only do those hunters buy lots and lots of feeders, they buy such things as corn and protein pellets to go in them. Texas hunters bought six million 50-pound bags of corn in 2000, according to a Texas A&M survey. Although there is no hard data on the number of feeders sold or the total value of those feeders, one thing is certain: Adding them to your inventory can get more people in the door and raise your bottom line. Selling feed can, too.

First Check Your Laws

Baiting or feeding deer is legal in at least 28 states, but laws can vary. In some, it is illegal to hunt over bait, but it is perfectly legal to provide supplemental feed when hunting season is closed. Other states prohibit feeding year-round — that is, hunters can't use any type of feed or bait ever. A few states have local or regional restrictions, while others, like Texas, have virtually no limits at all on feeding or baiting.

Even where the use of bait and feed is against the law, selling feeders typically isn't. Neither is selling corn or any other attractant. Of course, that presents an ethical issue. Should you sell a product your customers can't legally use?

The Basics of Feeding and Baiting

First, though, it is important to understand what hunters are doing with the products you sell. Feeding deer is just that: providing food that deer and



other wildlife would not have access to otherwise. It is a popular practice in the winter in northern states when natural foods are scarce.

Some hunters set up a feeder prior to hunting season and place a trail camera near it to take an inventory of their deer herd. Others provide high-quality, protein-rich feed year-round in an effort to increase animal health, antler size and the overall quality of their deer herd.

Baiting is the act of luring game animals to a specific location for the primary purpose of hunting. Bait draws deer into the open and gives hunters time to evaluate them before pulling the trigger. Generally, dried, shelled corn is the most popular bait and is ideal for use in both gravity and broadcast feeders. Some hunters use manufactured pellets made from pressed alfalfa and other ingredients. Not all types of pellets work in all types of feeders, though.

Gravity or Spin: What's the Difference?

Gravity feeders are little more than boxes or buckets with tubes or chutes extending downward. Feed falls from the container and stops at the bottom of the tube. When deer eat that available food, more falls down the tube. Some have a single tube or chute; others have multiple tubes and are elevated off the ground with legs. They can hold anywhere from a few pounds of feed to hundreds and can be the best option for hunters who prefer pelleted food.

They are simple and have no electric or moving parts that may break, making them attractive to budget- and convenience-conscious customers. However, gravity feeders do have some disadvantages. A limited number of animals can use them at once, and there is no restriction on how much an individual animal, or what types of animals, can eat. A pair of raccoons, for example, can empty a smaller feeder in a matter of minutes if they can reach the food.

Broadcast or spin feeders are battery or solar-operated and throw feed via an electric spreader. They typically include a programmable timer, and some come with a guard to keep raccoons and squirrels out of the feed. Many hunters set that timer to go off at dawn and dusk, when deer are most likely to be active. Users can also program the length of time a feeder throws food, controlling the amount of corn that is spread and the number of times it runs in a day.

Some come with legs; others have a hook so they can hang from a limb. They vary in size from a five-gallon bucket up to feeders that can hold hundreds of pounds of shelled corn. Those larger-capacity feeders don't have to be filled as frequently, a convenience factor that is important to some hunters. The larger the capacity, the more it will cost.

One significant disadvantage of a broadcast feeder is that non-target animals can eat the food before target game species like deer and hogs can get to it. The food falls to the ground, offering a first-come, first-served banquet for everything from squirrels and crows to raccoons and mice. Batteries can die, as well, and those electric motors may need to be replaced after a few years of exposure.

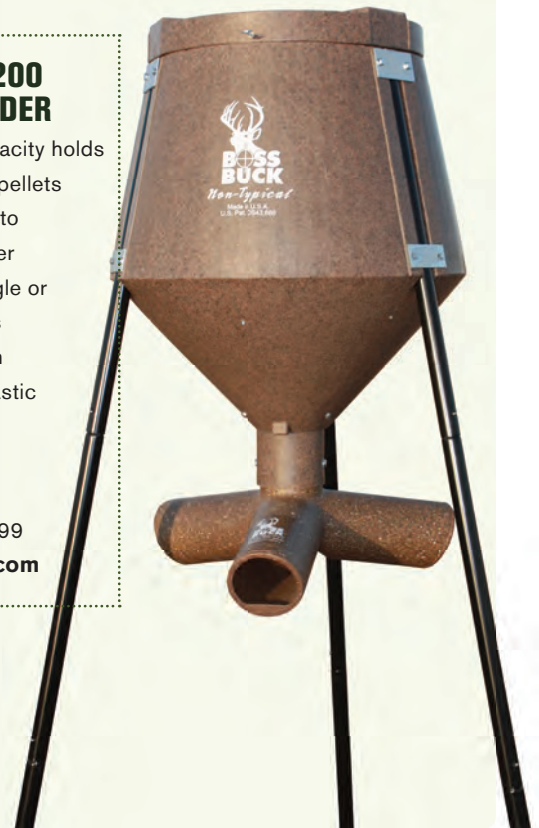
From a retailer's perspective, offering both types of feeders provides customers more options at different price points. Gravity feeders can be inexpensive. Moultrie's Feed Station, for example, retails for about \$25. It is a simple plastic tub and open tray that straps to a tree. Others have more features and are built from more sturdy and better quality parts. They can sell for several hundred dollars, although top-of-the-line products can retail for over \$1,000. Generally, though, gravity feeders are less expensive than spin feeders, which retail from about \$50 for a hanging bucket-type feeder up to \$1,000 or more for a freestanding, high-capacity model.

What you sell is less important than offering at least a few options. Feeding deer and hunting over those feeders is wildly popular where it is legal. Selling them can make your store popular, too.

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www.bossbuck.com



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www.bossbuck.com



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www.bossbuck.com



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www.bossbuck.com



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Get Packed!

Seven great backpacks worth their load-bearing retail weight.

BY KEVIN REESE

*L*iving life outdoors can be a blessing and a curse. As an outdoor writer, I feel privileged to spend more time than most off the grid, enjoying the wonders our nation's wild places provide. Unfortunately, as an avid hunter and multimedia content creator in our industry, getting all of my gear for the hunt and my work in the field can definitely be a challenge. Hundreds of thousands of hunters are similarly challenged — what to take, how to pack it and how to tote it all out there — coupled with the hope that you're going to return with a heavier load — can be a bit stressful, especially for longer, more remote adventures.

Picking the wrong pack system can result in a heavier haul than necessary or leave a hunter ill-

equipped — ultimately this can and occasionally does lead to life-changing, even life-ending consequences. Like Boy Scouts, hunters must be prepared and make sound, purpose-driven decisions. In quests to do just that, they often lean on retailers they trust for answers and solutions — great for you, since such answers also routinely end in sales, return visits and customer loyalty good for them, since they're better prepared for their hunt than before they came in to see you. Of course, understanding this retailer-customer dynamic is one thing; offering the right tool for the job can be quite another. To help you help them, here are seven great packs designed to enhance their outdoor experiences and increase your retail traffic.

BLACKS CREEK GUIDE GEAR STRATEGY (2020)

If any backpack manufacturer has learned beneficial lessons in production, research and development, it's Blacks Creek Guide Gear. With more than 20 years of manufacturing trailing behind the company, it has mastered raw material requirements early and, beyond product R&D, made consumer confidence and reliability top priorities. The result of such efforts are American-made pack systems regarded by hordes of fist-full-of-dirt hunting guides and diehard hunters as the pinnacle of backpack performance. This is good news for Blacks Creek Guide Gear and may be great news for retailers catering to discriminating hunters. Better still, for 2020, Black's Creek recently released the Strategy pack system — perhaps the company's best system yet.

The Blacks Creek Strategy Pack was designed to be an organized hunter's dream system. The Strategy's front-and-center feature is front access via a U-shaped zipper to 14 organizing pockets — perfect for organizing quick access equipment and micro-organization of additional gear. The Blacks Creek Strategy Backpack also boasts three rugged fabric options: 1000D Cordura, 500D Cordura and 3-layer laminated tricot; Mil-Spec hardware; YKK zipper pulls; external, expanding pockets; MOLLE straps to attach additional gear; front and top compartment access; bow and gun boot and a removable hydration pouch. Capacity is 4,000 cubic inches; www.blacks-creek.com



TENZING HANGTIME (2020)

While Tenzing is less than a decade old, it's definitely a dominant brand in the hunting space. Of course, with Plano Synergy at the helm, Tenzing's growth and popularity shouldn't come as a surprise. Honestly, considering brands like Tenzing, Ameristep, Wildgame Innovations, Barnett, Avian X, Flexstone, Frabill and others, as well as technology, product development and warranties, understanding Plano Synergy's success becomes pretty simple, and the proof is in the company's reputation — and to a great extent, in Tenzing backpacks, the brand-new Hangtime backpack as a shining example.

Unveiled in January 2020, the Tenzing Hangtime backpack has all the makings of the brand's new flagship daypack. Indeed, it appears that all of Tenzing's product development wins over the past eight years were rolled into a single daypack, and as a current Tenzing pack owner, I couldn't be happier; I may have to upgrade once the Hangtime is available. The Tenzing Hangtime Backpack features roomy top-load and face compartments as well as ample front-face storage. A specialized, quick-access optic pocket enhances gear organization and keeps binos or a rangefinder at the ready. A top brand like Tenzing is sure to draw customers through your door, and premium Tenzing features like Robic rip-stop panels, premium air mesh, silent access including no-rattle zipper pulls and compression straps make these packs a definite option. Capacity is 750 cubic inches; www.tenzingoutdoors.com



PACK RABBIT BACKCOUNTRY HAULER (2019)

A relative newcomer, Pack Rabbit has garnered quite a bit of positive attention as a result of its head-turning EXO-Skeleton technology and laser-focus on producing multi-function backpack systems. Designed for the hike, the hunt and yes, even the rest, Pack Rabbit Backpack systems offer versatility well beyond most other pack systems in the industry. Even better, depending on your customers' favorite pursuits, Pack Rabbit offers an array of hunt-specific pack systems, i.e. turkey hunting, deer hunting, etc. In this vein, Pack Rabbit released what proved to be its most popular system in 2019, the Backcountry Hauler. Not only is it worth the hard look from retailers, but it's also sure to turn heads and drum up hunting backpack sales for retailers opting to shell out some rack space.

Unveiled in 2019, the Backcountry Hauler certainly affirms Pack Rabbit's rightful place among today's best pack producers. As with other packs — I've spent quality time toting their Run-N-Gun Elite Turkey Hunter Pack System — the EXO-Skeleton tech is, as you might imagine, exposed. This technology is literally the backbone of Pack Rabbit's system. Not only does it provide a great pack frame, but it also incorporates a flip-down seat for improved sitting comfort while hunting or resting — it holds me, and I'm not the thinnest guy roaming the woods by a long stretch. The Backcountry Hauler features compression straps and lash loops, interior and exterior anchor points, quick-release straps, Velcro strap keepers, YKK zippers, a detachable sternum strap, an external 500 cubic inch pouch with an exit port for quick access to gear or a hydration reservoir and an adjustable, padded hip-belt complete with a MOLLE/PALS system to attach additional gear. The Backcountry Hauler is available in Alpine Green or Coyote Brown. Capacity is 3,700 cubic inches; www.pack-rabbit.com

SKB ARCHERY BACKPACK (2020)

So, what does a soft bow case have to do with packs and bags? This one is actually a backpack! SKB recently launched the SKB Archery Backpack. Archers and bowhunters are beginning to reap the combined rewards of backpackable convenience and SKB's unquestionable knack for delivering high-quality, ruggedly reliable bow, crossbow, firearm and gear bags and cases.

The SKB Archery Backpack is a padded, parallel-limb, soft-sided bow case constructed of heavy-duty 600D cross-dyed fabric and soft interior padding. Additional SKB Archery Backpack features include hidden backpack straps, interior and exterior accessory pockets, a shoulder strap that doubles as a bow sling and a long, zippered pocket large enough to accommodate arrows or an SKB Arrow Case. Dimensions are 45x16x4.5 inches; www.skbcases.com



BADLANDS CREED (2020)

From quite a humble beginning in 1992, armed with little more than \$2,500, a 10x20 storage locker and a couple sewing machines, Badlands has played an integral role in morphing hunting packs into the innovative, practical must-haves we know today. On a shoestring budget and a wing and prayer, just on the driven side of a pipe dream, Badlands stayed the course and grew from pack pioneers to one of the most popular hunting apparel and pack producers today, and its latest Creed backpack is a great testament to its drive to continue as an industry front-runner.

The Creed Backpack's foundation is based on a motto itself, so whether it's representative of the Badlands brand or just the pack itself, it appears aptly named. Badlands purports the Creed embodies the company's pinnacle achievements in quality and long-lasting, rugged durability. To accomplish this, the Creed features an Allite Super Magnesium internal frame, Badlands' KXO-32 fabric, molded foam suspension, magnesium alloy stays, zippered rear-entry suspension, zippered back-panel access and a detachable rifle and bow boot. The Creed is also hydration bladder- and handgun carry-compatible. Capacity is 2,679 cubic inches; www.badlandsgear.com



ALPS OUTDOORZ CONTENDER X WHITETAIL PACK (2019)

Launched in 2007, Alps Outdoorz offers packs, bags and other totable hunting gear. From ground blind chairs to layout blinds and sleeping bags to gun cases and backpacks, chances are good that retailers already carry a product type or two from this industry-leading brand. Fortunately, as diverse as their product categories and lineups are, they continue to innovate and the Contender X Backpack, released in 2019, is no exception. Alps Outdoorz fans already in the know and others just looking for a great pack are sure to give the Contender X a hard look.

Unveiled in 2019, the Contender X Whitetail Pack is a welcome addition to Alps Outdoorz's always-impressive pack lineup. The Contender X's foundation is an L-shaped frame for upright positioning when set on the ground, molded foam suspension and a heavy-duty, ultra-quiet fabric outer shell dressed in VEIL camouflage and ElimiShield Scent Control technology. The pack also features Lycra shoulder straps for long, comfortable carries, a drop-down pocket to hold a gun or bow, U-shaped zippered main compartment for easier access, and a waist belt complete with pockets and room for clip-style holsters. One of the Contender X's best features is an organizational pocket accessible from both the interior and exterior of the pack. Capacity is 1,850 cubic inches; www.alpsoutdoorz.com

MYSTERY RANCH POP UP 38 (2020)

For 20 years, Mystery Ranch has built a reputation among elite outdoor adventure seekers and professionals alike. From gritty high-mountain guides to firefighters waging forest-fire war in remote, extreme terrain, serious professionals have made Mystery Ranch packs their go-to. What does all this mean? In a world of influencers, endorsements through real-world use offer consumers great perspective on whether products can stand up to their own adventures. In a nutshell, Mystery Ranch packs have stood up to these reliability litmus tests, and based on the company's growth, consumers have noticed. That said, 2020 looks to be another banner year for Mystery Ranch with the recent release of the Pop Up 38 pack.

The Pop Up 38 Backpack capitalizes on benefits recently unveiled in Mystery Ranch's ultra-popular Pop Up 28, and expands upon them, literally. True to its name, the frame in this smartly designed pack quickly and easily converts from Pop Up 38's daypack capability to a full-size hauling pack with a load rating of 80 pounds when it's time to haul out meat and other gear. Size adjustments are achieved via expandable pole stays, while an adjustable load shelf and patented, micro-adjustable Futura Yoke system increase load capability while also improving carry comfort. An Overload feature allows for even more stowage between the pack and frame. Additional Pop Up 38 features include 500D LP Cordura construction, YKK coated zippers, hydration reservoir compatibility, Auto-lock SJ buckles and compression straps, zippered lid pocket, quick-access back pocket, top-loading shroud and side pockets for a rifle, tripod or water bottle. Capacity is 2,319 cubic inches; www.mysteryranch.com



HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

KNIVES & BLADES

BY GORDY KRAHN



BENCHMADE MEATCRAFTER

Having the right knife for the job is uber important when transitioning from the field to the kitchen. Designed in collaboration with MeatEater's Steven Rinella, the new Benchmade Meatcrafter (\$300) is a hybrid fixed-blade hunting knife with a 14-degree edge angle that provides a fine, smooth surface for trimming, deboning and slicing all cuts of meat. New to Benchmade, CPM-S45VN premium stainless steel combines the balance of a fine grain, sharp edge with carefully engineered blade flex. The Meatcrafter has an Ivory G10 handle and includes a black Boltaron vacuum-molded leather sheath. Great for field-dressing game and camp chores, this knife makes just as much sense in the hunting backpack as it does in the kitchen drawer.

www.benchmade.com

BEAR EDGE FULL-SIZED CAMPING KNIFE

Bear Edge Knives, a Bear & Son Cutlery brand, has expanded its fixed-blade lineup with a new serrated full-sized camping knife – the Model 61515 (\$32.49) – designed to fit the needs of hunters and general outdoor adventurers. Its 4.875-inch 440 stainless blade features a drop-point design that includes a partially serrated edge, built to handle basic chores such as cutting cordage, prepping food and shaving tinder, and bigger tasks such as field-dressing game. Its full body tang delivers strength and durability for demanding jobs, while its stainless steel Realtree Edge camo handle provides an ergonomic grip. Jimping and a smooth finger groove provide additional control while cutting. A nylon sheath keeps the knife secure while on the move.

www.bearandsoncutlery.com



ARGALI CARBON KNIFE

Ultralight and ultra-sharp, the Carbon knife from Argali (\$189 to \$199) is a one-knife solution for backcountry hunters. Crafted in the USA from super-premium S35VN steel for superior edge retention and sporting ergonomic textured G10 handles, the skeletonized Carbon holds a razor-sharp edge and has the feel of a full-handled knife. It is available with a Sunset Orange, Backcountry Black or custom First Lite Fusion two-tone sheath, which has Fusion camo on one side and Sunset Orange Kydex on the other. The sheath has a single tension screw that allows users to increase or decrease how hard the knife locks into the sheath. The Carbon's drop-point blade measures 3.25 inches.

www.argalioutdoors.com



BUCK 659 FOLDING PURSUIT

The 659 Pursuit from Buck Knives (\$70) features a comfortable, non-slip profile and strong, dependable lockback blade. Lockback folding knives have a mechanism that locks the blade in the open position, activated by opening it all the way. Pushing down on the rocker on top of the handle releases it and enables the user to close the blade. Each Buck Knives blade is put through a rigorous heat treatment process and quality performance test. It is then tempered to the appropriate Rockwell hardness through heating, freezing and reheating. This ensures longer edge life and easy sharpening. The 3.6-ounce 659 Pursuit has a 3.625-inch drop-point blade, glass-filled nylon/Versaflex handle and comes with a sheath.

www.buckknives.com



COLD STEEL 3V PENDLETON MINI HUNTER

Cold Steel's 3V Pendleton Mini Hunter (\$119.99) was designed with one goal in mind, to pare down a functional hunting knife to the smallest size that practicality would allow. Capable of skinning, dressing and processing even large game, this diminutive hunting knife is a great addition to any hunting or camping pack or survival kit. Its handle allows a secure four-finger grip and it comes complete with a tough, weather resistant Secure-Ex sheath, which locks the knife safely in place. The Mini Hunter is made from premium American CPM 3-V high carbon steel, with a hard-wearing, diamond-like coating for superior durability in the field.

www.coldsteel.com



CRKT GULF

Designed by Ryan Johnson of RMJ Tactical – well known for his tomahawks and fixed-blade knives – the Gulf folding knife from CRKT (\$99.99) is a big everyday carry knife designed for big jobs. It's beefy 4-inch big-bellied modified clip-point blade with a black stonewash finish is corrosion resistant and its G10 handle is extremely tough and durable and provides exceptional grip in all weather conditions. The CRKT Gulf has a thumb stud for easy, one-handed deployment and stays securely in place with a locking liner when not in use. It sports a low-profile deep-carry pocket clip for discreet transport.

www.crkt.com



DAWSON FORESTER

The Dawson Forester knife (\$300) is a fantastic companion for any outdoors adventure. Its classic skinning profile features a fine edge and deep belly, perfect for dressing all sizes of game as well as performing food prep and other camp chores. A comfortable, textured G10 palm-style handle, thumb ramp and finger choil provide superior control of the blade and help avoid hotspots. Constructed from CPM-3V powder steel, the Forester has a heat-treated 4-inch blade for maximum toughness, durability and edge-holding capability. It comes with a custom fitted leather/Kydex sheath that attaches to a belt or backpack and a clear Cerakote finish that protects the blade from corrosion.

www.dawsonknives.com



HELLE MÅNDRA

Helle's newest knife, the Måndra (\$199), was made in collaboration with Survivorman Les Stroud – inspired by an TV episode filmed in Romania where early prototypes of the knife were introduced. The word Måndra literally means proud, and the new knife is named for the hilly peak where Stroud was found by a Salvamont rescue party during filming. The fixed-blade Måndra has a triple-laminated stainless steel 2.7-inch blade and 3.1-inch curly birch and Vulcan fiber handle and a blade thickness of .10 inches. Handmade in Hølemdal, Norway, the knife comes with a genuine leather sheath.

www.helle.com





SHEFFIELD KNIVES BAX GUT HOOK

For a go-to knife that can withstand a beating and still get the job done, look no further than Sheffield's Bax Gut Hook 4.5-inch fixed-blade knife (\$19.99) – part of its Lex Point series of knives made specifically for hunters. Its satin-finished 420 stainless steel drop-point blade (complete with gut hook) is built for durability and easy sharpening, and a contoured TPR grooved grip conforms to any sized hand for maximum comfort and performance. The Bax Gut Hook knife comes with an above-military-grade 1680D sheath for safe and secure stowage. Overall length is 9.5 inches and the knife weighs 6.38 ounces.

www.greatnecksaw.com

ONTARIO KNIFE COMPANY FISH & SMALL GAME

The Old Hickory Fish & Small Game knife from Ontario Knife Company (\$41.95) blends modern construction and classic materials into a multi-function knife that's a marriage of nostalgia and modern durability. It features a 4-inch, smooth ground, drop-point blade for those tasks requiring a little finesse. The knife has an overall length of 8.7 inches, its blade made from high-carbon steel that has a hardness rating of 57-59 HRC. Its hardwood handle is brass pinned in place and the sheath is made of durable leather to stand up to years of use. The Old Hickory Outdoors Fish & Small Game knife is backed by a lifetime warranty and made in the USA.

www.ontarioknife.com



OUTDOOR EDGE JAEGER PAK KNIFE SET

Field-dressing and butchering big game has never been easier. Outdoor Edge's new Jaeger Pak compact knife kit (\$69.95) includes skinning, gutting and boning knives, a rib cage spreader, wood/bone saw and a two-stage ceramic/carbide sharpener to get the job done quickly and efficiently. The knives feature high-quality 420J2 stainless steel blades, heat-treated and hand-finished to a shaving-sharp edge, with an antlered texture molded into the rubberized TPR handles for a comfortable and secure grip. The T-handle wood/bone saw allows straight wrist butting from any angle with triple ground saw teeth that cut aggressively through bone. The ribcage spreader opens the chest fully to allow better air flow for faster cooling.

www.outdooredge.com

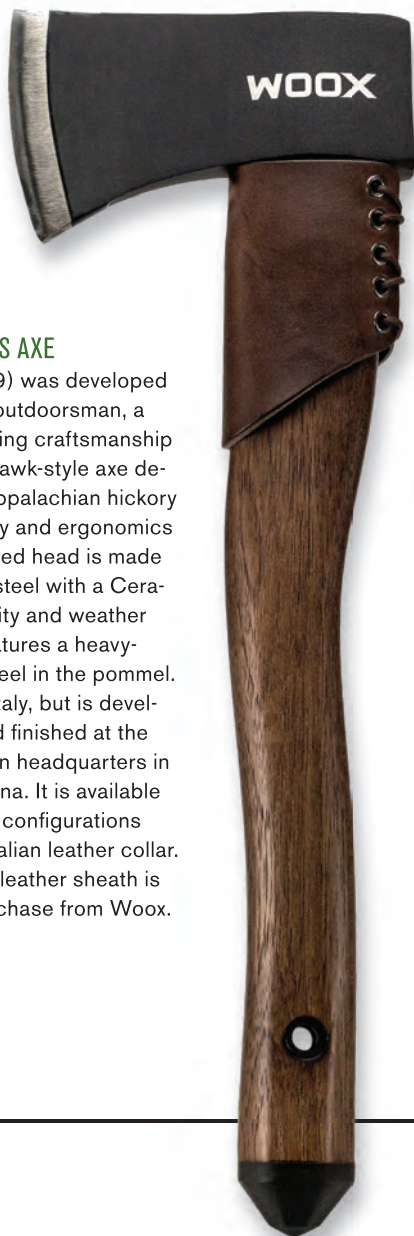




STEEL WILL F73 SCREAMER

Small and furious best describes Steel Will's pocket predator – the F73 Screamer (\$74.99). Bright and attractive, it has all of the characteristics of a useful and practical folding knife. The length of its blade is only 3.2 inches, but due to its aggressive shape, the Screamer acts like a much larger knife. The blade hole is not only an attractive detail of F73 Screamer, but also allows the user to easily open the knife. It has a high grind for a perfect cut, while a front part of the flipper can be used as a choil to handle the knife closer to the blade for more precise and delicate work. The F73 Screamer is available in three color options.

www.steelwillknives.com



WOOX AX1 HUNTER'S AXE

The Woox AX1 (\$179) was developed for the multi-tasking outdoorsman, a combination of stunning craftsmanship and innovative tomahawk-style axe design. Its octagonal Appalachian hickory handle adds durability and ergonomics while its wedge-shaped head is made of tempered carbon steel with a Cerakote finish for durability and weather resistance. It also features a heavy-duty steel diamond heel in the pommel. The AX1 is made in Italy, but is developed, assembled and finished at the Woox North American headquarters in Hickory, North Carolina. It is available in two different color configurations and comes with an Italian leather collar. A purpose-designed leather sheath is also available for purchase from Woox.

www.wooxstore.com



KNIVES OF ALASKA BONING KNIFE

Knives of Alaska's new Boning knife (\$49.99) is modeled after industry proven designs preferred by professional meat processors. Whether at the cleaning station, on the farm or in the home kitchen, this knife will make butchering chores more efficient. Available in two versions – flexible and semi-flexible – these knives have a substantial sure-grip handle for added control and comfort for quickly and safely processing game animals, domestic animals and fish. Overall length is 9.75 inches with a 5.5-inch blade made from D2 tool steel. Each knife weighs 3.8 ounces.

www.knivesofalaska.com



SPYDERCO LADYBUG K390

The Ladybug K390 folding knife from Spyderco (\$85) is made from a high-alloy particle metallurgy tool steel enriched with high volumes of vanadium, tungsten and cobalt. Produced by Böhler-Uddeholm, its advanced alloy composition offers exceptional edge retention and toughness, making it an ideal choice for steel connoisseurs. The Ladybug is the first in a special series of Spyderco knives designed to supercharge the proven features of well-established models using this elite, high-performance steel. To make these K390-bladed knives even more unique, their injection-molded FRN handles feature a distinctive blue finish. Its blade is 1.97 inches long and overall length is 4.45 inches open and 2.48 inches closed.

www.spyderco.com





Destressing Your Social Media Content Creation

Are you going crazy trying to keep up with social media content? Taking the stress out of the process is easier than you think.

BY HANNAH STONEHOUSE HUDSON

In the world of social-first content marketing strategy, the need for content on other platforms is usually forgotten. This “social-first” strategy can also add to a business owner being overwhelmed, “I need to create content, but I don’t know where or how.” Switching to a strategy that revolves around telling a story about your business, though, rather than just creating standalone social posts with no overarching goal, can relieve a lot of that stress and make creating content much more natural, efficient and consistent — and because consistency leads to more sales, that’s what matters most.

The key to this storytelling content strategy is

to find a storyline that relates to your marketing goals for a particular period of time (anywhere from a week-long campaign to a yearlong campaign). You can then create the content that tells that story in a way that can be shared on different platforms. These storylines can be inspired by and pulled from a variety of areas surrounding your business, including:

- Your business.
- Your employees.
- Your services.
- You!

Two Blog Posts = 12 Content Points

Do you have a product or service you would like to sell more of in a particular month? Brainstorm a storyline that relates to that product or service, focusing on how and why you decided to provide that service. Let’s say, for example, you offer scope-mounting and bore-sighting and you want to promote this service in the month before a particular game season opens. Why do you offer this service? You have tools to do the job that your customers likely do not, your customers are busy and this saves them time and frustration, your expert skills in scope-mounting protect their investments in expensive optics, and this service



gets them onto the range and into the field knowing that their firearm is ready to go. Note that this kind of approach puts the service at the forefront of a potential customer's mind, especially if it is reinforced across multiple platforms — people cannot buy something if they don't know it exists!

The second and third steps are to create the actual content and then determine the delivery methods for that content. For a month-long content push to highlight that scope-mounting/bore-sighting service, the following is an example of a multiple-platform content strategy.

- Article or blog post for the website with images and copy about why you created that service.
- Social post with link to the article.
- Short video on social that relates to the blog post, perhaps showing a bore-sighting tool your staff uses — preferably one a customer is not likely to have — and how this helps produce a properly mounted scope.
- Social post with a standalone photo — a gunsmith tightening ring screws with the correct screwdriver — and a caption that is a shortened version of the blog post.
- Second social post with a different standalone photo and a caption that is a shortened version of the blog post.
- E-newsletter with a link to the full article.
- Social post with link to the e-newsletter.

Article or blog post for the website with images and copy about how the service works. For the bore-sighting service, this might include the steps your gunsmith or other staff take to mount the scope, bore-sight it and guarantee it's on straight, as well as how long the process takes (remember, one of the benefits of this service is that you're saving your customer time). It should also emphasize that this will reduce your customer's time on the range and investment in ammo getting zeroed in, as well as how your service helps protect their optics from damage resulting from improper mounting.

- Social post with link to the article.
- Short video on social that relates to the blog post. This time around, maybe show screws damaged by the wrong screwdriver or an overhead shot of a scope out of line with the rifle because the ring screws weren't tightened properly.
- Social post with a standalone photo — those damaged screws would be a good one — and a caption that is a shortened version of the blog post.

- Second social post with a different standalone photo and a caption that is a shortened version of the blog post, this time maybe one of your customers with a target showing a tight group and a caption that reads, "John was zeroed in at 100 yards with just five rounds after using our bore-sighting service."
- E-newsletter with a link to the full article.
- Social post with link to the e-newsletter.



Tweaking the Process

Depending on how often you send out e-newsletters, post to social in general and post new content to social, etc., the above can be changed to suit your needs. As you can see, though, you can create at least 12 pieces of content out of two articles, both focused on one topic, and you can spread these out over a week or month depending on your content strategy goals — and isn't that far less stressful (and time consuming) than creating 12 individual one-topic pieces of content that would have only a fraction of the reach those two posts did because they multi-tasked, if you will, and emphasized the one thing you truly wanted to sell?

Here are a few more things you can do to refine this strategy and really make limited content creation work for you. Tweak them as you need to suit your goals and timeline:

- Develop storylines as they relate to your goals, e.g., you want to sell a particular lot of ammo, you want to get rid of aging inventory with a special sale, you want to fill a particular class or improve attendance at a weekly match, etc.

- Evaluate the types of posts and their timing that your audience responds best to.
- Create the content from the storylines that your audience will respond to best to, depending on the platform. This could be short videos, standalone photos, or simple text posts. Remember, every social account and its followers reacts differently to different content.
- Map out the timeline of when you are going to share this content (weekly, quarterly, yearly, etc.)

“The key to this storytelling content strategy is to find a storyline that relates to your marketing goals for a particular period of time.”

- Create a physical calendar of storyline posts, call-to-action posts that relate to your goals, personal posts that relate to your brand that are outside the story, and engaging items that relate to the interests of your various audiences. Remember that many, if not most posts, can be scheduled on the various platforms, so you can take 30 minutes to upload all your posts for a particular campaign and be done with it, and that's far easier and far less stressful than trying to remember to take the time, especially the right time, to make real-time posts.

Using a content strategy of this type leads to consistent social media posting and content creation. Consistency leads to increased interaction on all platforms, and that in turn leads to increased brand awareness and sales. Even more important, following a plan like this minimizes the stress and time needed to constantly create original content, and that allows you to do what you do best — provide the best service you can to the customers in front of you. **HR**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Stonehouse Hudson is a keynote speaker, coach and social media communications strategist. As the owner of HSH Communications, she helps people and organizations reach the most people on social media, and she is the instructor of the popular online course *How to Get the MOST Eyes on Your Social Media Content*.



HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS

BY GORDY KRAHN



DEER SMEER LIP BALM

Deer Smeer's all natural lip balm utilizes a variety of naturally occurring familiar and appealing cover scents to help hunters evade a deer's most formidable defense – its incredible nose. It's part of the company's complete line of products – field spray, body wash and laundry detergents – designed to mask deer-spooking human odor with smells that are familiar and appealing to deer, and specific to where they live. This easy to use lip balm can be applied as a final touch to a complete scent control regimen. It is available in twin-packs in nine region-specific scents. MSRP: \$4.99/Twin pack. www.deersmeer.com



PRIMOS EDGE CAMO STRETCH FIT MASKS

Primos' stretch-fit masks – cloaked in Realtree Edge camo – provide excellent concealment and comfort for warm weather bow and gun hunts. They fit like a second layer of skin and will not get in the way of drawing and anchoring a bow or snugging up to a rifle stock. These lightweight, moisture wicking, stretch-fit masks totally conceal the face and neck while helping hunters remain cool during their early season pursuits. They come in Full, Three-Quarters and One-Half versions, made from quality material designed to withstand the toughest environments. One size fits most. MSRP: \$19.99/All versions. www.primos.com



PRO EARS STEALTH ELITE BLUETOOTH EAR BUDS

Pro Ears' new Stealth Elite Bluetooth electronic ear buds are designed for avid hunters – a sleek new design with improved ergonomic options that deliver hi-fidelity hearing enhancement while providing noise cancelling technology. They are ideal for shooting and hunting because users can maintain situational awareness and safety in noisy environments while protecting their ears. Stealth Elite ear buds feature three modes of operation: Isolation, Pass-through and Amplification, and the kit includes batteries, Bluetooth lanyard, USB-C charger cord, three sizes of silicone ear tips, four sizes of foam ear tips and three sizes of optional use ear hooks for a more secure fit. MSRP: \$159.99. www.proears.com



CENTERPOINT ARCHERY CP400 CROSSBOW

The engineers at CenterPoint Archery have made new and innovative improvements to the CP400 Crossbow for 2020, including a silent cranking device, new camouflage pattern and the addition of arrows with lighted nocks. This compact crossbow measures just 6 inches axle to axle when fully cocked and via its adjustable stock can be configured from 31.5 to 34 inches in length. The 7-pound CP400 launches 400-grain arrows at up to 400 fps and produces 142 foot-pounds of kinetic energy. It features a CNC-machined cam system, aluminum rails and an anti-dry fire/auto safety wrapped in a limited five-year warranty. The package includes six arrows, silent cranking device, folding stirrup, quiver and quiver bracket and rail lube. MSRP: \$999.99. www.centerpointarchery.com

HAWKE OPTICS SIDEWINDER SYSTEM H5 RIFLESCOPE

Available in first and second focal plane models, Hawke's upgraded-for-2020 Sidewinder riflescope series has a 30mm main tube loaded with the company's new H5 18-layer multicoated optics that deliver an ultra-wide 24-degree field of view and 4 inches of eye relief. Also new for 2020 are resettable, precision locking turrets with 1/10 MRAD clicks that now have a Witness Window that provides instant visual confirmation of the turret position – eliminating guesswork when taking longer shots. The reticle is illuminated with high-intensity, adjustable multi-LED lighting for pinpoint accuracy in every lighting condition. All Sidewinder models are shock proof, waterproof and dust proof, and are fully nitrogen purged and all-caliber rated, so they can withstand the harshest recoil. MSRP: \$619-\$819. www.hawkeoptics.com



HAWK ELEVATE LITE SAFETY HARNESS

Utilizing form fit technology, the Hawk Elevate Lite safety harness features padded waist and shoulder straps for comfort and quick release leg buckles with adjustable leg straps for getting into and out of the harness quickly. It has a flexible tether for 360-degree movement, lightweight silent bino cables and an adjustable and durable elastic chest strap. The Hawk Elevate Lite harness is dressed in Chaos camo and comes standard with a lineman's belt, tree strap, suspension-relief strap and one-hand quick set carabiner. It weighs less than 2 pounds and has a maximum weight capacity of 300 pounds. MSRP: \$109.99. www.hawkhunting.com





HOWA HOGUE 6.5 CREEDMOOR COMPACT RIFLE

Legacy Sports International has announced the addition of a 6.5 Creedmoor chambering to its new Howa Hogue Compact rifle line – sporting a 16.25-inch free-floated heavy barrel that comes threaded for a suppressor or muzzle brake. The rifle features a Hogue overmold pillar-bedded stock for reduced recoil and vibration, a crisp two-stage match trigger with minimal over-travel and a three-position safety – which adds up to excellent downrange accuracy and deadly terminal performance. The Howa Hogue Compact rifle comes with Legacy Sport's sub-MOA assurance in OD green and black finishes. MSRP: Starts at \$649.

www.legacysports.com



MOJO HANDWARMER

Waterfowl hunters know the importance of keeping their hands warm and dry and ready for action. The MOJO handwarmer will do just that – crafted from durable water resistant material with a fleece-lined, moisture-wicking interior that maximizes comfort and convenience and dressed in Mossy Oak Blades camo for top-shelf concealment. Hunters can use the built-in clips to attach the MOJO handwarmer securely to their waders or use the adjustable waist strap to hold it secure and handy. A front zippered pocket holds shells, chokes and other gear and valuables. MSRP: \$24.99. www.mojoutdoors.com



MOULTRIE MOBILE INTERACTIVE MAPS

Moultrie Mobile recently announced that its newest feature, Interactive Maps, is now live, and that members can begin using it by updating their Moultrie Mobile app in the App Store or Google Play Store. With Interactive Maps, members can quickly place pins at all cell camera locations and build a visual layout of deer activity, save multiple hunting properties to the Locations feature and access them instantly, and use 20 different icons to mark food sources, bedding areas, feeders, stands, rubs, scrapes, mineral sites, parked trucks, hunt camps, blood trails and much more. To start using Interactive Maps, simply click on the Maps icon inside the app and choose from three different map overlays: Satellite, Street and Hybrid views. MSRP: Free to members.

www.moultriemobile.com

MASTERPIECE ARMS PORK CHOP RIFLE

MasterPiece Arms (MPA) has added a fourth rifle to its BA Hunter line with the introduction of the MPA Pork Chop – a purpose-designed rifle for varmint hunters and ranch managers. Built on a 6061 aluminum hybrid chassis, the Pork Chop sports a unique Cerakote paint scheme and laser engraved moniker. Its V-bedding system provides additional clearance for glass bedding the action and straight section of the barrel. Other features include MPA's Rat rail, adjustable cheek riser and length of pull (LOP), enhanced vertical grip, inclinometer leveling system, V4 spigot mount and a short LOP buttstock. MPA can fine-tune the build to the hunter or rancher's specific application – from caliber, chamber dimensions and barrel length to contour, twist rate and chassis finishing. MSRP: \$3,575-\$3,725. www.masterpiecearms.com



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HUNTING CALLS CARTRIDGE PREDATOR CALLS

Cartridge Call mouth-blown predator calls from Rocky Mountain Hunting Calls are compact and handy so hunters can carry them anywhere. Made from solid aluminum stock to the dimensions of .223 Rem., .22-250 Rem. and .243 Win. cartridges, each call is machined to high tolerances on CNC lathes and then anodized in two colors mimic a brass and copper finish. A metal "voice" is inserted into the aluminum body, so the user blows on the bullet end to create the realistic sounds of animals in distress. Each call includes a metal ring to connect to a key ring or lanyard. MSRP: \$9.95/Each; \$27.95/Three-pack.

www.rockymountainhuntingcalls.com



EASTON BOWTRUK ARCHERY TRAVEL CASE

Traveling with archery equipment can pose challenges when it comes to keeping gear safe and secure. And that's why Easton Archery designed the hybrid hard/soft shell BowTruk from the ground up with innovative functionality to conveniently provide 360-degree content protection during airline handling and transport. It has two full-sized main bow compartments, built for full-sized compound bows up to 47 inches in length and eight interior and exterior accessory pockets with dedicated compartments for stabilizers, arrow storage and more. It also provides easy toting with triple field-replaceable roller bearing wheels and a double seatbelt system securely anchors bows in place and keeps them there. MSRP: \$419.99. www.eastonarchery.com



Retail Staff Training in Today's World

Your sales associates are your store's best asset. We've got seven tips for training them properly to make the most of their skill.

BY BOB ROBB

In today's uber-competitive retail world, the days of hiring a friend's son or daughter "just because" are over. Each and every employee must be motivated to do whatever it takes to satisfy the customer. Few come to work with the requisite skills. Here are seven tips, modified from www.vendhq.com, on how you can turn them into your shop's number one asset.

1) Hire for attitude, not skill: Simply stated, you can hire nice people and teach them to sell, but you cannot hire salespeople and teach them to be nice. That's why it pays to hire trainable individuals with a positive disposition and attitude — they're much easier to train if they already share your values than it is to modify someone's bad attitude that will quickly turn off customers. As Oddball so profoundly said in the classic movie *Kelly's Heroes*, "Why don't you knock it off with the negative waves?"

2) Get to know each employee: In our industry, it really helps if in-store associates are hunting and shooting enthusiasts. Be sure to ask them about their in-the-field and on-the-range experience level. This will help you know what motivates them, and also fill you in on how much specific product knowledge training will be required.

3) Teach incrementally: Most people learn best when using several methods over time. For example, first you can verbally explain a technique or skill, then let the employee read about it in a manual, then maybe watch a YouTube video and/or have it demonstrated personally to them, then perhaps do some quick role playing. This becomes doubly important when teaching how to use a POS system or taking inventory. When it comes to customer service, verbally teach about company policies, reinforce the information through handouts, then practice everything by role-playing.

4) The importance of role playing: Sales is serious business, and employee sales skills can become markedly improved if you can make it a game by role playing. It can bring staid, boring conversations about customer service, closing a sale, and upselling to life, helping turn on the lightbulb that says, "OK, now I get it!" And it doesn't have to be formal. Watch your staff interacting with customers, then in between customers, re-enact sales conversations that didn't

produce a sale. Keep it casual and positive, and do it privately, with no judgment. In a store I once worked at, the manager would do a staff role-playing session before the store opened where we would act out what not to do. He would focus on one specific situation and kept it light, but it loosened everyone up and got everyone thinking about sales and how we could all get better.

“Empowered employees who can use their judgment and skills to forge creative solutions can be a big benefit to any business.”

5) No one stays the same: As a professional fitness trainer told me, every day, his athletes are either getting stronger, or they are falling behind. To him, there is no such thing as treading water. One goal should be to encourage employees to strive for continuous improvement. Just because a training session ends doesn't mean it should be forgotten. This can be simply defined by TQM, or Total Quality Management, developed by William Deming, a management consultant whose work had a great impact on Japanese manufacturing. TQM is the continual process of detecting and reducing or eliminating errors in manufacturing, streamlining supply chain management, improving customer experiences, and ensuring that employees are up to speed with training. TQM aims to hold all parties involved in the business accountable for the overall quality of the final product or service.

6) Flexible enforcement: Motivated employees want to be heard and have their ideas for im-

provement considered. While rules that you train employees on are necessary to keep staff in line and make sure there is consistency in the way you operate, there may be some areas where flexibility is not only possible, but a good option. Empowered employees who can use their judgment and skills to forge creative solutions can be a big benefit to any business. This is especially true when it comes to customer service. If the base principle of your store is to service the customer and make them happy, within reason of course, allowing employees to solve customer problems creatively while maintaining the core principles of the business can be a win-win for everyone.

7) Recognize your strengths and weaknesses: Sales training is not for everyone. If that isn't one of your strong points, you might seek some outside help. Can you delegate it to another employee or manager with skills in this area? And do not overlook vendors. Many years ago I was a consultant for W.L. Gore & Associates, makers of Gore-Tex. At the time they were just starting to be a player in the hunting business, but found that because technologically-advanced Gore-Tex products cost a lot more than competitor's products, it was necessary to teach retail sales staff about why this was so. So I would travel to major retailers like Cabela's with another Gore employee and conduct training sessions on both the scientific benefits of a Gore-Tex membrane, and how wearing Gore-Tex garments in the field helped improve hunter efficiency and comfort. These training sessions were conducted at no cost to the retailer and helped staff intelligently sell the product.

How do you keep your staff trained and motivated? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com, I'd love to hear about it, and share it with our readers. **HR**

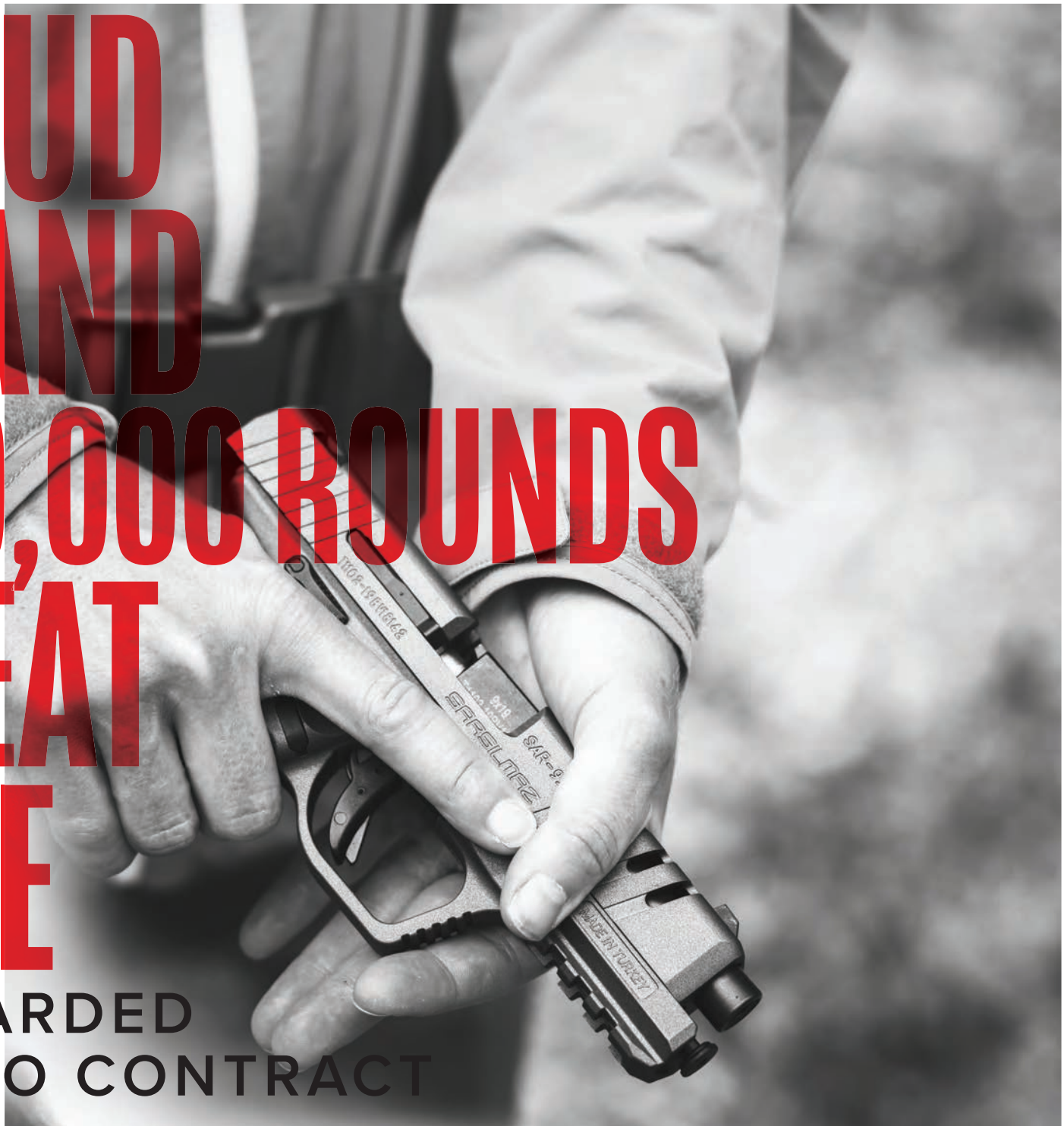
PRO STAFF

Bob Robb has been a full-time outdoor writer since 1978. He's a former staff editor for *Peterson's Hunting magazine*, as well as the former editor of *Western Outdoor News*, *Peterson's Bowhunting*, *Inside Archery*, *Whitetail Journal*, *Predator Xtreme* and *Waterfowl & Retriever* magazines. He's hunted on five continents with both rifles and archery equipment and lived in Alaska for 15 years, where for a time he held an assistant hunting guide's license.



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