

# RANGE OF OPTIONS

Rangefinders have become an obligatory part of the hunter's kit bag. Pete Evans looks at three of the best from Hawke Optics

Whatever some people may claim to the contrary, airgun hunting is a relatively short-range business. Couple this with the fact that most hunting is achieved with sub-12 ft. lbs. power, and it soon becomes clear that range estimation is of paramount importance. Just to add to the headache, the larger calibre pellets will have a more pronounced looped trajectory, adding even more pressure to get the range right.

Back in the olden days, we relied upon our eyes to judge range estimation, which some people seem more adept at learning than others. If you fall into this privileged group, you can stop reading now, but if like me you struggle with this elusive skill – read on because I have good news for you.

## KNOW THE RANGE, HIT THE TARGET

I am not in the habit of embracing each piece of airgun technology as it emerges, but I soon cottoned on that the rangefinder had a very practical place in the field. Knowing the range to the target is the piece of information required to decide whether a shot is on, or if I need to close the gap further.

Judging distance over rough terrain, up/downhill, or up into high trees can be challenging because it's quite surprising just how 'out' it is possible to get!

A rangefinder is also a useful device for those wishing to train their eye. Simply take the rangefinder out on your daily walk, pick an object, estimate the range, and then measure it to find how close you were. It's a good game to play with family, and over time, your inbuilt skill will improve, but could take some time before your own skill matches that of the laser!

## MATCH MEET FIELD

I've always maintained that the hunter has much to learn from competition shooters. In particular, those of the field-target persuasion, who whilst they are not able to use a rangefinder, make use of high magnification scopes and parallax adjustment to get an accurate measure of distance. For this style of rangefinding, the key is high magnification, which would be at a level beyond the size of an average hunting optic.

The competition shooter is aware of the importance of knowing their rifle's trajectory intimately, and coupling this with range means



High-tech rangefinders are child's play to use.

that providing the remaining variables are executed correctly, the target will fall. It's exactly the same for the hunter, probably even more important because incorrect range estimation can result in a wounding shot, which every hunter does their utmost to avoid.

## CHOICES

As with everything there are many choices of rangefinder, working on similar principles,

some offering more features than others, and of course widely differing price tags.

My own everyday device is an elderly model from Hawke, which came to my hands, having already seen use by another. Over the past eight years it has served me well, helping me to place very many shots accurately, in varying weather conditions.

When considering this feature I was keen to stick with the Hawke brand because alongside



Before starting, remember to adjust the ocular lens.

**COMMON GROUND**

Starting with power; all three use a CR2, 3 V cell, with a waterproof casing rated at IPx5 – that latter feature meant nothing to me so I looked it up. The IPx5 rating means that the unit can resist a sustained low pressure water jet spray, which means they should all be fine for use on a wild and windy Welsh hillside. The power supply automatically turns off after 15 seconds of inactivity, thus saving battery power.

All internal optics are nitrogen purged, so will be fogproof, and those optics magnify to six times.

The units have multi-mode capability which means that they measure in yards or metres to an accuracy of +/-1m, and have the ability to compensate for use in rain. Another feature, which to be fair is probably more of use to hunters of quarry larger than the average rabbit, is the hunt mode. This allows targeting large animals which are partly obscured by distractions such as long grass. Already they are way ahead of my old model, and we've only just started on standard features.

For peace of mind, all are covered by a two-year warranty, provided you are the original owner. My own unit still delivers the goods some eight years on, so expect a long and trouble-free experience. To keep things in good order, the units have a hand lanyard for extra security, and a carry pouch to attach to a belt. With the common ground covered, it's time to get on and look at the individual models, and find out which might be best for your needs.

their scopes I believe they offer a top quality product, at a sensible price point, with unbeatable after sales service – which I think pretty much says it all really.

**THREE MODELS**

Examination of the Hawke range turned up three models; the LRF, Vantage, and Endurance. These three ranges offer a stepwise increase in features, so I thought a comparison piece would make interesting reading. Following a chat with the ever-helpful Jamie Ransome at Hawke, he agreed to send

a sample of each device, all with the minimum meterage measurement, which is still well in excess of even the most powerful

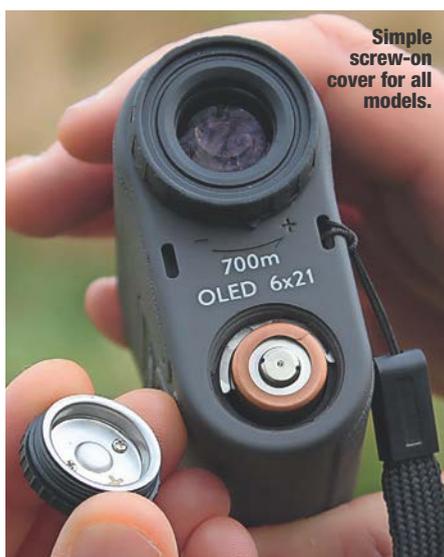
*“they offer a top quality product, at a sensible price point, with unbeatable after sales service”*

of air rifles.

Before looking at each model, I think it might be useful to look at the features common to all three, because by so doing I will avoid repetition.

**LRF**

Although this is Hawke's entry level rangefinder, I'm quite excited about this one because it's a brand new model, which to the best of my knowledge hasn't been reviewed



Simple screw-on cover for all models.



The Vantage and Endurance give the direct straight, and horizontal distance, as well as shot angle.



# PETE EVANS



**LRF reticle has all you need to start successful rangefinding.**

yet, in fact I can't see any for sale, so remember you heard it here first.

With vital statistics of 94mm x 78mm x 37mm and a weight of 130g, this unit will really fit in your palm, and won't impose any weight penalty whilst out in the field.

With the supplied battery installed, it's time to get the adjustments in order, which means focusing the ocular lens to accommodate your eyesight. Immediately, I could see the difference in optical quality between this and my own unit – the old unit's image looking a bit 'yellow' in comparison. It's quite surprising what you get accustomed to – I wouldn't have



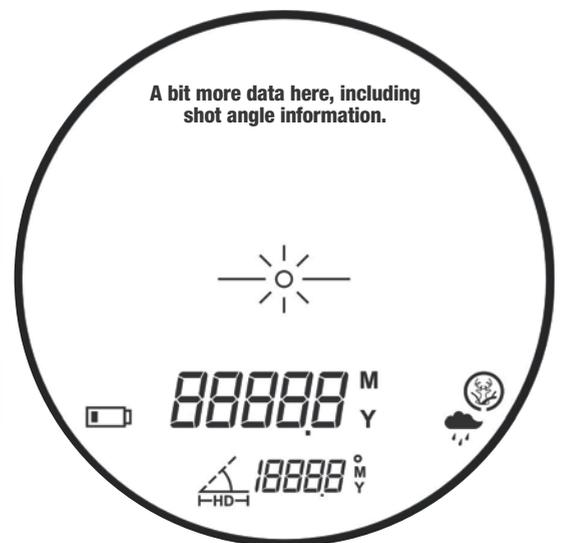
**The new LRF model from Hawke. it's entry level, but you would never guess it.**



**A little more rounded than the LRF, and fits the palm a treat.**

realised this without the comparison.

On checking the manual I found that the optics are multi-coated with anti-reflective treatments, which coupled with superior glass makes all the difference. The display on the LRF is the familiar LED type, which appears clearly superimposed on the image. Scrolling through the modes, I targeted objects at various airgun-friendly ranges, and then checked with my measuring wheel. As I expected, the measured and re-checked distances agreed, which of course was very reassuring. The weather



**A bit more data here, including shot angle information.**

being what it is meant that the rain mode got a bit of a workout, and that too came through with shining colours, remembering that the rain mode is only usable at ranges beyond 30m. If the power button is held down, there is the facility to scan the landscape and range find individual objects, which can be useful when mapping your territory.

The unit itself is very user-friendly and will be simple to use, even if you are a little technologically challenged. Coming in two models measuring up to 400 and 800m respectively, there is enough scope to deal with even the most powerful of rifles. For someone wanting an introduction to the world of rangefinding, or indeed an upgrade for an older unit, this will be a very good choice. If on the other hand you want a few more features, you might want to consider the Vantage.

### GET AN AD - VANTAGE

Of similar size and colour to the LRF comes the Vantage, the main outward differences being a more rounded appearance, and two lenses instead of the three on the LRF. Looking through the Vantage gives another significant step-up in optical quality, with observed images being much brighter. Referring once more to the instruction book, I was informed that the Vantage made use of true colour optics, with multi-coated BK-7 prisms. Once more, I was ignorant of the significance of BK-7 prisms, but with some research I was able to ascertain that it related to the composition of the glass, so I would deduce that this unit has superior glass. For a simple man like me, it explained the enhanced image quality, which satisfied me. The display is the same clear black LCD, but with a couple of added modes to enhance the rangefinding.

The horizontal distance or HD mode, is typically used if, for example, you are shooting upwards into a tree. Point the rangefinder at the



Super-clear optics, and red OLED display, that will be the Endurance.



looking down on the target the angle will show a negative value.

For those who appreciate top quality images with extra rangefinding elements, the

Vantage might be the one to go for – as for those who want the ultimate, keep on going.

woodland situations. A wide viewing angle helps to target the quarry quickly, instead of wasting time dancing round trying to locate the target. As you might expect, the unit performed perfectly, ranging subjects at all angles and ranges, in a variety of atmospheric conditions.

### WHICH IS BEST?

A difficult question to answer, and I suppose it boils down to which unit which works best for you and your needs. If it's straightforward rangefinding with good optical quality the LRF would serve the purpose nicely. If you value super-bright optics, and some extra range analysis, the Vantage will not disappoint. When a super-bright display and super quality optics are the priority, the Endurance is certainly the one to choose.

Hawke really have covered all the bases here, putting top quality kit within reach of the average hunter, ensuring that missed targets through range 'guesstimation' are a thing of the past. ■

### TEST OF ENDURANCE

At the top of the tree you will find the Endurance, which comes with a minimum of 700m rangefinding ability, and is finished in a grey/black texture. Optical quality and inbuilt features are similar to that of the Vantage, but its display is the defining one. The Endurance uses an OLED system, which doesn't rely on

*“the red display is super-clear and crisp, and can be varied in its intensity by six levels”*

top of the tree and it will give the distance in a straight line, and also the horizontal distance. The straight line distance appears on top with the horizontal distance at the bottom. Coupled with this is the angle mode, to display the angle at which you are viewing the object, if you are

LEDs lighting an LCD display. This means that the red display is super-clear and crisp, and can be varied in its intensity by six levels. The red colour is particularly prominent against dark backgrounds, which coupled with its top notch optical quality will prove very useful in

### RANGEFINDERS AS REVIEWED

■ LRF 400 M - Model 41 020

RRP £109

■ Vantage 400 M - Model 41 200

RRP £169

■ Endurance 700 M - Model 41 210

RRP £209

Check out the full range of Hawke products at [www.hawkeoptics.com](http://www.hawkeoptics.com)