

A RANGE OF 'FINDERS

Tim Finley is a strong advocate of laser rangefinders. Here are three reasons for that

Laser rangefinders have come a long way. Nowadays, they are just a tool that shooters can use, and an extremely useful tool at that. I remember the first ones I ever saw, handled and used when I went to America to shoot in the 1990s, and I was so taken aback by the technology that I brought one back. Until that point I'd had to use a big 50m roll-handle tape measure to set out national grade, field target courses and American silhouette banks – both of these have to be precise. FT shooters also need accurate distances when setting up a large magnification ranging scope, or for checking zero – and I had to string out the range with that big old 50m tape measure.

That first laser rangefinder was designed to be used with two hands, so in order to use it with one, it had to be firmly attached to the hand with a huge strap. Its performance was still a revelation, and I have continued to use laser rangefinders ever since, for all of my shooting sports. Thankfully, they have come down in size, and price! I could only afford the first one that I bought in the States because of the rate of US dollars to the British pound at the time.

My first rangefinder was a two-handed operation it was much bigger.



I tested the 55-yard measurements with a tape and metal knock-down FT target.

HAND-HELD

Hawke now have a whole range, pardon the pun, of hand-held laser rangefinders and I bring you three of them right now in a 400, 700 and 900 yard capability. Overkill, you would think for airguns, but all have their place, and any outdoor air rifle shooter should own one. I use them for both hunting and target work and if you have regular hunting grounds, you can use one to 'ping' your ambush spots – you will have your favoured shooting positions, spots overlooking the quarry's regular trails and feeding spots. Once you have the exact ranges from using your LRF, you'll have total confidence in your shots, and confidence is key in airgun hunting. The three Hawkes are all 6x magnification, which gives you enough to see adequately at long range, but it's not too high to make it hard to aim when operating with the one hand – as they are designed to do, of course.

COMMON FEATURES

First up the cheapest of the three, the 6 x 25 LRF 400 – '6' being the magnification, and '25' the size in mm of the rangefinder's objective

lens. It does share features common to all three, though; there is a wrist strap on the rear, which has attachment slots on both the right- and left-hand side, and so in real terms they are all ergonomic for both left- and right-handed shooters. The eye piece is on the top of the rear body, and this can be focused to the individual shooter's eyesight, with or without glasses. It's got a rubber rim for comfort, that rests on your eyebrow. There is also a pointer, so that you can make note of where your optimum setting is – minus focus is clockwise, and positive is anti-clockwise.

All three run off CR2 three-volt batteries held in a compartment under the eye cup. This has a ribbed circumference for grip, and a coin slot in the middle to facilitate fitting the batteries. Hawke also supply the CR2s and they give you an instruction booklet and a soft yellow lens cloth.

There are two buttons on the top, power button at the back and mode button at the front. They also share a low battery indicator, signal strength read out and auto shut off. They all remember the last mode you used – pressing the mode button cycles through the modes – and you can read out in yards, or



The rear of the Endurance rangefinder, telling you it has a 700m range and an OLED display.

On all three Hawkes, you can fit the wrist strap on the right or left.

The rear of the Vantage, the battery compartment with its centre coin slot and ribbed edge to make it easy to remove and replace.

The Endurance, Vantage and LRF400. Seriously effective, compact technology that airgunners should use.

metres if you prefer. If you hold the mode button for three seconds, it changes from one to the other.

RAIN OR HUNT?

The design of the 400 LRF is quite angled, but it still has great ergonomics – a large cut-out

scalloped at the back fits in the 'V' of your index finger and thumb. The 400 also comes with a fabric pouch, Velcro flap fastening, and a loop for the belt on the back.

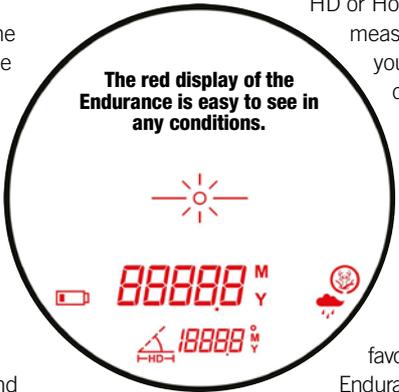
The other two rangefinders share the same outward appearance when it comes to design, but are very different. The Vantage has an LCD screen readout, and the Endurance a bright red OLED display. All three have a 'rain' and a 'hunt' mode. A rain cloud comes up in the display for that, and in 'hunt', a deer's head behind some grass appears. In 'rain' it ignores any reflections below 30m, and in 'hunt' they ignore grass and brush signals, and holding down the power button continually scans the distance.

USEFUL FEATURE

All three rangefinders are accurate to a yard/metre. I checked them at 50m with my trusty tape measure and an old FT target! One useful feature on the Vantage and Endurance is the HD or Horizontal Distance feature. It measures the angle to the target you are ranging to a 1/10th of a degree, and also gives you the horizontal distance along the ground to it very useful for an airgun's loopy trajectory. These two also share the same neoprene, zipped carry case with a carabiner on the rear.

All were bang on, but my favourite of the three was the Endurance, not only because the

green body was real OD green, but also for its very visible display with six brightness settings. I never lost the display even when woodland testing. Hawke have a rangefinder for every budget, and if you shoot airguns, you need one. ■



The red display of the Endurance is easy to see in any conditions.

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Hawke

Models: 400 LRF

Number: 41 020

Magnification: 6

Objective lens: 25mm

Range: 6-399m 7-437yds

Length: 94mm 3.7"

Weight: 130g 4.6oz

RRP £109

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Hawke

Model: Vantage 900 LCD

Number: 41 202

Magnification: 6

Objective lens: 21mm

Range: 6-900m 7-984yds

Length: 97mm 3.8"

Weight: 170g 6oz

RRP £189

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Hawke

Model: Endurance 700 OLED

Number: 41 210

Magnification: 6

Objective lens: 21mm

Range: 5-700m 5.5-766yds

Length: 97mm 3.8"

Weight: 170g 6oz

RRP £209