

THE GUN ISSUE

200 YEARS OF REMINGTON / READERS' FAVORITE FIREARMS / CARTRIDGE GENEALOGY / THE MODERN GUNSMITH

OUTDOOR LIFE

JUNE/JULY 2016

15
NEW RIFLES
& SHOTGUNS
TESTED, RANKED
& RATED
+
2016'S BEST
RIFLESCOPES
AND SPOTTERS

**SUMMER
FISHING**
RIG THE
ULTIMATE KAYAK
TARGET MONSTER
BLUEGILLS

TROLL UP
SLAB CRAPPIES
HUNT NORTH
COUNTRY MUSKIES
MAKE YOUR OWN
BASS POPPERS



TODAY'S
QUAIL
HOTSPOTS
P. 88

READER AIMS... Our judges put some of this year's winning gear and optics through their paces in Paradise, Utah.

DISPLAY UNTIL EXHAUSTED

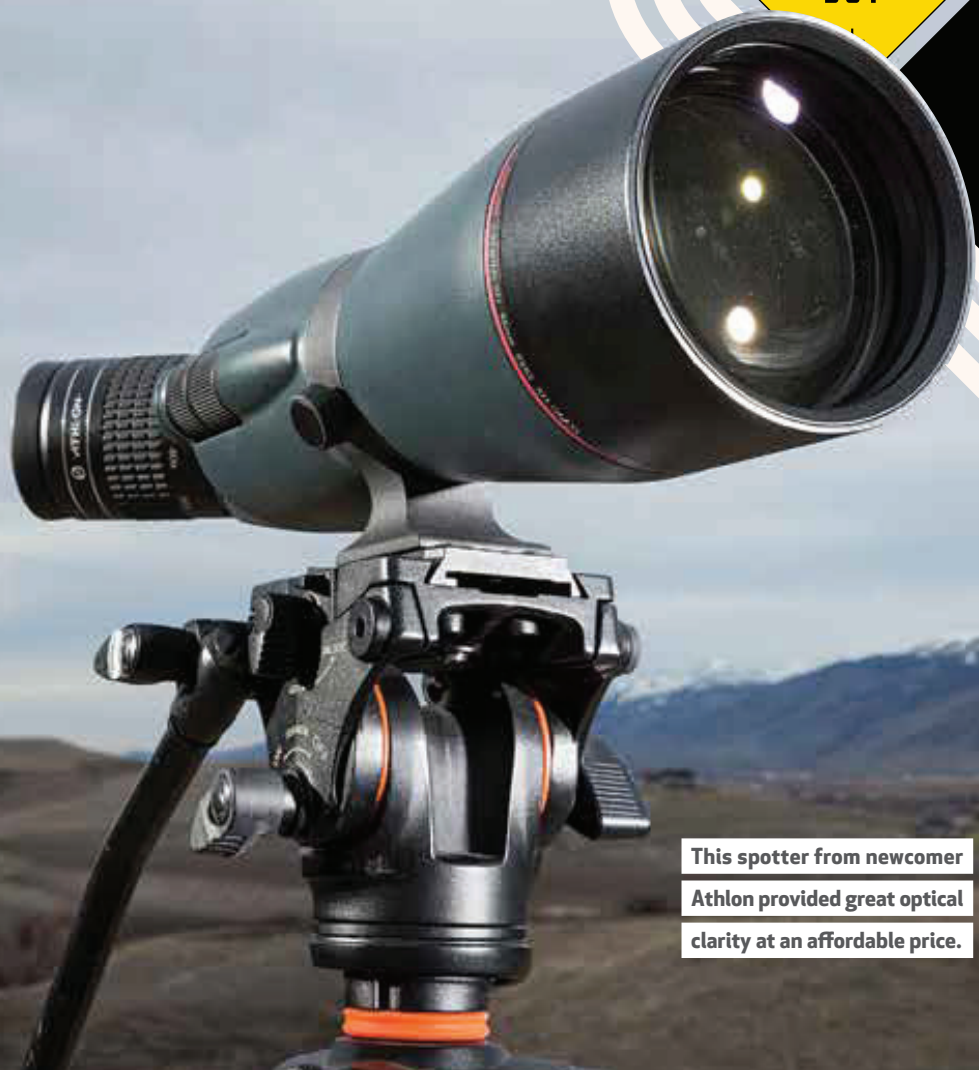


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ISSN 1098-0131

GREAT
BUY



This spotter from newcomer Athlon provided great optical clarity at an affordable price.



ATHLON
CRONUS ED (20-60X86)

IT'S FAIR TO SAY this was the surprise of the spotting scope category. Based on its ostentatious logos and derivation, many on the test team dismissed this new brand as just another forgettable made-in-China optic. Then they glassed distant elk with it. The Athlon is very sharp, and we loved its tight, positive controls.

Our only ding is that the image is slightly darker than that delivered by its peers in this full-size class. That's not a big consideration if you're glassing in the middle of the day, but it was noticeable at twilight and during our low-light test, where the Athlon was one of the lower-scoring optics. Try as we might, we were

unable to detect flaring or peripheral distortion.

Mainly, we liked the Cronus' price. It's a big (4.2-pound) spotter built around a sharp-looking pebbled magnesium chassis. The two-speed focus is easy to use and the fine focus is very precise. In all, it's a ton of value in an optic that will be a worthy addition to your field or range kit.

SCORE: 81.25 PRICE: \$1,500
UPSHOT: A TIGHT AND FUNCTIONAL NEWCOMER TO THE SPOTTING SCOPE GALAXY



MAVEN
S.1A (25-50X80)

MAVEN, THE WYOMING-BASED company that pioneered the direct-to-consumer sales model with binoculars last year, adds this spotting scope to its lineup for 2016. The same excellent optics, tight controls, and customizable exterior that defined Maven's freshman effort all characterize the spotting scope.

It should be noted that the unit we tested is a prototype, and it looks pretty generic. Buyers will be able to dress up their S.1A by picking elements from an online menu that include camouflage patterns, colored focus rings, and eyecups.

SCORE: 84.7 PRICE: \$2,100
UPSHOT: VERY BRIGHT AT 50X



SWAROVSKI
STR-80 (25-50X80)





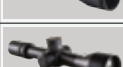
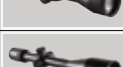
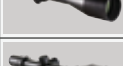
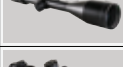






THE HEART OF THIS pricey optic is a first-plane illuminated reticle with MOA references. It's designed to be used by a spotter acquiring targets for his partner, who fires at those targets through a riflescope sporting an identical reticle. It's a niche optic—designed for shooting rather than game viewing—and while the reticle is invisible when the illumination is turned off, the extra lenses required for the sighting system helps explain why the normally high-performing Swaro turned in middling optics scores.

Hits included the excellent hinged lens cap and wonderfully adjustable illumination.








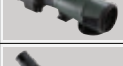

SCORE: 73.45 PRICE: \$4,542
UPSHOT: HOT PRECISION RIFLE SPOTTER

TEST RESULTS

RIFLESCOPES

TOTAL	PERFORMANCE								DESIGN				PRICE/VALUE	COMMENTS
	CONFIGURATION	RESOLUTION	LOW LIGHT	IMAGE	MECHANICS	RETICLE	AIMING SYSTEM	CONSTRUCTION	DURABILITY	MEETS PURPOSE				
 BURRIS VERACITY	86	3-15 X50	7	8.5	8	8.5	9	8.75	9	8.5	8.75	\$700 /10	FIRST-PLANE RETICLE IS AS AT HOME HUNTING AS IT IS RANGING TARGETS. CHOICE OF TWO TURRETS IN A TIGHT, VERSATILE SCOPE. ONE HELLUVA BARGAIN.	EDITOR'S CHOICE GREAT BUY
 TRACTOR ULTRA HD	85.25	3-15 X50	9	8.5	9	8.5	8	8.25	8.75	8.25	8.25	\$724 /8.75	FRESHMAN EFFORT BY NEW OPTIC MANUFACTURER FEATURES SHARP GLASS, POSITIVE CONTROLS, AND DIRECT-TO-YOU DISTRIBUTION.	
 SWAROVSKI XSI	85	3.5-18 X50	7	9.5	8.75	8.5	8	9.25	8.75	8.25	8.25	\$3,432 /8.75	HUGE TURRETS DRIVE HOME THE POINT: THIS IS AN "ON THE KNOBS" SCOPE FOR LONG-DISTANCE SHOOTERS WITH TIME TO RANGE TARGETS AND DIAL IN THEIR SHOT.	
 SIG SAUER TANGO6	81.8	5-30 X56	7	8.8	8	9	9	9	8	8	8	\$2,400 /7	A DO-EVERYTHING OPTIC. PICK BETWEEN MIL- AND MOA-BASED RETICLE, FIRST OR SECOND PLANE, MOUNT ON AN AR OR A BOLT GUN. THIS SCOPE DOESN'T CARE.	
 NIGHTFORCE ATACR	81.5	4-16 X50	7	7.0	7.5	9.25	8.5	8.75	8	9	8.75	\$2,200 /7.75	THE LATEST IN LINE OF BATTLE-HARDENED OPTICS, THIS IS THE BEST CONFIGURATION YET FOR NIGHTFORCE. WE LOVE THE TURRETS, ILLUMINATION, AND MOAR RETICLE.	
 LEICA ER LRS	81	6.5-26 X56	6	10.0	8.75	8.75	7.75	7.75	8.75	8.5	7.5	\$2,200 /7.25	A "JUDGEMENTAL SCOPE," ONE TESTER SAID, BECAUSE WHILE CONFIGURED FOR DISTANCE SHOOTING, CONTROLS LIMIT UTILITY TO ABOUT 600 METERS.	
 MINOX ZX5	79	5-25 X56	10	9.2	8.5	7.5	6.75	7	7.75	7.5	7.25	\$750 /7.5	LOVELY LINES AND FINE OPTICS, BUT THE ULTRA-FINE RETICLE DISAPPEARED AGAINST CLUTTERED BACKGROUNDS AND AT TWILIGHT.	
 ZEISS VICTORY V8	78.2	1.8-14 X50	7	8.7	8.75	8.5	7.5	7	9.25	8.25	7	\$3,200 /6.25	A HUGE SCOPE THAT DOESN'T FEEL THAT BIG, THE COMPLICATED TURRET AND CLOSE-ENOUGH CONTROLS LIMIT ITS UTILITY AS A PRECISION OPTIC.	
 CABELA'S INSTINCT CUSTOM TURRET	78	4.5-14 X50	9	8.7	8.25	7.5	7.25	7.25	7.5	7	8	\$800 /7.5	BUY THIS SCOPE AND CABELA'S WILL SEND YOU FREE CUSTOM TURRETS FOR LIFE. EACH WILL BE COLOR-CODED TO A SPECIFIC CALIBER. GIMMICKY, BUT COOL.	
 VORTEX RAZOR HD LH	77.75	3-15 X42	10	6.0	7.75	7.75	8.25	7.5	7.5	8	7.5	\$1,100 /7.5	A LIGHT, BRIGHT, DO-EVERYTHING SCOPE, WE ESPECIALLY LIKED THE INNOVATIVE RETICLE, USEFUL FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF HUNTING AND SHOOTING SITUATIONS.	
 TRIJICON ACCUPOWER	78.5	4-16 X50	9	8.5	7.75	8.5	7.75	7.25	7.25	7.75	7.25	\$1,000 /7.5	A SOLID, NO-FRILLS (AND NON-TRITIUM-ILLUMINATED) SCOPE ESPECIALLY CONFIGURED FOR MOVING GAME IN LOW-LIGHT SITUATIONS.	
 NIKON MONARCH 5	76.4	3.5-14 X50	7	6.9	8.25	7.75	8	8	8	7.75	7.25	\$600 /7.5	THE LATEST IN THE FAMILY OF MONARCH RIFLESCOPES, THIS FEATURES NIKON'S DISTINCTIVE STACKED-CIRCLE RETICLE, ONLY WITH WINDAGE REFERENCES.	
 MEOPTA MEOSTAR R2	77.2	8X56	6	9.7	8.25	7.5	7	7	8.5	8.25	8	\$1,495 /7	BRIGHT AND ELEGANT, THIS FIXED 8X IS INTENDED FOR LOW-LIGHT HUNTING. THE CENTER-POINT ILLUMINATION IS WONDERFULLY SUBTLE.	
 LEUPOLD VX-3I	74.7	4.5-14 X50	7	6.7	8.25	6.75	7.5	7.25	8	8.25	7.5	\$800 /7.5	NEW TWILIGHT-MAXIMIZED COATINGS SHOULD MAKE THIS A LOW-LIGHT ALL-STAR. WE FOUND GOOD, BUT NOT GAME-CHANGING, PERFORMANCE.	

SPOTTING SCOPES

TOTAL	PERFORMANCE								DESIGN				PRICE/VALUE	COMMENTS
	CONFIGURATION	RESOLUTION	LOW LIGHT	IMAGE	MECHANICS	DURABILITY	CONSTRUCTION	VERSATILITY	ERGONOMICS	MEETS PURPOSE				
 MEOPTA MEOPRO 80 HD	87	20-60 X80	8.5	9.3	9.75	8.75	8.75	9	9	8	8	\$1,500 /8	LIGHT, BRIGHT, AND DURABLE, THIS IS A RAGING BARGAIN IN A FULL-SIZE SPOTTER. WE LIKE THE FIXED VARIABLE EYEPIECE AND THE ELEGANT LINES.	EDITOR'S CHOICE
 MAVEN S.1A	84.7	25-50 X80	7	8.4	9.75	8.75	8.75	9	8.5	8.75	8.75	\$2,100 /7	THE OPTICS ARE SO GOOD ON THIS NEW BRAND THAT WE WANTED THE MAGNIFICATION TO TOP OUT AT 60X INSTEAD OF 50X. DRESS THIS UP WITH CUSTOM BLING.	
 ATHLON CRONOS ED	81.25	20-60 X86	8	8	8.75	8.5	8	8.25	7.5	7.5	7.75	\$1,500 /9	POSSIBLY THE BEST-PERFORMING FRESHMAN SUBMISSION TO OUR SPOTTING SCOPE TEST, THIS FULL-SIZE SPOTTER IS SHARP AND TOUGH.	GREAT BUY
 ALPEN RAINIER EDHD	80.5	20-60 X85	7	9	9.5	8.5	7.75	7.75	7.75	8.25	7.75	\$1,100 /7.25	A PERENNIAL CONTENDER FOR OUR GREAT BUY AWARD, THE ALPEN FEATURES GREAT GLASS WITH SHARP EDGE CLARITY AT A VERY ACCESSIBLE PRICE. A BARGAIN.	
 TRIJICON TSS-01	77.75	20-60 X82	7.25	8.5	7.5	7.5	7.75	8.5	7.5	8	7.75	\$1,900 /7.5	THE FIRST SPOTTER FROM A COMPANY BETTER KNOWN FOR RIFLESCOPES, THE TRIJICON IS TIGHT, BUT TESTERS THOUGHT IT A BIT OVERPRICED.	
 MINOX MD88 W APO	76.65	20-60 X88	7.5	7	7.91	7.5	7.5	8	7.5	8	7.5	\$1,800 /8.25	ONE OF THE LARGEST SPOTTERS WE'VE EVER TESTED, THIS BIG 88MM SCOPE DIDN'T DELIVER THE LOW-LIGHT PERFORMANCE WE EXPECTED.	
 SWAROVSKI STR 80	73.45	25-50 X80	6.25	6	7.20	7.5	8	7.75	8.5	7.25	7	\$4,542 /8	THIS INVESTMENT-GRADE OPTIC FEATURES AN ILLUMINATED FIRST-PLANE RETICLE AND IS DESIGNED AS A TOOL FOR SPOTTERS TO ASSIST SHOOTERS.	
 NIGHTFORCE TS-80 HD	73.25	20-60 X80	6.75	7	8.74	6	7.25	8.5	7.5	7	7.5	\$1,547 /7	WE EXPECTED THE IMAGE THAT THIS BIG, TOUGH-LOOKING SCOPE DELIVERED TO BE A LITTLE BETTER. AT LOW POWERS, IT'S FINE, BUT IT DARKENS AS IT MAGNIFIES.	
 SIG SAUER OSCAR3	70.25	10-20 X30	6.75	7	6.00	7	6.5	6.75	8.25	7.75	6.75	\$600 /7.5	THIS LITTLE HAND-HELD SPOTTER FEATURES AN IMAGE-STABILIZING GYROSCOPE. WE FOUND ITS UTILITY TO BE PRETTY LIMITED.	