



Ruger Super Redhawk Alaskan

Most shooters think of snub-nose revolvers in the context of diminutive concealment guns. Thus, at first glance, the Ruger Super Redhawk Alaskan—a large-frame, six-shot revolver with a 2½" barrel, chambered in .454 Casull or .480 Ruger—may seem like an anomaly. Actually, it is a reasonable solution to a problem faced by those who live or play in America's Western wilderness: the threat of an unexpected attack by a bear or other dangerous animal.

The idea of the Super Redhawk Alaskan came to Ruger President Steven Sanetti while on a trip to Alaska. There he heard repeated requests for a short-barreled, large-bore magnum handgun for handy field carry. Responding to this input, Sanetti and the Ruger design team quickly made the idea a reality, and the Alaskan was introduced in 2005.

The Alaskan is identical to the standard Super Redhawk (January 1988, p. 56), with the exception of the shorter barrel and the absence

of frame cuts for scope mounts. The Super Redhawk's rubber, wood-insert stocks were replaced by a Hogue Monogrip having finger grooves and a Sorbothane cushion along the backstrap.

Sighting is by way of a ramped, serrated 0.12"-wide black post in front, and a rear unit adjustable for windage and elevation, with a white-outline 0.135"-wide notch. We would have liked a front post with a red or orange insert if we had to suddenly take aim at a large, angry critter with dark fur.

We tested our Alaskan, chambered for the .480 Ruger cartridge, at 25 yds. off sandbags with a 325-gr. Gold Dot soft-point load from Speer and two Hornady loads featuring 325- and 400-gr. XTP hollow-point bullets. Accuracy and velocity results are contained in the accompanying table.

Accuracy was good for a sharp-recoiling revolver having a short

SHOOTING RESULTS (25 YDS.)

.480 RUGER CARTRIDGE	VELOCITY (F.P.S.)	ENERGY (FT.-LBS.)	GROUP SIZE IN INCHES		
			SMALLEST	LARGEST	AVERAGE
HORNADY No. 9138 325-GR. XTP HP	1107 Avg. 16 Sd	885	1.78	2.99	2.33
HORNADY No. 9144 400-GR. XTP HP	1042 Avg. 7 Sd	964	2.77	5.01	3.82
SPEER No. 23985 325-GR. GDSP	1135 Avg. 16 Sd	929	2.17	3.95	3.04

AVERAGE EXTREME SPREAD 3.06

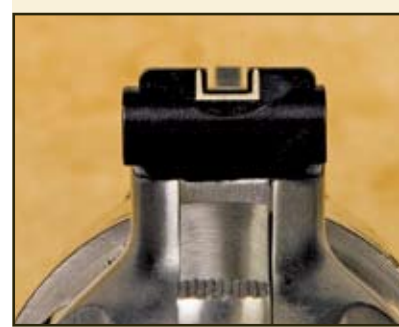
VELOCITIES REPRESENT AN AVERAGE OF 10 SHOTS FIRED OVER A CHRONOGRAPH AT 15 FEET. ACCURACY RESULTS REPRESENT AN AVERAGE OF FIVE CONSECUTIVE, FIVE-SHOT GROUPS FIRED OFF SANDBAGS AT 25 YDS. ABBREVIATIONS: GDSP (GOLD DOT SOFT POINT), HP (HOLLOW POINT), Sd (STANDARD DEVIATION), XTP (EXTREME TERMINAL PERFORMANCE).




The Ruger Super Redhawk Alaskan is distinguished by its short 2½" barrel, Hogue Monogrip rubber stocks and lack of scope-mounting cuts on the top of the frame.

SUPER REDHAWK ALASKAN

MANUFACTURER: STURM RUGER & CO., INC. (DEPT. AR), 1 LACEY PLACE, SOUTHPORT, CT 06890; (203) 256-3860; WWW.RUGER.COM
CALIBER: .454 CASULL, .480 RUGER (TESTED)
ACTION TYPE: DOUBLE-ACTION, CENTER-FIRE REVOLVER
FRAME: INVESTMENT-CAST STAINLESS STEEL
BARREL: 2½", STAINLESS STEEL
RIFLING: 1:18", SIX-GROOVE, RH TWIST
CYLINDER CAPACITY: SIX ROUNDS
SIGHTS: RAMPED POST FRONT, REAR WHITE-OUTLINE NOTCH ADJUSTABLE FOR WINDAGE AND ELEVATION
TRIGGER PULL: SINGLE-ACTION, 4¾ LBS.; DOUBLE-ACTION, 14 LBS.
OVERALL LENGTH: 7½"
HEIGHT: 6¼"
WIDTH: 1¾"
WEIGHT: 43 OZS.
ACCESSORIES: BLACK PLASTIC CASE, INSTRUCTION MANUAL, HIP HOLSTER, SHOULDER HOLSTER, TRIGGER LOCK
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$860



The 1.79"-diameter, unfluted cylinder holds six rounds of .454 Casull or .480 Ruger (top). Sights include a ramped, black serrated post in front, and a white outline notch in a rear blade adjustable for windage and elevation (above).

river or gathering firewood in the nearby forest, you probably won't have a rifle in your hands. At such times, the Super Redhawk Alaskan is one of the best insurance policies you can buy. 

American Rifleman has used the phrase "Dope Bag" at least since 1921, when Col. Townsend Whelen first titled his column with it. Even then, it had been in use for years, referring to a sack used by target shooters to hold ammunition and accessories on the firing line. "Sight dope" also was a traditional marksman's term for sight adjustment information, while judging wind speed and direction was called "doping the wind."

WARNING: Technical data and information contained herein are intended to provide information based on the limited experience of individuals under specific conditions and circumstances. They do not detail the comprehensive training procedures, techniques and safety precautions absolutely necessary to properly carry on similar activity. Read the notice and disclaimer on the contents page. Always consult comprehensive reference manuals and bulletins for details of proper training requirements, procedures, techniques and safety precautions before attempting any similar activity.



Beretta Xtrema2 3.5"

The last of the world's major shotgun manufacturers to embrace the 12-ga., 3½" shotshell, Beretta based its Xtrema (October 2002, p. 67) on the successful A391 Urika. The gas-operated Beretta A391 Xtrema 3.5" closely followed the lines of its progenitor, but borrows elements from other designs as well (notably Benelli and Franchi, both of which are owned by Beretta) to better withstand the constant pounding of heavy 12-ga., 3½" hunting loads. Beretta's Xtrema2 includes a number of performance enhancements that focus on improved handling, reduced recoil and increased durability.

Although it will cycle some 1-oz. loads, that is not the gun's intended role. It is a field gun, pure and simple, and Beretta recommends that only 1⅛-oz. or heavier shotshells be fired in it. With that in mind, the Xtrema2 is offered only with a synthetic stock, either in matte black or in full-coverage Realtree Advantage Max4 or Hardwoods.

Efforts to reduce felt recoil start with the Xtrema2's 4140 steel barrel, which is overbored to 0.742". Hammer forged and fitted with the "Optima Plus" bore system, the barrel features lengthened forcing cones and choke tubes that are longer and thinner than Beretta's

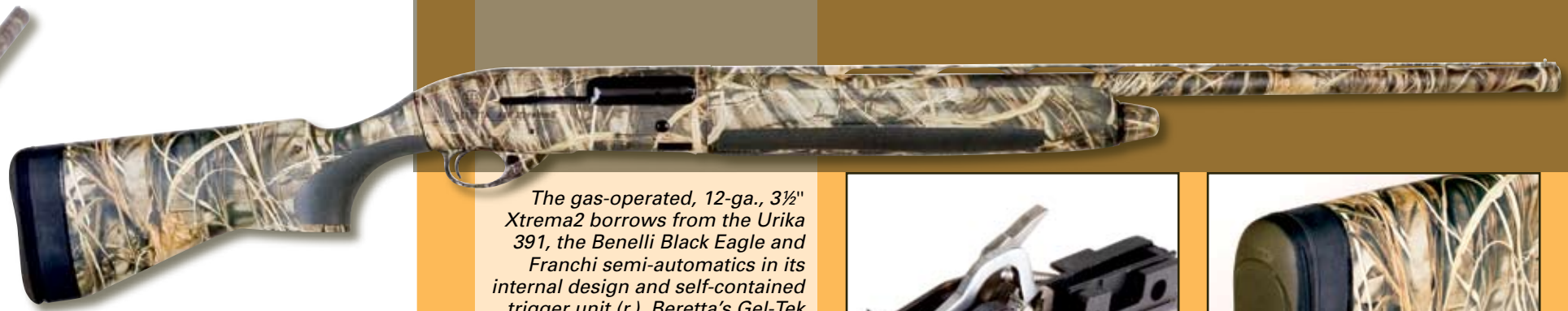
other designs. The full vent rib is crosshatched to reduce glare and topped by a gold bead at its front. The barrel extension is a separate piece firmly screwed to the barrel and left in the white.

Extraction is via a hook on the bolt's right side, and the ejector is pinned into the receiver's left. The ejector is a tapered rectangular stud that rides in a channel in the wall of the barrel extension as it is pushed forward along with its guide under spring tension. Depending on the force of the recoiling shell, the extractor will travel rearward as much as is necessary to clear the ejection port before kicking the case free.

The Xtrema2 employs a gas system with two ports. Gas drives a piston rearward that, in turn, drives the operating rod rearward. Excess gas is vented forward and out of vents at the bottom front of the fore-end. A steel ring with a toothed face reduces fouling around the piston and makes the system, to some extent, self-cleaning.

The bolt, operating rod and recoil spring are removed as a unit for cleaning. The two-piece bolt has a rotating head reminiscent of the Benelli Black Eagle. The recoil spring slides over the magazine tube and is surrounded by a polymer tube below the dual, white-metal action bars. This arrangement leaves room in the buttstock for the two hydraulic cylinders that make up Beretta's Kick-Off recoil-reduction system, which is available as an accessory.

The round, knurled, trigger-blocking manual safety button is located forward of the trigger and integral with the front of the guard. It is disengaged by pushing from right to left. When in the "fire"



The gas-operated, 12-ga., 3½" Xtrema2 borrows from the Urika 391, the Benelli Black Eagle and Franchi semi-automatics in its internal design and self-contained trigger unit (r.). Beretta's Gel-Tek recoil pad system is standard equipment (far r.). The pad is made of a soft gel-type material that effectively reduces perceived recoil. The pads are easily interchangeable, and Beretta advises that different lengths are currently available.



position, a red annular ring around the shaft of the safety is exposed.

The bolt release is on the receiver's right front. Depressing the smooth, rounded button frees the bolt to move forward. There is also a magazine cut-off on the left front of the receiver. On top of the receiver are two sets of recesses that allow for Weaver-style scope bases to be attached, which is welcome news to turkey hunters who prefer optics.

The buttstock incorporates Beretta's Gel-Tek recoil pad system as standard equipment. Made of a soft gel-type material, the pads


are interchangeable, and different lengths are offered. To detach the unit, simply withdraw the U-shaped wire bar at the stock's toe and lift it off the stock. The stock and fore-end also have soft rubber panels over-molded on both sides that aid in gripping the gun, especially when it is wet. The panels are stippled and of a medium gray hue.

The ejection system earned high marks by kicking out 2¾", 3" and 3½" shells with aplomb. In fact, the big 3½" shells were ejected more positively than the shorter ones thanks to the

increased spring tension in the ejector. It cycles extremely fast for a gas-operated autoloader; and recoil, thanks to the overboring, weight and efficiency of the gas system and recoil pad, was more than manageable—even with heavy 3½" Federal goose loads.

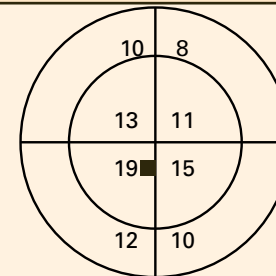
Beretta has trimmed the wrist and fore-end to improve handling and response, and in recognition of the fact that this gun is intended for cold-weather shooting where hunters are forced to wear bulky clothing, it has shortened the length of pull. The end result of these efforts was not lost on staffers who had a chance to put the Xtrema2 through its paces on a Saskatchewan waterfowl hunt. The gun was admittedly something less than lively—after all what 3½" autoloader is—but it was certainly not sluggish. Unlike some other 3½" guns we've tested, we never struggled to keep the Xtrema2 in front of the target.

That said, the Xtrema2, like other 3½" autoloaders, is a special-purpose tool rather than an all-around shotgun. It worked well with higher velocity 1-oz. loads, but it proved to be balky with light target loads. The Xtrema2 was patterned with Federal field loads, and the results are shown in the accompanying table.

Those looking for a fast-handling 3½" autoloader to take to the field in search of waterfowl or turkey would be well advised to give the Xtrema2 a thorough look. 

SHOOTING RESULTS

AVERAGE OF 10 PATTERNS (40 YDS.)



IMPROVED CYLINDER
CHOKE TUBE

■ = POINT OF HOLD

FEDERAL PREMIUM No. PW133, 12-GA.,
3" — 1⅛ oz.—No. 2 STEEL
AVERAGE PELLET COUNT: 167
MEASURED VELOCITY @ 3 FT.:
1438 F.P.S.
REMAINING ENERGY PER PELLET: 4.2 FT.-LBS.

TOTAL HITS	98 (59%)
21" INNER CIRCLE	58 (34%)
30" OUTER RING	40 (25%)

BERETTA XTREMA2 3.5"

MANUFACTURER: FABBRICA D' ARMI
PIETRO BERETTA, 18 S.P.A. VIA PIETRO
BERETTA, 25063 GARDONE
VAL TROMPIA, BRESCIA, ITALY

IMPORTER: BERETTA, USA CORP. (DEPT.
AR), 17601 BERETTA DRIVE, ACCO-
KEEK, MD 20607; (800) 636-3420;
WWW.BERETTAUSA.COM

GAUGE: 12, 3½"

ACTION TYPE: GAS-OPERATED, SEMI-
AUTOMATIC SHOTGUN

RECEIVER: ANODIZED ALUMINUM

BARREL: 28" (TESTED), 30"

CHOKES: FIVE OPTIMA-BORE CHOKE TUBES:
FULL, IMPROVED-MODIFIED, MODIFIED,
IMPROVED CYLINDER, CYLINDER

TRIGGER PULL: SINGLE-STAGE, 4½ LBS.

STOCK: SYNTHETIC: LENGTH OF PULL, 13¼"
(14¼" WITH KICK-OFF RECOIL SYSTEM);
DROP AT HEEL, 2¼"; DROP AT COMB,
1½"

OVERALL LENGTH: 49½"

WEIGHT: 7 LBS., 2 OZS.

ACCESSORIES: LOCKABLE HARD PLASTIC
CASE, CHOKE-TUBE KEY, CHOKE TUBES

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1,098
(MATTE BLACK); \$1,198 (REALTREE
ADVANTAGE MAX4 OR HARDWOODS)