

As a hunting or HFT rifle, the Daystate Air Ranger Mk II should excel



Second Helping

Not a company to sit back on their laurels, Daystate have taken their original Air Ranger to a new level with the introduction of the MkII version – Terry Almond gets reacquainted

The Daystate Air Ranger is a mechanically-operated, pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) rifle as opposed to their electronic Air Wolf PCP range. The original was a great rifle and won many admirers when it was introduced 5-years ago, with its 10-shot magazine and practical but elegant stock design.

A lot of bottle

Originally designed for the high power US market, the FAC-rated Air Ranger

was fitted with a huge 500cc buddy bottle giving 230bar to accommodate shots generating 50 to 60 ft/lb of energy. Once the decision was made to do a UK 12ft/lb version, the huge bottle was retained, which upped the capacity to 500 in .177, and even more in .22 – almost enough for a seasons hunting. The new version on test would normally come with a slimmer 400cc bottle but in this case was fitted with an optional 500cc design. There is no difference in price.

So is it better? Starting with the stock; it has been stealthily improved in a number of areas. Gone is the integral trigger guard to be replaced with a traditional metal design. The ambidextrous thumbhole has a larger cut out - which accommodates the hand and wrist more comfortably - and a thumb rest shelf has appeared in the form of two flat sections each side just behind the action. The slightly curved pistol grip remains the same with a sharply cut, stippled panel each side.

The new Daystate Air Ranger shows noted improvements over the original



From the trigger guard forward, the deep grooves each side of the forend have been extended to give a more generous choice for hold. The extended lower lip of the forend allows forward hand positions without making contact with the buddy bottle. Finished off in a hand-rubbed walnut finish with a ventilated rubber butt pad it is a classy looking stock that's for sure.

No escape!

The action has also been updated too. Gone is the steel regulator, replaced with a more efficient, "Slingshot" hammer and plastic valve system with a patented anti-bounce design. The hammer uses inertia to open the valve, having virtually no contact with it. The valve is spring-loaded and working against inertia, eliminates any form of bounce. The result is a huge gain in efficiency of 40% in terms of shot count!

The original alloy breechblock has been replaced with a titanium alloy version along with a strengthened bolt, and various improvements have been made to the magazine to enhance reliability. The scope rail is generous for fore and aft movement but care has to be taken over the choice of mounts owing to the height of the magazine, which would catch the body tube if low mounts are used. Because of this I feel that the stock would benefit from a slightly higher cheek piece position.

The trigger is a delight, being a 2-stage, multi-adjustable unit fitted with a curved stainless blade. The

rotary safety remains the same being located at the rear of the action. A match-quality, 17" Lothar barrel is retained, as is the neat shroud with integral baffles and a threaded end for a sound moderator if required. A pressure gauge is positioned on the left side of the forend and easily readable from the shooting position. There you have it; certainly enough mods and improvements to earn its MKII title.

Fill her up

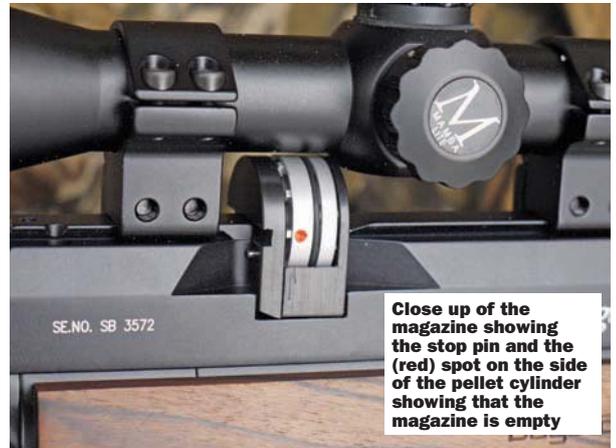
Although the Air Ranger has a buddy bottle air supply, it is not necessary to remove it for charging. Located under the forend is a filler valve with a push-on cover, allowing a bayonet-type connector to be attached. Filling from a divers' tank is simple enough, though I feel the push-on cover cap should be a screw-on as it could get slacker over time and the chances of losing it in the field become a possibility.

My own divers' bottle only had 190bar available, and this took the rifle's air meter reading up to where the green section starts. Below the yellow section is a red area which indicates that the rifle needs a re-fill. I imagine that a full fill of 230bar will take it all the way to the top of the green.

Nevertheless, using Daystate's own 8.3grn pellets, the rifle put out consistent readings on the chrono right down to the bottom of the yellow section for 200-shots or so, only starting to drop off to any appreciable degree near the bottom. It averaged out at 770 fps over the fill for around 11.3ft/lb. With the standard 400cc



The heavy duty bolt gives an easy grip, and the red safety lever is positioned handily at the rear of the action



Close up of the magazine showing the stop pin and the (red) spot on the side of the pellet cylinder showing that the magazine is empty



The muzzle is threaded for an additional sound moderator and has a screw on protector



The handy integral air pressure gauge gives a clear indication of the fill level

"Gone is the steel regulator, replaced with a more efficient, "Slingshot" hammer and plastic valve system with a patented anti-bounce design"

Not looking a lot different changes are subtle but noticeable



“The answer is to use some sort of seating tool which I found to be the end of a blunt Phillips screwdriver”

bottle and a full charge you can expect 260- shots in .177 or 300 in .22.

Loading

Filling the magazine is easy, provided that the pellets are seated at the right depth. As with all magazine-fed air rifles, too far in will allow the pellet head to protrude at the breech end resulting in a jam and not far enough in gives the same result due to the skirt.

The answer is to use some sort of seating tool which I found to be the end of a blunt Phillips screwdriver. The bit on the end was just deep enough to seat the pellet before the thicker stem butted up against the magazine’s outer body preventing the head from protruding.

Once loaded the magazine locks out and is ready for insertion into the mag well. A nice feature is that it can be inserted from left or right, by means of a removable pin that can be re-fitted to suit your preference. This one was set up to be fed in from the left side.

The safety can be set on green (SAFE) during loading drills as follows; Cock the action and slide the magazine in from the left. No rearward pressure needs to be applied to the bolt once cocked. Close the bolt and the rifle is loaded and ready to fire. Release the safety and you are good to go!

What’s it like to shoot?

In the field, the Mk II feels well balanced and quick to point of aim, despite the larger air bottle. The lip at the tip of the forend underneath the

bottle helps create a conventional feel and hold for the supporting hand. I particularly like the thumb rest option as it allows the rear mounted safety to be toggled ON and OFF with the minimum amount of disturbance to the firing hand. All important in a hunting situation!

The rifle is a delight to shoot and deadly accurate. With pre-charged pneumatic rifles it’s pretty much the norm these days for pellets to be making one slightly larger hole at distances up to and beyond 45yds, and the Air Ranger Mk II is well capable of that.

I doubt that many users would bother to fit a sound moderator because it’s so quiet as it is. The barrel shroud and integral moderator do a good job in smothering any noise. The rifle came for test fitted with a 3-12x Mamba scope with a graduated reticule and this proved perfect in terms of size and weight.

All up the combination weighed in at around 8.5lb which makes it ideal for lugging around the fields. Indeed, I have accounted for a good few rats and magpies during my time with it. I’m more used to using single shot FT-machines, but the 10-round magazine gives the confidence of a follow up shot if required and is a great thing to have.

As a hunting/HFT combination, the Daystate Air Ranger fits the bill and manages to aesthetically please, despite the naked bottle hanging out the end.



Now in a 12ft/lb UK version, the MKII should prove popular



The air bottle is filled via a quick fill valve at the base of the action – note the push fit dust cover

Daystate Air Ranger Mk II

- Capacity 10 (DM)
- Action Bolt-operated PCP
- Sights N grooved for scope mounts
- Weight 7.7lbs un-scoped
- Length 40.5"
- Barrel 17"
- Trigger 2-stage, adjustable
- Safety Y
- Silencer integral, threaded ½ x 20 UNF
- Power 11.3ft/lbs
- Calibre: .177 on test, .22 available.
- Price: £999
- Options: FAC-rated 80ft/lbs version available £1220
- Single-shot pellet tray £11
- Reflex sound moderator £55
- Contact: Daystate, 01782 791755