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OFF THE PORCH: The illuminated rifle scope

by DICK JONES: Outdoor Columnist

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I was in my office waiting to hear a shot. I knew Cherie was likely to see a doe and she is deadly with her Pre '64 Winchester Model 70 in .243. I heard her come in through the garage and her face was red with cold. She looked frustrated.

"I saw two does just in front of my stand but I couldn't see my crosshairs. I watched them till dark but I just couldn't take a shot." She was frustrated. Cherie's scope was a high quality 3-9 scope with good light gathering qualities. Under normal conditions, it works just fine until legal shooting time is past but the overcast conditions and the low light area where her two does were standing created a situation where it was just too dark for the crosshairs to be seen.

Most of us take the hunting rifle scope for granted because by the time most of us became adults, hunting scopes were fairly common. The fact is, hunting was a lot harder with simple iron sights. It's true that really accurate shooting can be accomplished with iron sights but when the light level goes down, things can get tough. The reason is that, to shoot accurately with iron sights, the shooter must focus on the front sight. When you focus on the front sight in low light at a dark gray deer standing in shadows, he simply disappears. Optical sights allow us to shoot earlier in the morning and later in the evening and add at least 20 minutes to our shooting time. Most importantly, because of the nocturnal habits of deer, it's the most productive time of the hunting day.

Optical sights have been in existence for almost two hundred years but until after World War II they were quite expensive and beyond the reach of the average hunter. The first commonly available scope for the average hunter was the Lyman Alaskan. It was a 2.5 X scope with internal adjustments and was reasonably affordable. Then Weaver scopes appeared. Reasonably priced with internal adjustments and a steel tube they quickly became the standard of the industry. Out of a sense of tradition, I still have a K4 Weaver I bought in 1968 on my Model 70 .308.

While scopes have a huge advantage over iron sights in low light and at longer distances, there are still situations where they can let us down. In my many years of shooting and hunting, I've experienced all kinds of problems from scopes that simply can't be zeroed to a pistol scope that suddenly turned to fog while in the gun safe. The old days to tapping on the turret in the hope the reticule would move when the knob was turned are mostly over.

Today, we have an incredibly broad choice of quality riflescopes to choose from. Optical quality and advances in lens coatings, combined with new technology in reticules has given us a plethora of excellent choices for hunting. Many deer hunting scopes now have 30 mm tubes and monster sized objective lenses. These scopes admit a lot of light but a lot of light doesn't help if you can't see your crosshairs.

My first experience with a Konus scope was a 1.5-5 that my friend at Connecticut Valley Arms, David Meredith, had installed on a CVA muzzleloader. I was impressed with the clarity and brightness of the scope when I first looked at it and at the accuracy of the turrets when I sighted it in. Cherie shot her first deer looking through that scope. I made a mental note to pay attention to this new to me name in optics.

When I received a press release on the illuminated reticule models early this fall, I instantly thought of that evening when Cherie had enough light to hunt but not enough to see the crosshairs. I sent an email back to Melly Bonita at Konus. The scope I chose was the 3-10 Konus Pro Plus. The 44 mm objective lens is bright and has good light gathering qualities and the Illuminated reticule assures Cherie will never have to pass up a deer again because its coat is dark and it's in the shadows. If you can see it in the scope, you can shoot it with the illuminated reticule.

Besides the illumination, this scope has features that make it a winner. The turrets are tall,

almost target style, with distinct audible clicks. The reticle is the duplex type and is mounted on the second focal plane keeping the crosshairs the same size as the power is increased, as it should be on a hunting scope. The blue and red illumination is controlled on the left side and has six different power levels in each color.

The Pro Plus is lightweight at 19 ounces. It's shockproof, waterproof, and fogproof. With an exit pupil of 14.6 at 3X it has excellent light transmission qualities and generous eye relief at three inches. At less than \$150 this scope is a great value.

It is now securely nestled on top of Cherie's .243; I fully expect it to provide deer sausage, tenderloin, and some deer jerky for the holiday season.

For more information on the Konus Pro Plus and other Konus Optical products go to: konusscopes.com

Dick Jones is a freelance writer living in High Point. He's an NRA Certified Instructor and a member of the board of directors of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association. He writes about hunting, fishing, dogs, and shooting for several NC newspapers as well as national and regional magazines. If you'd like to have him speak to your group, he can be reached at offtheporch52@yahoo.com or offtheporchmedia.com.

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