

Digi-Mon

Pete Wadeson tests the Ranger 5x42 Digital Nightvision Monocular from Yukon Advanced Optics and comes away feeling Digital Nightvision kit has now come of age...

Digital Nightvision has been on the periphery of conventional nightvision kit for some time now but none has quite cut the mustard in terms of performance claims. The Yukon Ranger is a major advance in nightvision as not only does it use the latest digital technology previously available for military purpose only, but it actually works and certainly has a role to play in the sport shooters' night shooting kit.

Practical build

Gone are the days of bulky, heavy and cold metal casings of many nightvision units from Russia. Certainly as Yukon has developed, units are much more aesthetically pleasing and this itself is indication we're now getting product made specifically for sporting use - and not some second grade ex-military hand me down.

The Ranger has the look of a pair of binoculars from the front, but is classed as a monocular having one eyepiece with adjustable ocular facility. The eyepiece has a fold back and very comfortable rubberised eyepiece and will suit most people's vision. The casing measures quite a substantial 6.7" x 4.6" x 3" but has a very practical rubberised outer and the build feels reassuringly robust. The unit is powered by 6 x AA batteries that sit neatly inside a cradle that is located in a compartment in the underside of the unit and secured by a slide on/off retaining cover.

The control layout in my opinion is of prime importance for nightvision units, so you're not faffing around in the dark searching for switches or buttons. In this case the controls couldn't be better positioned or work more effectively. On top of the unit are two large rubberised

pressure switches on the right with two smaller ones alongside these on the left. The rear right hand button switches the unit on and off while the forward button switches on the powerful onboard IR illuminator. The buttons on the left control the intensity of the IR (Infra-red) the front button is clearly marked with a plus (+) symbol while the one towards the rear with the minus (-) symbol signifying their duty.

Main focus is achieved by turning the left objective lens housing and once switched on this is where your first surprise is seen. Due to the unit using a CCD sensor, the sight picture is seen not in ghostly green light, as is common to image intensifier NV units, but on a monochrome LCD and in a TV shape, not round. This does at first seem quite alien but due to the unit having such clarity, and a big 5X fixed magnification, the sight picture and distance you can observe is greater than you can see with any Gen 1 grade of equipment that uses a conventional image intensifier tube. A small dial with a serrated edge is positioned just rearward of the objectives that alters the brightness/contrast of the actual sight picture - using this in conjunction with the IR control results in a very high level of image quality being easily achieved.

Handheld or static

Though the Ranger has primarily been designed as a fully independent handheld Nightvision observation unit it can also be attached to a camera tripod due to the threaded metal insert set into the underside. There's also a built in video output connector so the Ranger can be connected to a larger monitor screen or

digital recording device. Though on first inspection this may not seem to have much use outside wildlife watching, the unit can be positioned outside a hide and an area watched in comfort from a hidden and more comfortable position, or of course the unit can be set up and allowed to record events of the night.

The first feature many ask of any NV unit is 'what range is it effective for?' Well, obviously ambient light does come into this equation but over flat open

fields with some starlight using the NV on its highest IR setting I could spot rabbits at 100+ yards with ease and foxes out to 150.

Anybody with any real experience of the use of NV for observation, then swapping over to a dedicated Nightvision sight to take a shot, will tell you this is by far distance enough for





Considering what we've had in the past – the Ranger 5 X 42 Digital Nightvision Monocular from Yukon is literally eye opening...



The controls on this unit couldn't be better positioned or work more effectively



The neat battery compartment – note the threaded metal insert set into the underside for tripod mounting



Easy to miss – note the small serrated edge dial positioned just rearward of the objectives that alters the brightness/contrast of the actual sight picture

TECH SPEC

5 X 42 Ranger Digital Nightvision Monocular

Magnification:	5X
Objective Lens:	42mm
Power Source:	6 x AA Alkaline/Lithium/NiMH batteries
Operating Time:	6hrs without IR. 3hrs with (using both battery holders)
Dimensions:	6.7" x 4.6" x 3"
Weight:	22.9oz
Price:	£299.95 inc. VAT
Contact:	Thomas Jacks Ltd 01789 264100 www.thomasjacks.co.uk

most shooters requirements. Of course there will always be those that want better performance, but for that you need to pay the price. It's staggering to think the Ranger is priced as a Gen 1 unit and complete with a spare battery cradle, car power lead, UK mains adaptor, carry pouch and Yukon's unrivalled 3-year warranty included in the wallet friendly price.

It's claimed to have the best viewing range in its category - I'd have no hesitation in saying that's valid. The image it gives is bright and sharp, making identification at the ranges mentioned previously achievable in all but the darkest of nights. Incidentally, one major advantage of digital night vision is that it cannot be damaged by bright light sources – although image

quality will suffer, you can even use the unit in daylight.

Conclusions

As many readers will be aware I've tested a lot of NV kit over the years, but at long last I feel we've reached a point where Digital Nightvision is a viable alternative, at least for observation, before switching over to a conventional NV sight for taking the shot. A dedicated observation aid is far more suitable than pointing your rifle around to scan the area ahead. That alone makes this a very useful piece of NV hardware to have.

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