

**Awarded
Best in Texas!**
(see page 63 for more information)

Dove Hunting = Family Time

TEXAS OUTDOORS

"Texas' Most Comprehensive Outdoors Publication"

JOURNAL



September 2026 / \$5.99



texasoutdoorsjournal.com

Gear Choices - Texas & High Country | One Last Time At Night
Texas Exotics - Bonus Hunt Options | Cast 'N Blast Time
Raising Kids Into Fishing Buddies | Late Coastal Slam Season

COASTAL & LAKE FORECASTS | TIDE & SOLUNAR TABLES



Gear Choices — Texas & High Country

There are so many items we use hunting it is unbelievable. For every scenario the gear that works or doesn't can change on a dime. For instance, what optics used in East Texas is totally different from those used in West Texas.

It also changes according to the hunting method employed. If hunting in a blind as opposed to still hunting, different camo and cover scent is used.

Let's focus on two categories — optics and cutlery. Since a lot of Texans hunt in Colorado and other parts of the mountain west so I'm going suggest optics and knives that work from East Texas all the way to the High Country.

Hunting the tight cover of East Texas a 3-9x40 scope is fine. I realize there are some wide-open pastures in parts of East Texas so if there's



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Binoculars come in a variety of powers and overall size. Domestic manufacturers like Vortex now rival the three European manufacturers.

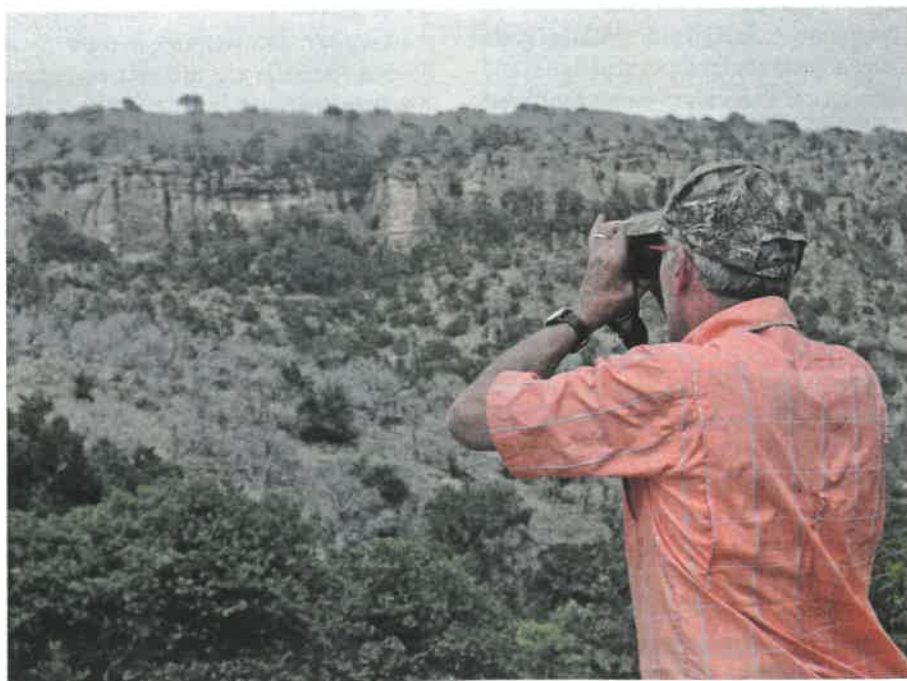


PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

When still hunting and needing lighter weight binoculars the author prefers Vortex 10x44 models.

a different terrain make appropriate adjustments.

One time I bear hunted the post oak forest west of Walsenburg near La Veta, Colorado. A .30-30 without a scope worked fine. Half of the hunt I didn't have a shot over 20 feet. But that's not the norm for Colorado.

If you plan on having opportunities for really close shots you'll want an AO (Adjustable Objective) scope so you can focus when game is super close. You'll want the 3-power so you can pick up the animal super-fast if it's close. If he is that close he'll likely detect any movement when you put the crosshairs on him and you'll need to get fast target acquisition to make a quick shot.

I like duplex crosshairs. I don't mind a few tic marks, but I don't want a scope that is cluttered. I'm sure a cluttered scope works fine for long range shooters on a bench but for hunting, I keep it clean.

Speaking of using a lower power scope like a 3-9, what if you've got a

sounder of hogs close? You'll want to be able to get fast target acquisition after the first shot before they scatter. A 6-18 will make it tougher.

In the wide open country of West Texas, I favor at least a 4.5-14 or more likely a 6-18 scope. I've got both. To me, a 3-9 just doesn't cut it for longer shots.

I'm not a long-range shooter. Yes, I've made a couple of shots over 400 yards for antelope when it's not possible to get closer, but I prefer to get closer, not over 200 yards.

You'll want the objective lens to be at least four-times the highest power on your scope. So on a 3-9 you'd want it to be 3-9x36mm with most of them being 3-9x40mm. If it is lower, it won't let in enough light early/late in the day. For instance an 8x25 small pair of binoculars may seem ok from 10:00 to 5:00 but at daylight/dark in lower light situations it doesn't let in enough light to see—which is primo hunting time.

Which brings up, why not buy the 50mm scopes? Yes, 50mm scopes do let in more light but the heartburn I have with them is that they are heavier and a lot wider so you have to use high scope mounts. I like my scopes mounted as low as possible.

For most hunts in Colorado I'd recommend a 6-18x44mm. Again, all shots in Colorado aren't a country mile. I remember my first Colorado elk I shot at 30 yards with a blackpowder rifle with open sights. Another time in Idaho down in the Owyhees which is high desert country where you can see for miles and miles, I shot an elk at 20-30 yards. But these two incidences are not the norm, so I'd still recommend higher power scopes as a whole.

As we close on scopes, don't buy the cheapest scope on the market or every time you use it you will regret your decision. Decades ago, to get good glass you had to buy from one of the top three European optic companies.

The last six years I've been using Vortex optics which are hard to beat and available at affordable price-points. They offer multiple levels of quality. If you want some good glass, you can get it from two or three American companies that rival the big three European manufacturers.

In a nutshell, I'll share the advice of my old 87-year-old buddy, Roy Snethen. He used to say, "Don't leave any pennies



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

The author's 10x44 binoculars affords greater magnification to spot game at greater distance.

in your pocket when making an optic purchase". Everyone is on some kind of budget but buy the best that you can afford and you'll never regret it.

One last word on scopes. I'd never heard of putting a scope on a shotgun 50 years ago but now, due to the super tight turkey patterns I put a Vortex Crossfire red dot on my two Henry turkey shotguns. The patterns are so tight you'll miss gobblers just as if you were shooting your deer rifle if you don't mount a sight/scope.

Moving on to binoculars — if you're

sitting in a blind in Texas by all means use a 10x50. Weight is no issue compared to hunting Colorado where they will be too heavy to lug around.

When you're hunting in the mountains you're going to be scrambling up and down at 10-12,000 feet and sucking wind no matter how good of shape you're in.

The author used to preach carrying an 8x42 to compensate for the huffing and puffing to help stabilize the image. About 10-14 years ago while hunting with a buddy that was using 10x42 binoculars



PHOTO BY TOM CLAYCOMB III

An angled eyepiece on this spotting scope provides the author with more versatility when glassing game.



PHOTO BY TOM CLAYCOMB III

The author suggests using scopes with larger 50 mm objective to gather more light when hunting from a stand or stationary position. Otherwise a 3-9x40 is a good overall option.

and was seeing twice as many elk and other game. The author made the change to the higher powered binoculars.

They were using 10x binoculars and after that hunt the author switched to 10x42's. Most of the time there is a tree or rock available as use as a brace and help stabilize the image. I've never looked back. To sum up binoculars, when setting stationary in a blind by use a set of 10x50 binoculars. When hoofing it hard all day,

use a set of 10x44's or after a couple of days you won't be carrying them plus that much weight, will put your neck out of sorts.

Being raised in Texas I'd never heard of spotting scopes. After college a buddy from Montana tried to tell me the virtues of them and I thought he was crazy.

Then I moved to Idaho. My buddy Ed Sweet used to own a TV show and he'd film kids bear hunting for his show. Once

we hunted two evening in a row and saw a total of 10 bears. I only saw one first. Ed and his photographer saw everything else before I did. The difference? They had good European spotting scopes. All I had was an entry level pair of Burris 8x32 binoculars. That prompted my quest to learn and get better glass.

Which is the best choice a 20-60x85 or a 15-30x50 spotting scope? It's somewhat like my argument above about 10x44 vs. 10x50 binoculars. It's according to your hunting scenario. If you're sheep hunting, then you're pretty much locked in using a 20-60x85. You'll be glassing two to six miles. And before you waste a day sneaking in on a ram you spotted you need to be able to predetermine if it is a legal ram?

Plus the weight factor. If you're riding up high on horses, by all means take a 20-60 but if you're hiking up to the top of a mountain for a few days straight you'll die. The Vortex 11-33x50 weighs 27.4 ounces or 1.7 lbs. Their 20-60x85 weighs 76.6 ounces or 4.8 lbs. That's a 3.1 lb. difference. That's a big deal.

For 85 percent of the hunts in the lower 48 I'd recommend using a 15-30. It'll be a lot easier to lug up a mountain plus provide sufficient magnification.

Get a spotting scope with a 90-degree angled eyepiece. A straight eyepiece is functional on the shooting range but not so much when you're setting on a steep slope. You'll have to be a contortionist to be able to see out of it.

You'll have to have a tri-pod. I've got several sets of Vortex tripods and all are good. You can spend as much as you want. Get one that is lightweight, functional, is easy to scan with and lock down?

Moving to cutlery, this gear is somewhat like optics. Are you hunting out of a blind or scrambling up mountains? If weight is no problem, then a lot of knives will work.

The actual knife designs will be the same whether you're gutting, skinning and processing an antelope or a moose. The first knife design needed is a clip point to stab through the hide to mark the pattern. Marking the pattern is the cut up the belly line and out to each hoof.

I've preached using a clip point knife for nearly 25 years until a year and a half ago while on a deer and hog hunt in East Texas with knifemaker Charles Allen. He said he uses a caping knife to cut the



Bottom to top — Clip point design, Caping knife, Drop Point knife and a Boning knife

pattern. With his advice I've adjusted and now to carry a caping knife to not only cape out a head or skin the feet and toes on your bears. But simply put, use this specialty knife for a multitude of tasks.

If you're saving the hide, you'll want a drop point knife. You can skin faster and not cut through the hide as often if you use a drop point knife as compared to a clip point. If you're not saving the hide then it doesn't matter. I've probably skinned a 100 deer with a folder and thrown the hide to the coyotes. If you're mounting the head or tanning the hide of a bear, you'll need a caping knife.

The author suggests you needing a boning knife like the Knives of Alaska Professional Boning Knife. I designed so of course I'm going to tell you that it is the best boning knife on the market. I took what I learned from working 45 years in the beef packing world and perfected the ultimate design.

The four knife designs you could justify carrying doesn't really matter where you hunt. The designs will be the same from Texas to Colorado but here's where things can vary. You can carry any knife if you shoot a deer on your 50-acre home place — no biggie as long as it is the four designs described above. Where it matters is if you shoot something on top of a mountain two to five miles out. If you do that then you'll want a hard metal knife so you can finish skinning your animal before the knife gets dull. Consider a DiamondBlade Knife or the new MagnaCut steel knives that holds an edge longer than a regular knife.

Carrying either of the two harder knives prevents you from having to carry two to three knives to finish your skinning job or to carry a whetstone. Just remember where you hunt and how you hunt will dictate the equipment needed and used. **TAJ**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Matching the scope mounted on a rifle should also match how the combination is going to be used in the field

North American & Exotic Game Taxidermy Specialist

