

T/C Venture Predator



The T/C Venture Predator is almost completely camo covered except for bolt, recoil pad, and grip areas.

In the last issue of *GUNS&GAME* we reviewed the Thompson/Center Venture rifle. T/C have also released the Venture Predator model, which is very similar to the Venture except for cosmetic changes, most significant being the camouflage finish. The T/C Venture Predator is a striking looking rifle, appealing to the serious hunter that wants to be fully camouflaged in the bush. There is nothing like the glint of a stainless steel rifle to alert animals of your presence.

Most impressively, also coming with the rifle, was the camouflaged mounts and scope - a Nikon Coyote Special 3-9x40. This Philippine-built scope had what is called a BDC Predator reticle, (Bullet Drop Compensation) which features four bars with a circle in the middle and two more circles underneath that, so that elevation can be gained. These circles correspond with various elevations for cartridges at different ranges, meaning that quick target acquisition can be achieved when out hunting small game. The scope is mounted in Nikon four-screw rings on Weaver-style bases, and the whole rifle mount/scope package is uniformly covered in Realtree Max-1 camo pattern.

Since the T/C Venture rifle was reviewed in depth in issue 67, I won't go into great detail on the mechanics of the rifle, and mostly focus on the differences in the T/C Venture Predator rifle. The T/C Predator has a fluted barrel to reduce weight and improve heat dissipation. It has a 650 thou' muzzle diameter, with the barrel being 22" long.

The rifle sent for review is in .308 calibre. The T/C Venture is a modern three-lug design where the bolt body is the same diameter as the lugs. This provides a very stiff, but a little heavier bolt than with more conventional designs, where the locking lugs protrude beyond the diameter of the bolt. Because of the three lugs it has a short bolt throw (60-degrees), and T/C have

engineered a rigid receiver with only an ejection port separating the receiver bridge and receiver ring. With the top of the action completely closed the rifle features a single stack three round detachable box magazine which fed reliably.

The camo coating on the rifle is very impressive, it is extremely well done and appears to be durable. Although it is possible to scratch it, it did not scratch off or mark readily. It looks as though the coating is applied in a very thin film, but exactly how I cannot tell you. The camouflage pattern has plenty of variation of greens, dry grass, dark areas, certainly suitable for breaking up the outline of the rifle in most hunting environments. The grip areas are rubber inlays by Hogue, which is claimed to give superior grip, and they worked well in this regard. A rubber recoil pad is fitted to the rifle and the trigger is integral with the stock - fine as long as you don't break it. Two guard screws are fitted to the rifle, one front and one rear of the trigger guard, and the barrel fully floats. The trigger is adjustable between 3.5 and 5lbs, although I measured it slightly less than this. A tool is provided for its adjustment. The rifle also features T/C's 5R rifling.

The rifle comes with an MOA guarantee. Initially I struggled to get three shots under 1MOA with factory ammunition, but 150 grain Winchester Ballistic Silver Tips did put three shots in a neat 1.04" at 100 yards, which would suffice. I then swapped to some Norma Match ammunition and got three shots into 0.9". I guess the rifle has capacity to shoot when you find ammunition and loads that it likes. Interestingly, in an attempt to try and improve the groups, I put a "Limbsaver" barrel de-resonator on the end of the barrel. This device is just a 30 gram rubber grumpet, about 35mm in diameter which is pushed onto the end of the barrel. I re-shot the two groups on the target with Highland AX and Norma Match, and with the barrel resonator fitted, both groups halved. In



Left hand side with action and barrel completely covered.



For a completely camo covered hunter the usefulness of the TIC Predator becomes apparent.

fact, I got the Norma Match ammunition 3-shot group down to under 0.5", and the Highland AX group, which is only a line of basic factory ammunition, down to 0.82" from 1.8" without it. This device is designed to dampen barrel vibration and improve accuracy. In this particular rifle, it worked well. A bedding pressure point in the forend may achieve a similar result in this rifle, but I never got to test this.

The range of calibres available in the Predator model shows it to be geared heavily towards varmint shooting. In Australia, a rifle like this would probably be used as much for deer hunting as anything. However, the four calibres

(Right) Plastic magazine holds 3 rounds in .308 in a single stack.

(Below) Close up of the butt shows make up of Realtree Max-1 camo pattern.





(Left) Venture Predator target showing results with factory ammo.
 (Below) Top two groups were shot with standard rifle. Follow the arrows to the same ammo with a Limb-saver barrel deresonator fitted. This device (below) is said to dampen vibration and improve accuracy. Seemed to work on this rifle. A pressure point at the forend tip would probably achieve a similar result.



available currently are .204, .223, .22-250 and .308. The .308 could make a useful deer cartridge, although one would wonder that some bigger calibres, like .30-06 may well interest sambar hunters where the complete camo outfit in a sit and wait situation can be rewarding. For fox whistling for example, the T/C Predator in the varmint calibres would be useful indeed.

SPECIFICATIONS

Thompson/Center Venture Predator

Maker: Thompson/Center Arms, USA
Action: 3-lug bolt action
Calibre: .308 Win (.204, .223, .22-250)
Overall Length: 1055mm (41 1/2")
Barrel Length: 560mm (22") 5R Rifling
Weight: 3.1kg (6.85lbs) bare
Stock: Synthetic, with Hogue grip areas and Real Tree Max-1 coating
Metal Finish: Real Tree Max-1 covering Weathershield bolt
Sights: Drilled and tapped for scope mounts.
Magazine: 3-rounds. Synthetic detachable box.
Safety: 2-position, RHS
Distributor: Frontier Arms Co
www.frontierarms.com.au
Warranty: Lifetime
Price: \$1465

For those that feel their hunting requires an almost invisible rifle in the bush, the T/C Venture Predator combined with the Nikon scope, and the whole package covered in Realtree Max-1 is impressive. Perhaps the most convincing camo covering I have ever seen on a hunting rifle.

