

The continuing evolution of Beretta gas-operated shotguns has kept them at the very leading edge of autoloading technology. Designed to replace the highly successful AL 391 family, the new A400 series has models to suit most shotgunning needs whether they be in the field or on the range.

The black synthetic model performed well on Wairarapa mallards.

BY GARY GIRVAN

BERETTA QUALITY FOR THE BUDGET CONSCIOUS

For the hard-out waterfowler who chases ducks and geese in the most extreme conditions, the A400 Xtreme would have to be at the top of my list as the ultimate in ruggedness, refined handling, and versatility. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most expensive. And that's where the new A300 range comes in. It's designed to offer the benefits of Beretta technology at a price range that is more affordable.

Currently, there are two models available in the A300 family. The A300 Outlander is chambered for 3-inch cartridges. Its design is based firmly on the now-discontinued AL391 Urika model, a gas-operated autoloader that was renowned for its reliability and fine handling. With a choice of three different stock finishes - wood or synthetic in black or camouflage - the Outlander offers Beretta quality for under \$1700.00. The other model, the A300 Xtreme, is the subject of this review.

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A300 XTREMA

The Xtreme is designed with the serious waterfowler in mind. It is chambered for 3 ½-inch shells and is capable of cycling a wide variety of loads from super-magnum field loads down to 28-gram target loads. Its technology is a combination of elements from the ALXtreme2 series and the latest A400 Xtreme models.

This gun features the same gas operating system, rotary bolt design, and barrel technology as the A400. In these aspects, you are getting the latest in Beretta design except for the lack of a magazine cut-off, which has been omitted to save cost. The major difference between the A300 and A400 models is in the recoil-reducing, hydraulic

Kick-off system. The Xtreme uses the older-style of Kick-off which is mounted on the end of the butt-stock rather than mid-stock as in the much more complicated A400 design.

The Xtreme is available in two styles of synthetic stock: black or camouflage. With a suggested retail price of \$2199.00 for the black synthetic version, this represents a saving of \$800 over the equivalent A400 model.

FIELD TEST

As usual, we began our function testing on the range where, as expected, the gun cycled a wide variety of ammunition without a hitch. Its time-proven, gas-powered operating system is renowned for its reliability. For comparison purposes, I had taken my Xtreme2 to the range. Surprisingly, the A300's handling qualities seemed livelier than those of the Xtreme2. Its dimensions are very similar, but



The rotary locking bolt system has proven its reliability.



The A300 camouflage version in the high country.



You wouldn't enjoy shooting a lot of 3-inch high-velocity steel through a fixed-breech double gun, but the A300's gas action in combination with the effective Kick-off system certainly took the sting out of the recoil as well as subduing muzzle jump.

28 inch barrel
Gas operated
Chambered for 3.5 inch shells
Kick-Off

the A300 weighs slightly less - 3.4kg as opposed to the Xtrema2's 3.55kg. This small difference in weight made a marked improvement in speed of handling so that the gun performed very capably at clay targets.

The barrel has the same specifications as those of the A400: over-bored, with lengthened forcing cone and Beretta's new Optima HP choke tubes. Just as our testing showed when we test-fired the A400 Xtreme, this combination produced very effective patterns with 3-inch 36-gram steel loads of Federal Black Cloud.

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muzzle jump.

For our annual high-country goose-hunting trip, we were supplied with a version of the A300 in camouflage. Extreme weather conditions severely limited our goose hunting activities, but I shot enough 3 1/2-inch super-magnum shells through the gun to establish that its recoil taming ability made the experience tolerable.

CONCLUSION

For the dedicated waterfowler, the A400 Xtreme remains the ultimate Beretta model. But if budget considerations dictate your choice of model, you wouldn't feel short changed by the A300 Xtreme. It's at least as good as the previous top-end model, the AL391 Xtrema2, and has the advantage over it of Beretta's latest barrel technology. The only feature it lacks is the magazine cut-off and if you asked most shooters how often they used this particular feature, I bet the truthful answer would be, "Not often!" **R&R**

Specs

BLACK SYNTHETIC MODEL

MAKE & MODEL: Beretta A300 Xtrema

TYPE: Gas-operated autoloading shotgun

Gauge: 12 gauge only

BARREL: 28-inch, 3 1/2-inch chamber, lengthened forcing cone, 18.6mm bore diameter, Optima HP interchangeable choke system.

RIB & SIGHTS: 6mm ventilated. Single red fluoro bead at muzzle.

RECEIVER: Aluminium alloy

SAFETY: Cross-bolt at front of trigger guard

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 2 3/4"; 4+1; 3"; 4+1; 3 1/2": 3+1

STOCK: Black synthetic
Length of pull: 371mm.
Drop and cast adjustable with shim kit.
Kick-off hydraulic recoil reducer

WEIGHT: 3.4kg

ACCESSORIES: ABS case
5 choke tubes with wrench
Stock drop/cast shim kit

RRP: \$2199.00

DISTRIBUTOR: Beretta New Zealand Ltd