



LEFT: THE SIDE ZIP POCKETS ARE LARGE ENOUGH TO CARRY A WATER BOTTLE OR A RANGE FINDER AND WERE EASY TO ACCESS.

BELOW: THIS CLOSE-UP SHOWS ME ACCESSING MY RANGE FINDER, SINGLE HANDED, WITH MINIMUM MOVEMENT. YOU CAN ALSO SEE MY GPS, CAMERA AND WINDICATOR, CONVENIENTLY AND SECURELY CARRIED ON THE PACK WAIST BELT.



THE CROOKED HORN MASTER GUIDE II DAYPACK, SHOWING THE EXCELLENT FIT (LOW AND CLOSE AGAINST MY BACK), AND THE VERY USEFUL WAIST BELT. I REALLY LIKE THE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF THIS PACK.



CROOKED HORN OUTFITTERS

Master Guide II Daypack

By Bob Gough

Since I was a teenager I was never satisfied with off-the-shelf outdoor equipment. I regularly used and abused first my mother's, then my wife's sewing machines, sewing canvas and other materials to make and improve my gear.

I got serious about making outdoor equipment in the early 90's, when I purchased a heavy duty industrial sewing machine and ran a rewarding, but mostly unprofitable hobby business making backpacks and modifying soldier's packs and other equipment.

I designed and made specialist backpacks and daypacks for climbers and back country snowboarders, and pulled apart well made and not so well made gear to modify and/or repair. Along the way, I learnt a lot about making good outdoor equipment, and I know a well made pack when I see it.

When I received the Crooked Horn Outfitters Master Guide II Daypack, I immediately recognised it as very well designed and made of quality materials. SOTS readers would know Crooked Horn for their excellent binocular harness. I've used a Crooked Horn harness for several years, and recently a Crooked Horn Bino-Shield and can confirm that they are well made products.

Crooked Horn advise that Guides and Outfitters across the USA contributed to the design of the Master Guide II pack. The pack is made of what Crooked Horn call "GrizHide" material that is laminated to waterproof nylon Cordura for a weather resistant, hard wearing and quiet finish.

The 33 litre (2000 cubic inch) pack weighs just over 2kg (4.5lb). It is 100% made in the USA and has a lifetime guarantee. The pack has a rifle/bow carrier in common with a number of packs on the market today and has several really well thought out features as discussed following.



THE 15X56 SWAROVSKI BINOCULARS AND SMALL TRIPOD FITTED INTO THE TOP POCKET, SO THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF ROOM FOR A SPOTTING SCOPE, LARGER TRIPOD, VIDEO CAMERA, SHOOTING STICKS AND OTHER LONG ITEMS.

r.r.p. \$250 plus \$25 postage within Australia.
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phone 0351568278 email: lynnemason@sambardeer.com

TOP POCKET

The top pocket is designed to hold a spotting scope and tripod; and I carried a small tripod and a pair of 15x56 Swarovski binoculars, as well as a hydration bladder in this section and found it roomy and easy to access. Importantly, these heavy items are carried close to your body for good balance and reduced fatigue. This pocket will also hold shooting sticks or a video camera.

REAR STOWAGE SECTION

There is plenty of room in the rear section of the pack for all the gear you will need in a day's hunting. There is a secure internal security pocket for licenses, keys and wallet as well; and the pouches for your knife and flashlight keep them secure and ready to hand by slipping the pack off one shoulder.

SIDE ZIP POCKETS

The feature I like most on this pack is the really well positioned side zip pockets. These pockets hold plenty and the quiet coil zips are very strong. Always choose coil zips over "chunky" zips for strength, reliability and low noise.

These side zip pockets allow single handed access while wearing the pack. They are large enough to carry a water bottle and I also carried my range finder, snacks and Fox 40 whistle where they were easy to access without the movement of taking off the pack.



THERE IS PLENTY OF ROOM IN THE REAR SECTION OF THE PACK FOR ALL THE GEAR YOU WILL NEED IN A DAY'S HUNTING. MOST OF MY STANDARD HUNTING LOAD OF WIND-STOPPER JACKET (IN THE GREY BAG), RADIO, BLAZE VEST, FIRST AID KIT, MEAT BAGS AND CUT-PROOF GLOVE IS SHOWN IN THIS PHOTO. THE REMAINDER IS STOWED IN THE ZIP SIDE POCKETS OR ON THE WAIST BELT.

WAIST BELT

The heavy duty padded waist belt stabilises the pack, and the additional strap on the waist belt allows you to carry all your "belt gear" (knife, GPS, small camera, ammo pouch etc) so you don't need to wear a second belt with a pouch etc. More importantly, all of your gear is on the pack, is easy to get to and is well organised.

SHOULDER STRAPS & CARRY HANDLE

The ergonomically curved shoulder straps are comfortable and don't interfere with rifle mount. When these are combined with the waist belt, it makes the pack very comfortable, even carrying a heavy load. The heavy-duty carry handle is comfortable in the hand and a secure point if you need to hoist

the pack into a treestand, or haul it up a cliff. The lashing straps give you the option of tying on a trophy head or a bag of backstraps or firewood.

CAMMO PATTERN & RIFLE/BOW CARRIER

I found the camouflage pattern works well in the Australian bush and doesn't "blob" at a distance. The rifle/bow carry flap stores away neatly when not in use, and adds padding to the already well padded base to protect the end of your spotting scope. The rifle carrier is perfect if you need both hands climbing up a hill, but I wouldn't carry a rifle or bow in the carrier downhill in case I fell and landed on it.

In conclusion, I carried an average weight of 12kg (26lb) of gear in the Crooked Horn Master Guide II daypack on a number of hunting trips over several months and can honestly say that I have finally found a pack that I am well pleased with.

One last thing I noticed, was that in all the time I carried the pack, no matter how I carried my rifle, slung barrel up, slung barrel down, in both hands, in one hand sidling along a hill or in the crook of my arm; the rifle never once clipped, scraped or made a noisy contact with a buckle or zipper, so there was no unnatural noise that could give me away on a close stalk.

WHAT DO YOU CARRY



Look for a wool or fleece covered daypack of 25 - 35l capacity that carries the load low on the hips and is no wider than the wearer.

Bob's Best Picks



My folding stool. If you are comfortable you won't fidget. The stool gets you up at just the right height to see above low scrub.

A Hunters "MUST CARRY" List



My meat recovery gear consists of several nylon meat bags, a cut proof glove and a padded harness with 550 cord loops to carry jointed legs of sambar.

Below: I use the UHF radio, "blue tick" mobile phone, Garmin PLB and Fox 40 whistle for communicating. The Garmin ETREX 10 GPS is very reliable for navigation. My old Petzl MYO head torch has never let me down, and the belt pouch carries all the gear I need handy on my belt.



IN YOUR DAYPACK?



A Knife is one of the most essential tools to carry in the field. The two knives on the left are hand-made; with plenty of 'belly' for skinning and not too long so they are easy to use inside the body cavity of a deer. In the centre are Mora blades I bought for \$15 each. One customized with a sambar antler handle, the other as it comes from the factory. On the right is my Victorinox folder, a "go to" blade for most camp chores.



My optics, on the left, Swarovski 15x56 binoculars and a small tripod, a Leica RF 1600 Rangefinder in the centre and on the right a pair of Vixen 8x40's with a Crooked Horn binocular harness and Bino-Shield, I keep a Spudz cloth with each item, and also carry lens cleaning gear. I tie a tether cord to all of my small items such as the Rangefinder, to reduce the risk of loss.



Top L. to R.: small survival kit, my windicator, Micropur water purification tablets and a Camel-bak water bag.

Bottom L. to R.: first aid kit, lozenges, small camera, small plastic cup to fill the camel-bak, orange bin liner.