

# NEWCON OPTIK'S 1500 METER LASER RANGEFINDER

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With each passing year technology continues to improve, making the life of a serious rifleman a little bit easier. This is particularly true in the area of rangefinding, where a spillover of military laser technology has revolutionized this task for the sportsman.

Today various makes and models of lightweight and compact laser rangefinders are readily available at reasonable prices. It's now possible for the average sportsman to own a device that, with the push of a button, will instantly tell him the range to his target. No Mil Dots to count, no formula to remember, no calculations to make, just pure simplicity. Look at your target, push a button, and read the range, that's it.

Of course then there's reality, which is usually a little different. Often these units work extremely well ranging highly reflective targets under textbook conditions, but when taken afield their useful range drops off dramatically. This should be understood by any prospective buyer. Plus, many units are of little use to the serious long-range shooter due to their limited advertised range of only 400-600 yards. Remember, if a unit ranges out to a maximum of 800 yards under ideal conditions on highly reflective targets, it may only range half as far under less than ideal conditions in the field. This is reality. Due to this I prefer a laser rangefinder that will easily range further than I ever plan on shooting with a rifle. The last thing I want when preparing for a shot at extreme range is for my laser rangefinder to stare blankly at me.

Unfortunately when it comes to commonly available laser rangefinders very few will go the distance required by the avid long range shooter. I live in the East and have shot out to 1,200 yards. Friends out West shoot even further with their vast open expanses of which I am so jealous. Until recently, the top dog on the block was



A useful tool for the serious long-range shooter, the Newcon Optik LRM 1500 ranges all the way out to 1,500 meters.

Bushnell's Yardage Pro 1000. Lightweight and compact with very good ranging capabilities, so-so optics, and a superb protective case it's a good inexpensive unit.

However a Canadian company called Newcon Optik has upped the ante considerably in the compact laser rangefinder market. In addition to offering a 7X50 laser rangefinder binocular that ranges

out to 1,500 meters and retails for only \$799, they also offer three compact laser rangefinder monocular (LRM) models. Their LRM 1200 ranges out to 1,200 meters, their LRM 1500 to 1,500 meters, and their LRM 1500 SPD ranges to 1,500 meters and will also measure the speed of a moving target. Price wise they are very competitive with their rivals. The sug-



A compact unit, its small size can be noted here next to a Kestrel 3000 wind meter. Weight of the LRM 1500 is less than a pound.

gested retail price of the LRM 1200 is \$299 and the LRM 1500 is only \$349.

Knowing that these would be of interest to readers of S.W.A.T., I had Newcon Optik send me one of their LRM 1500s for review. It arrived with a protective case, carrying strap and well-written instruction manual. The unit itself is compact and measures approximately 4 5/8 x 5 3/4 inches. Dimensionally it's slightly smaller than my Yardage Pro 1000. Weight without battery is just under a pound, the same as the Bushnell. The unit's body is a tough synthetic with a rubber handgrip for a secure hold. Optically the LRM 1500 features a 7X monocular with a 25mm objective lens and a wide, 8-degree field of view. The ocular lens is approximately 17mm in diameter, is not adjustable for focus, and features a fold-down rubber eyecup. The body has integral mounting slots for a carrying strap and there is a standard mount to affix the unit onto a tripod. Power is from a standard nine-volt battery.

Operation of the LRM 1500 is relatively simple. There are two buttons on the top of the unit, a "Mode" button and an "Action" button. The "Mode" button allows the user to pick the units he wants the distance to be read in, either yards or meters. It also allows him to choose from two aiming reticles. One is a square and the other a crosshair. The "Mode" button also allows the user to recall the last ten measurements taken and scan through them using the "Action" button. Or he

can clear the memory.

Once the user has decided on his reticle and unit of measurement he simply places the reticle on his target and presses the "Action" button. The range to his target will appear along with the reflectivity of his target: Low, Medium or High. If the "Action" button is held down for more than three seconds the unit will go into the "Scanning" mode where it automatically ranges every second until the "Action" button is released. This allows a user to rapidly range multiple targets. When the voltage of the battery drops below 7.2 volts a LOW BAT message is displayed. At this point the unit will still function, but the battery should be replaced as soon as possible.

To provide accurate and reliable readings the LRM 1500 incorporates a "Last Target" measurement feature. What this means is that the distance reading is taken off the last, rather than the first, object that the laser hits. This allows it to ignore erroneous readings caused by hitting rain, snow or stray branches on the way to the intended target. This also allows it to be used from inside a house by "shooting" through the windows.

The electronics employed in the unit are designed and manufactured in Canada. The optics and eye-safe laser are produced in Russia. Newcon Optik works closely with a number of old, well established Russian optical manufacturers whose roots extend back to 1909. One example is the KOMZ factory in Kazan which had

close ties with Zeiss Jena in the 1930s and today builds military laser rangefinders that measure out to twenty kilometers and thermal imaging equipment. These factories also currently build optics for both the Russian military and space program in addition to their sporting line.

To evaluate the LRM 1500 I spent over a month using it afield to check its performance. I was interested in evaluating it both optically and for its ranging capability. The optics of the unit's monocular are surprisingly good. The objective and ocular lenses are both larger in diameter than on my Yardage Pro 1000. The image is bright and flat with fairly good resolution. It sports higher magnification than the Yardage Pro 1000, 7X versus 6X, and its field of view is larger. Under good light conditions the optics perform quite well. However their ability fades fast, as it grows dark due to the small 25mm objective which only musters a 3.57mm Exit Pupil. Optically this unit is no replacement for a good set of binoculars—nor was it meant to be.

During testing the unit performed well and ranged out to over 1,300 yards on a channel marker. I utilized the LRM 1500 during both snow storms and rain (thanks to the weather here in Maine) with no problems. Under poor conditions the unit still ranged reliably to 600-900 yards. During testing I found the "Scanning" mode especially useful for rapidly ranging multiple targets. All in all it's a good unit with better than average optics and an impressive range. No problems of any kind were experienced during testing.

The question then becomes what do you do with it? Depending upon how you utilize a fine instrument like Newcon Optik's LRM 1500 it can be a useful tool or a hindering crutch, much like a bipod on a rifle. All too many people mount a bipod on their rifle and then try to take all their shots from the prone position. When forced to shoot from a different position they lack the required skills and all too often blow the shot. Something similar can happen depending upon how you choose to use a laser rangefinder. If all you ever do is pull it from your pocket, press a button and read the distance, then put it away—you're missing the true potential of the tool. The true potential of




The LRM 1500 features a 7X monocular with a 25mm objective lens and a comfortable fold-down rubber eyecup. Operating the rangefinder is simple and done via the two buttons on top of the unit.

a laser rangefinder, in my opinion, is to teach you how to properly estimate range, and then verify what the actual range is.

If you desire to improve your ability to visually estimate range, a unit like Newcon Optik's LRM 1500 is an invaluable aid. It's a relatively simple thing to do, it just requires effort and constant practice on your part. I recommend carrying your laser rangefinder around with you and frequently stopping and picking out an object. Then try to visually estimate how far it is to that object. Once you

have your estimate, only then bring the rangefinder into play to find the actual distance. Then look at the object again and notice how far away it looks. At first you will probably be either grossly over or under estimating the actual range. However, if you practice consistently you will gradually improve your ability to visually estimate range. The more you practice, the better you'll get. You'll be glad to be able to accurately estimate range someday when you forget your laser rangefinder in the truck, its battery

fails or the unit dies a grisly death just when you need it most.

Without a doubt Newcon Optik's LRM 1500 is a valuable tool for the serious long range shooter. It's nicely made, robust, has very good optics and an impressive range. Best of all is the retail price, only \$349. If you're looking for a laser rangefinder that will go the distance, then I suggest giving Newcon Optik a call. 

### NEWCON OPTIK'S LRM 1500 SPECIFICATIONS

Magnification	7X
Objective Lens	25mm
Field Of View	8 degrees
Laser Type	Class 1 Eye-safe
Maximum Range	1,460 meters
Accuracy	+/-1 meter
Power	9 volt
Weight	.92 pounds
Retail Price	\$349.00

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