



The Mossberg 930 is chambered for both 2-3/4" and 3" loads, and is steel shot compatible.

Too good to hide...

# Mossberg's Mossy-Oak 12 Gauge Autoloader –

Shotgun editor John Dyer testfires a modern semi-auto...

**T**he Mossberg family have been making firearms since 1919, but their Model 930 auto-loader is an entirely up to date specification for anyone in the market for a semi-auto shotgun. With its durable Mossy-Oak camo finish its looks are entirely contemporary too. Yet this is a price-friendly US-made shotgun that will not require you to take out a second-mortgage. In the field, it performed well for me on Waikato's

waterfowl and pheasants, and without any problems. The Model 930 is a no-nonsense product with several features that will endear it to all future owners.

#### EASY ON THE EYE

The smart matt-style finish on this gun immediately sets it aside. Not only is the Mossy-Oak "Break-Up" pattern well applied to almost all the surfaces with nothing suggesting ripples or misfitting, but it gives

every impression it'll last a lifetime of normal use – or maybe even hard use. Just don't dunk any such finish in strong solvents or insect repellents. The "Break-Up" pattern is quite at home in a New Zealand setting and looks the part as well – too good to hide!

Underneath the finish, the Mossberg's receiver and trigger guard are both alloy and this reflects the guns relatively light carry weight. The bolt itself locks into a recess in the steel barrel extension which





*It's unusual to find a tang-mounted safety catch on a semi-auto shotgun, but particularly handy if you're a left-handed shooter. Note the screw just showing at top left – the 930's receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounts.*

must be useful both for longevity, and also for maintaining proper headspace.

All the major working components of the trigger group are steel and look well made. The stock and fore-end are both synthetic, so there's no wood to get wet, swell up and perhaps cause problems in the field. Mossberg boasts that it's the first gunmaker in the US to meet the stringent international standard ISO-9001. This involves a thorough annual audit of their manufacturing and quality control, and nothing on this American made gun suggests that the company doesn't fully deserve that accreditation.

Throw the 930 to your shoulder and you'll also see something else that's novel, a high-viz fibre-optic front sight. These show up well in poor light. The wide ventilated rib seems just the right height too. In addition, porting on the barrel means not only softer recoil, but also a quicker recovery between shots to get you onto the next mallard.

#### **EASY UNLOADING**

A feature unique to this gun is that the magazine can be emptied by simply pressing the bottom loading gate down and then depressing the bolt release. Out they all come. That's pretty handy when your



*The protruding pin inside the trigger guard is a cocking indicator. It sits flush when the gun is uncocked. John found it to be a useful safety feature and wondered why more guns don't have one.*





*Muzzle ports help reduce barrel-jump, and the hi-viz fibre-optic front sight shows up equally well at dusk or on wet misty mornings.*

magazine is full of duck loads and you hear a big honker coming down the lake. If the bolt is closed, don't push the bolt-release first to empty the mag (as one article suggested) or you'll end up with cartridges jammed firmly beneath the follower – a jam that might take several minutes to clear. I'd imagine that most of us, Homer Simpson aside, would only ever make this mistake once!

Another unique feature is a cocking indicator inside the front of the trigger guard. You can tell by feeling it with the back of your trigger finger that the action is fully cocked. If not the indicator pin will be flush. You can do this while being immediately ready to shoot, which is something overseas owners of the 930 pistol-grip stocked, self-defence version would appreciate, especially in the dark. I've always found cocking indicators of any kind to be useful but I can't think of any other autoloading shotgun with this simple but helpful safety feature.

The top-tang safety catch may not be unique, but it's something found on few of the current crop of semi-auto shotguns. If you're a left-hander, or if there's one in your family who might also use this gun, it's a most valuable ambidextrous addition.



*The ventilated butt pad makes life easy on the hunter's shoulder, and sling swivel eyes are provided too.*





The Mossberg's trigger group is easily removed for cleaning by drifting out two pins in the receiver.



Three chokes, a spanner, a cable lock, and a set of stock-adjusting spacers are part of the Mossberg package.

The Mossberg comes with a set of stock-spacer adjusters. If the stock drop of any gun is set up wrong for you it can make a big difference to your shooting. Not only will the gun fit you awkwardly, but you'll fail to hit the number of birds you deserve to, and probably have to cope with more recoil problems than you need. Most manufacturers set their shotguns up for the mythical

"average person", so here is a chance to partially customize your new gun.

The M930 comes with three screw-in "Accu-Choke" choke tubes; improved cylinder, modified and full choke. These will interchange with other Mossberg shotguns. A simple choke wrench is supplied with the gun. A small grizzle is that although the black choke tubes are well-enough

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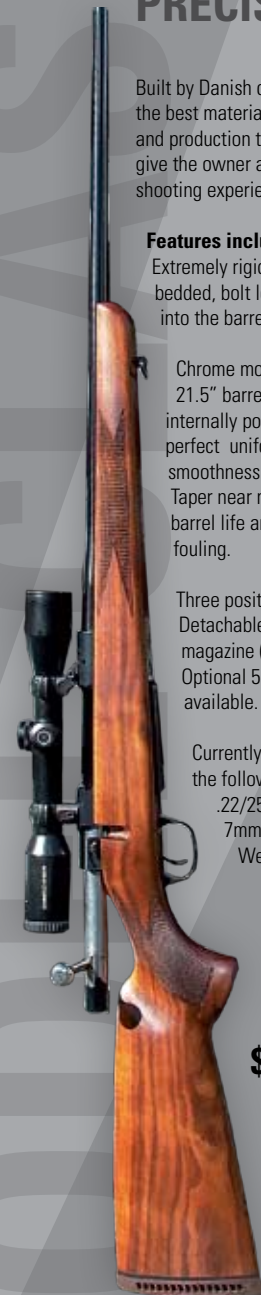
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*A variety of birds, both pheasants and waterfowl, fell to the Mossberg 930 during John's field tests.*

marked on their sides (if you remembered your reading glasses), there are no external notches to show you at a glance which choke is installed in the gun.

The 930 may not be set up as a dedicated clay target model, but if there's a duck-hunter's eye-opener shoot at your local gun club, you need only screw in the improved-cylinder choke and you're well set up to break clays. My pattern testing showed that this Mossberg's sighting plane (or point-of-aim) matched the actual point-of-impact well.

The Mossberg also comes with a trigger lock which might be handy when you're traveling and can't store the gun in a safe. My advice though is to carry the key on your vehicle key ring. If you leave it loose, you might end up forgetting it in the field and have to walk back to the truck, and you just know that all the birds are going to drop into the decoys behind you then. Of course, I've never done anything like that. Yeah right!

Unusually, this shotgun is drilled and tapped for a scope mount base. In their



*A good gun and a good dog add up to plenty of geese in the freezer...*



country of origin shotguns like these are often used for deer hunting in the woods with buckshot, slugs and sabots, and also for turkey hunting which can involve scopes. However, unless you're of a mind to bush hunt deer yourself for a bit of a challenge, you can ignore these screws. Wild turkeys are big birds and this Model 930, which normally takes 2-3/4" or 3" lead or non-toxic shells, also comes out in a 3.5" shell version called the Model 935. I've used another company's 3-1/2" autoloader for a number of years now, and I find the extra weight useful no matter what size load I'm shooting.

Once you start swinging, that extra heft helps prevent any tendency to check your swing prematurely, but if you rarely or never hunt geese at longer ranges, the 3.5" shell is probably more than you need, and I'd argue that you'll be much better off with the more responsive standard Mossberg 930 chambered for both 2-3/4" and 3" loads. That's especially the case when you're trying to hit ducks that flare when they catch the wind and other tricky snap shots.

### THREE'S NOT A CROWD?

Installed in the Model 930 you'll find a magazine plug that restricts it to 3-shots

in total, making it legal to use in the USA for migratory waterfowl. This can be removed in New Zealand by stripping the gun down, though perhaps not when you're in a hurry in the field. When I pulled the truck up and found literally 1,000 geese just off a point and swimming towards some newly sown grass, the situation required immediate attention. I snuck up on them and managed to down three birds with the three shots I had in the gun, but I could easily have added another if I'd had the full provision of four in the mag plus another one in the chamber (5 shells total).

Some shooters argue that the old 3-shot rule should come back into the Waikato and perhaps elsewhere where hunters are thick on the ground and waterfowl not as common as they once were. While the factors for that are many and varied, I wouldn't be too quick to throw the 3-shot plug away when you remove it from a Mossberg or you might end up having to buy another one!

Another feature I like on the 930 is the ease with which the trigger group can be removed. Simply punch out two pins and it comes free for a thorough clean. If you pay attention to keeping the trigger group

and the chamber of any autoloader clean, you're unlikely to have any problems with cycling. Just a warning though, go easy on the CRC (or whatever else you use on the trigger housing) as the oil will attract any partly burnt powder residue that blows back through the action. Eventually this oil/residue gunk will build up and start causing you problems. So clean, then lightly oil this mechanism. The rest of the Mossberg 930 gas mechanism readily strips down for cleaning, and reassembly is equally straightforward. Just remember to turn what the owner's manual calls a "pusher assembly" 180 degrees from where it naturally rests on disassembly, to allow it to engage it with the receiver recesses it should mate with.

The well-made 930 has yet another feature that savvy hunters will appreciate and that's eyes for swing-swivels. With a shotgun like this, chances are you'll be taking more than a few waterfowl out of the swamp, so why not free up both hands by fitting a sling? But like any camo-finish gun, if you put it down in the long dry grass, just remember where you left it! The manufacturer's standard 2-year warranty might not cover the loss. ■

**John Dyer**

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