

# FINGER ON THE PULSAR

Phil Hardman and friend go after farmyard rats, with the help of a handy add-on



Turning night into day with the Day Scope Adaptor.

**A**t this time of year, I tend to spend most of my hunting trips lurking about in the dark. With such short daylight hours, it's the best way to stay effective as a hunter and I'm lucky in that I have a practically never-ending supply of rats to keep me busy during the worst of the winter weather. I recently got my hands on a new bit of night vision equipment in the shape of a Pulsar Challenger GS 1X20 add-on, which is a much more modern bit of kit, compared to the old Yukon NVMT I've been using to pretty good effect for the past couple of years. With more rats around than ever, it represented the perfect chance to get out and see how much this new technology has moved things forward, and just how effective it is in the field.

## SMALL BUT EFFECTIVE

The Challenger GS is a small unit at only 16cm in length and that's important for an add-on because it has to fit to the rear of your normal day scope, and the longer it is, the more your head will be pushed back into an uncomfortable shooting position. The only way around this is to move your scope forward to compensate but I loathe doing that. I want an add-on so I don't have to dedicate a whole rifle combo to just night shooting, and it's probably a throwback from when I only owned one rifle but it's still the way I feel today.

## TOP TIP

Even with night vision, make sure you know the ground in daylight to avoid trip hazards and other risks

Luckily, thanks to the Pulsar's compact dimensions and my apparently weird giraffe neck, I don't have to make any changes to the scope to get a comfortable head

position. The DSA (Day Scope Adaptor), which, as the name suggests, is what enables you to fit the NV unit to your scope, is very simple to use, with no tools needed. Powering the unit is a CR123A battery that Pulsar say should last around 72 hours of continuous use if

straight off again every time the image begins to darken.

Speaking of images, the intensifier tube inside the Challenger is what Pulsar call a CF Super gen. Anyone who has ever looked through a first Generation NV unit will know that the view is rather 'fish-eyed' due to the

**"I WAS ABLE TO PUT MY PELLET EXACTLY WHERE IT NEEDED TO BE"**

you don't use the on-board IR illuminator. I must say I'd be inclined to agree with them, I've used it on many occasions and, because you don't always have to have the unit switched on (you get a perfect image for up to 10 minutes after you turn the unit off), you could quite easily go months without changing batteries if you simply turn it on and then

edge of the image suffering from distortion, but with the challenger that is so reduced that you really can't see much of it at all and it gives a nice crisp image across the whole field of view.

## IMPRESSED

The Challenger came with Pulsar's own 805 IR flashlight which

## HARDMAN'S HUNTING

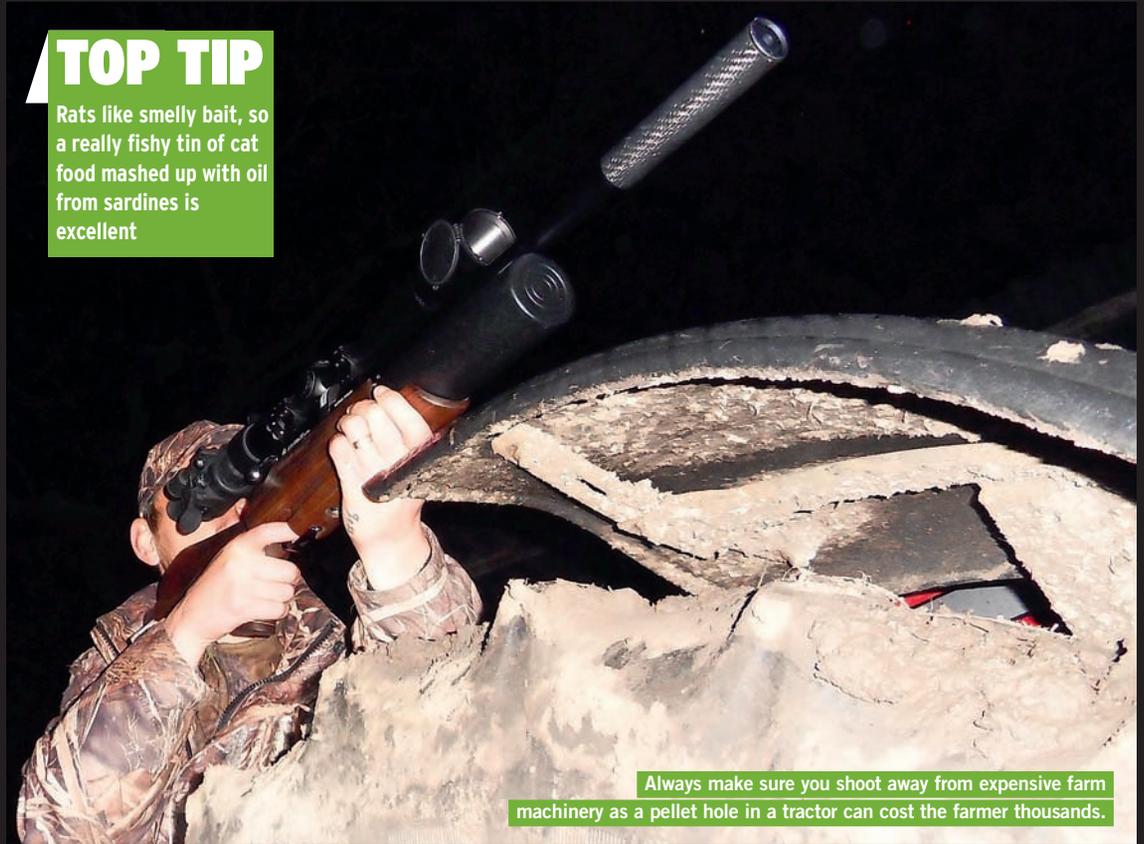
connects to the DSA via a Weaver rail. Using this set-up with my MTC Mamba Lite 4-16 x 44, I find, gives enough illumination to see out to 100 yards in optimum conditions, and easily out to 70 yards on all but the very dampest of nights, when the moisture in the air has a habit of seriously reducing the range at which you can see clearly. It's safe to say that I'm impressed, and I'm not the only one, either. My good friend, and the person who does most of the photography you see in my features, Keith Blaney, actually bought a Challenger on the back of the one I have, after a couple of nights out ratting with it. He rarely shoots these days, and had long since sold his rifle but the thrill of slotting scaly tails after dark was so alluring that he bought himself a BSA T10 to mount it on and decided to join me in front of the camera for a change.

It wasn't the best night for it really, bitterly cold and damp, with a light mist in the air that threatened to turn into a full-on fog. I'd already been out two nights previously and bagged 16, but I knew there were a lot more for the taking, especially with two of us operating at the same time. We arrived, got the rifles loaded and made some final checks on the NV to make sure everything was in focus and set up perfectly, before we headed slowly across the yard to the first cattle shed. It was awkward and slightly squelchy going as we slipped and slid our way to the gate, which was our first shooting position. I took a nice steady rest on the top of the gatepost and scanned along the front of the cattle shed. At first I saw nothing but the reflection of a dozen cow's eyes all shining back at me. Scanning lower, I spied my first target of the night, a young rat scurrying around at the bottom of one of the feed bales. I locked onto it and followed it through the scope but the rat vanished into the bale, never to be seen again.



### TOP TIP

Rats like smelly bait, so a really fishy tin of cat food mashed up with oil from sardines is excellent



### DIVIDE AND CONQUER

I gestured to Keith to open the gate and we both slowly made our way past the cattle shed, entering the other side of the yard. This part is by far the busiest end of the farm so we elected to split, I'd take the first of the cowsheds along with the grain barn, while Keith would work the furthest cowshed and the bale shed. We made sure we both knew our safe arcs of fire and exactly where the other would be before we separated. It's so easy to lose each other in the dark and with no visible light due to the use of NV, any lapse here could potentially lead to an accident, so we always pre plan, not only where we are going, but exactly where we will wait to meet up and no matter what happens, we stick to it.

As Keith slipped away I began scanning around the front of the shed with my Yukon NVMT monocular but I saw nothing of interest. Keith obviously had, because I heard a couple of shots and the resulting impact of pellet on rat. I continued to the grain barn determined not to let him outscore me in the opening minutes and I really didn't want to be playing catch-up all night, not that I'm the competitive sort, you understand.

I spotted my first real target high



up on the top of a ledge that leads to the huge pile of grain in the middle of the barn. At 25 yards it wasn't an easy shot, after all a rat's brain is a pretty small target, but the super-clear view through the Challenger meant I was easily able to put my pellet exactly where it needed to be and switch the rat's lights off in an instant. The sound of the shot sent another couple running for cover but one paused for just long enough to let me get the cross hairs on it and get a well placed shot off. I grabbed

the bucket and litter picker to go and make the retrieve, while yet more muffled shots rang out from Keith's T10.

### LONG RANGE SHOT

Happy with my two for two, I went to the front of the barn to await Keith's return. While I was standing there I had a quick scan back in the direction of the first cowshed and spotted a couple of sets of eyes twinkling at me through the NV. Winding up the dimmer switch on



Phil acts as spotter as Keith takes the shot.



A good bag, thanks to the wonders of modern technology.

the Pulsar Ir illuminator to get a better view, confirmed to me that there were four rats out in the yard, about five feet away from the safety of the shed and totally vulnerable to a long-range sniping shot. By long range I mean 35 yards, which at night is long enough for me, but to a rat must seem like a mile. Even the sound of a shot doesn't make them run away at that sort of range.

I dropped to a kneeling position and took a rest on a large metal piece of farm machinery, rock-steady and feeling good. I took aim at the closer of the bunch and wound the zoom up slightly on my Mamba Lite before slowly squeezing off the shot. I saw the pellet zip through the air and then vanish as it arrived on target, but I saw nothing else apart from the other rats jumping slightly at the sound of the pellet hitting home. I shuffled the bolt on my Airwolf and took aim at



All the kit you need to enjoy some hi-tech night hunting.

resumed the attack. I headed back to the south side of the yard while he retook his position overlooking the alley, and over the next hour we both managed plenty of kills. It was also around this time that I noticed I had made a bit of an error. I'd knocked the litter picker over and it had landed handle-first on the ever-growing pile of dead rats, which left it very much out of play for the rest of the night. I was looking about for a replacement when Keith spotted a shovel, "That'll do nicely," I thought,

**"AFTER A FIVE-MINUTE CLEAN-UP WE RESUMED THE ATTACK"**

another. Again, I saw the pellet as it flew but this time I clearly saw the rat flip over and kick its last in the mud. The other two ran off so I went over to pick them up and happily, the first was lying a yard away from the second, dead as soon as the pellet hit it, but submerged in four inches of watery mud.

**IN THE BUCKET**

Keith returned and asked for the bucket and litter picker so he could retrieve his kills. All of his were shot in the same place, 'Rat Alley' or, 'Keithy's Alley' as it's now known. It's simply a gap between the grain barn and the bale shed that allows the farmer access to the rear of the yard and the muck heap, but it's like a rat highway on a good night as they leave the comfort of the bales to grab an easy meal in the barn, and Keith had found the perfect position to take advantage of this fact. He'd bagged six and needed to clear a gap in the holes that the rats had been using to exit the barn, otherwise I'm fairly certain he'd have just stayed there all night.

**HEADING SOUTH**

After our five-minute clean-up we

not wanting to praise him too much.

With that little dilemma over, we resumed the carnage and just as before, we were seeing plenty of ratty action in both parts of the yard. Over the next 40 or so minutes we took the total to 24, before a thick fog rolled in and pretty much stopped us dead in our tracks. Infrared light, which Gen 1 NV depends on so much, tends to hit fog and stop dead, leaving a white-out effect causing havoc with target identification and range estimation.

It was a real shame because I had a feeling we were on course for a record-breaking night as far as total numbers bagged go, but alas it wasn't meant to be and we headed off, still very happy with ourselves and the night in general.

It's safe to say I'm a total fan of the Pulsar Challenger, as is Keith. It's a well made bit of kit that's fairly easy to use, as far as NV goes anyway, and relatively cheap, and for me that's the appeal. I simply can't see how it's possible to produce such a good unit at such a low price, but Pulsar somehow managed it. I'm so glad they did.

See you all next month! ■