

Browning Gold Hunter 3 1/2 in.
Browning Gold Stalker 3 1/2 in.

Retail Price...\$735

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SPECIFICATIONS (Hunter)

Warranty: 1 year

METAL FINISH	Blued	BARREL LENGTH	26 in.
WEIGHT (EMPTY)	7.7 lbs.	UNPLUGGED CAPACITY ...	4+1 rds.
OVERALL LENGTH	47.1 in.	STOCK MATERIAL	Walnut
PULL LENGTH	14.4 in.	ACTION TYPE	Gas/Semiauto
DROP @ HEEL	1.5 in.	TRIGGER PULL Wt.	7 lbs.
DROP @ COMB	1.3 in.	Safety	Reversible Button

SPECIFICATIONS (Stalker)

Warranty: 1 year

METAL FINISH	Matte Black	BARREL LENGTH	28 in.
WEIGHT (EMPTY)	8.1 lbs.	UNPLUGGED CAPACITY ...	4+1 rds.
OVERALL LENGTH	48.9 in.	STOCK MATERIAL	Synthetic
PULL LENGTH	14.1 in.	ACTION TYPE	Gas/Semiauto
DROP @ HEEL	1.7 in.	TRIGGER PULL Wt.	6.8 lbs.
DROP @ COMB	1.4 in.	Safety	Reversible Button

Our recommendation: We thought the Browning versions handled better than the very similar Winchesters.

the action and its gold colored trigger and gold-filled highlights very well. The stock had cut checkering that worked well and looked great. The buttstock was fitted with a black rubber ventilated recoil pad. The barrel was glossy blued but we found the polished surface to be a bit wavy. The Stalker was matte black all over, like the X2 3 1/2-inch gun. The Golds' barrels accepted Invector choke inserts. They had 1/2-inch-wide ventilated ribs with matte finishes that led the eye well into the 0.140-inch diameter round white front beads. The barrels were swamped, which means the smallest diameter is not at the muzzle, but about two-thirds the way down the barrel. This is a method of reducing barrel mass to aid liveliness, and it works well. The Gold Hunter/Stalker felt great.

Brownings have long been multinational, the Belgian and Japanese versions of the Auto-5 springing to mind, but the new Gold

Hunter mentioned no fewer than four nations on its barrel. The markings mentioned the Browning Arms Co. of the U.S. and Canada, and told that the parts were made in Belgium and assembled in Portugal. The Gold Hunter's receiver was fully machined from aluminum alloy. The sides of the receiver were absolutely dead flat, and the top surface was evenly rounded and showed no waviness. Inside the action everything was cleanly cut and nicely finished in matte black. The follower was chrome plated steel, and it was not necessary to push the bolt release button to load the magazine. The bolt was shiny, appeared to be chromed and had only one extractor. The ejection port had smooth beveled edges that left no sharp edges to cut your hands, or cause ejected shells to hang up. The reversible safety was a triangular trigger-blocking button located in the rear of the trigger guard. It was stiff, and we'd prefer to see it

at the front of the guard. We found it to be a more natural motion to extend the trigger finger forward and work a safety located in the front of the guard. That is where the safety is found on the Beretta AL390 Silver Mallard.

Beretta AL390 Silver Mallard

Our recommendation: Light feeling, quick, low recoil. Buy it.

Oh, how we longed to shoot this one, and we're not alone. We found out the AL 390 Sporting, a variant of our field grade, is one of the most popular semiautos in the demanding game of Sporting Clays. The Italian-made Beretta was quite innovative, looked great, and felt very good indeed to all who handled it. Part of that good feel came from a slight bit of cast-off, which can be changed by a gunsmith if you either don't want it, or want more. The drop, too, can be slightly altered. Both of these adjustments come from the wedge shape of a polymer plate installed between the stock and receiver. Change the plate and you can alter the cast and drop to suit you. Clever. The Beretta's walnut stock had cut checkering, a glossy finish and a thin but effective rubber butt pad. The pistol grip was capped with blued steel. The gun looked very attractive yet business-like. The Beretta's forend is quite long because it incorporates a metal grille underneath its foremost tip, which is a gas vent. The gas system requires no oil and is self-cleaning. The Beretta bleeds off a big dose of gas to kick the action open. Extra gas from hot loads that isn't needed to cycle the action exits forward through a spring-loaded valve and out the vent grille under the forend. That is how the Beretta automatically handles all loads from light target to heavy magnum. The forend wood is quite thin and