

Optics Editor Don MacDonald tests an...

# ALPEN "KODIAK" 4-12X40 SCOPE



A handy tip – to keep a focus ring in place during rough going, slip a section of bicycle inner tube over it.

**T**here are many mid to top of the line scopes on the market today, varying in price from around \$500 to the breathtaking \$3000 plus mark. For obvious reasons some shooters or hunters are unable to spend a lot on a scope – perhaps they're just starting out, under budgetary constraint, or simply do not need the flashiest

of all things optic to enjoy the occasional day on a range or in the hills. If this is the case, all is not lost. Let me introduce you to the Alpen Kodiak 4-12x40.

#### BACKGROUND

Founded by Tim Gardner and Tony Proper (formerly of Bausch & Lomb fame) the Alpen Optics Company has been

in business for a few years now (see my review of the company's binos in NZG&H issue #118 May/June 2010), and to its credit now manufactures over 70 optical products from binocular to spotting scopes. With the objective of providing sportsmen with high quality products (but without paying a big-ticket price), Alpen is becoming noticed worldwide.





A matte finish and a stylish logo add to the Kodiak's appeal. Reticle adjustment is via the raised blade, meaning that coins or a screwdriver are not required.

#### SPEC SHEET - ALPEN KODIAK 4-12X40

|                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tube diameter:   | One inch                          |
| Construction:    | Aluminium alloy                   |
| Parallax adjust: | Front ring - 25 yards to infinity |
| Reticle adjust:  | Finger adjustable - raised blades |
| Length:          | 13.4"                             |
| Weight:          | 16oz                              |
| Price:           | \$270.00                          |

Don installed the Kodiak on his Marlin .22 semi-auto for testing, then finished things off with some informal plinking.

The company has packed a lot of options into its range and has won many awards, especially with its binocular line. The emphasis on loading its products with features involves the entire optical range however, including the Apex and Kodiak rifle scopes which are getting rave reviews in many quarters.

#### FEATURES AND SPECS

The new Kodiak is a great example of an above average entry-level scope. It is a jack of all trades scope in regards to its features and specifications. It's shock-proof, waterproof and fog proof with a 40mm objective lens, built on an industry standard one-inch tube, and finished in non-reflective matte black. Optically the Kodiak has a wide-angle field of view, ranging from 11 feet to 32 feet at 100 yards, depending on the power setting. The maximum eye relief is 3.4 inches. The 40mm objective lens lets in a good amount of light, making for a bright visual picture which is further helped by the multi-coated lens surfaces. Speaking of features, the Kodiak has an interesting, perhaps even unique feature - its objective ring is designed to be easily removed, letting in a little more light and improving brightness even further. The exit pupil ranges from 3.3mm on 12x to a full 10mm in the lower power range, which is pretty good for most applications. For those unfamiliar with the term, the "exit pupil" is the diameter of the light column seen by the shooter as it leaves the eyepiece. The image gets brighter as the exit pupil increases in size.

#### TEST TIME

The first test I conducted was to see how well the scope tracked, and to check its ability to return to zero. I installed the Kodiak on a rifle and secured the whole rig down with the scope's cross hairs set on the centre of a 1-inch grid at a distance of 100 yards. At that range it was difficult to view the grid accurately so I reduced the distance to 50 yards and repeated

*"..the Kodiak's brightness exceeds most scopes in its price range."*



the test, using the appropriate number of clicks to move the crosshairs one inch.

The scope tracked around the grid well and returned to zero each time in respect to both elevation and windage. With the crosshairs focused on the grid it was a good opportunity to test for any reticle shift as I ran the scope through its magnification range. I found that the degree of shift was very slight, about a 10<sup>th</sup> of an inch through the middle power range which is fairly typical and not a problem for most shooting/hunting applications.

The elevation and windage adjustment controls turned with positive clicks throughout their entire range, although I did find it a little easier turning them one way than the other, so there was a tendency to overshoot slightly when heading in the direction of lower resistance. As with most Alpen products there was no problem with the brightness or clarity of the images. I compared the Kodiak with another vari-power scope of around the same price range. The other scope (Brand-X) had a 50mm objective lens yet it did not perform as well in the brightness stakes. So thumbs up to the Kodiak's internal optics.

As the evening faded into darkness the Alpen resolved detail well, losing just a little image quality when I wound it up to the higher magnifications and the exit pupil closed up (ie; reduced in diameter), which is to be expected.

The Alpen's moving parts were all smooth and positive, yet mobile enough to move with one finger. It is refreshing not having to grab a big handful and crank the adjuster rings around to the magnification you desire. There was a very slight sideways movement in the magnification ring. Rather than being a problem though, I think this is simply movement in the rubber seal used for waterproofing. The importer brought to my attention the fast focus ring, which he felt was possibly on the loose side. You want the convenience of easy adjustment in the field, but you still want to be able to lock a setting in place. A tip for dealing with any too-mobile focus (or parallax) ring is to cut 1-inch wide sections from a bicycle inner tube and slip them over the join between the ring and the scope body. The rings won't move now, and the rubber also provides extra protection for the scope. Unfortunately the kids have to ride around with flat tires! Priorities!

The parallax adjustment was smooth and worked correctly for each of its settings. I moved my head around to alter the angle of my view through the lenses, adjusted



The power adjusting ring can be turned smoothly with just the finger or thumb.

the parallax until the cross hairs came into sharp focus, then ranged the area, and as a ball park test it worked well.

#### FIELD TEST

In hunting and shooting, practice makes perfect. The more you do, the better your shooting will be. You'll learn new things and develop your skills with each squeeze

of the trigger. With the Alpen fitted to a Marlin .22lr semi-auto I took the opportunity to do a little practicing of my own. Many of my field tests involve actually hunting but sometimes it's nice to just sit back and waste a few packets of ammo into paper. After sighting the Kodiak in with a standard target I put out a group of more "interesting" targets – photos of animals



To make things interesting Don used animal photos as plinking targets. The images look surprisingly real through the scope and provide practice for the real thing.





The parallax adjusting ring worked efficiently, and the front section can be removed to allow more light to enter the lenses.

The Kodiak's brightness was better than the majority of its competitors in the same price bracket.

from old hunting magazines. The benefit of practicing with targets like these is that you get used to aiming at specific points on an animal. I believe it also helps with buck fever as well. Practicing on pictures before you go where the big ones are, means you tend to be a little more relaxed when you see a real animal in your sights. Now you can settle in for a well-placed shot on that trophy animal.

While burning up the packets of .22 ammunition, I found myself using the power ring (reducing the magnification) to simulate greater distances to the targets, which created more challenging shooting. With the Alpen there was no noticeable change of impact. This is something to watch for in cheaper vari-power scopes as some of


the manufacturing tolerances may not be as good as they could be, resulting in varying points of impact.

#### CONCLUSION

Because the Alpens are recent arrivals on the New Zealand market I'm unable to comment on their long term durability. But from my research, shooters have been very pleased with their purchases and so far the scopes have exceeded their expectations, especially considering their reasonable price.

Overall, the Alpen Kodiak 4-12x40 is very stylish scope with clean lines and a simple decal that looks very smart. The Kodiak covers a wide range of shooting/hunting applications well with its power

selection. The 4-12x40 has an extremely wide field of view at the bottom end, yet has the power up top for precision tack drivers like the .17HMR. As with most Alpen products the Kodiak's brightness was impressive and exceeds most scopes in its price range. For the budget conscious it is probably one of the better buys around and I am surprised it is not being used in .17 HMR or .22 package deals – it would suit these very well.

At the time of writing the 4-12x40 had a recommended retail price of \$270.00. For more information the Alpen range can be seen on ([www.alpineoptics.co.nz](http://www.alpineoptics.co.nz)). For the current price list contact Grant Bisset at Alpine Optics Ltd in Wanaka.   
Don MacDonald



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