

10 Reasons To Try The 28-Gauge

Ready for some sub-gauge action?
It's time to give the 28-gauge a look.

BY MARK CHESNUT

I shot my first 28-gauge shotgun back in the late 1990s at a product seminar in Arkansas. At the skeet range that day, one of the other writers handed me a tiny Remington model 1100 and an under-sized box of shells. "Try this," he suggested.

Initially, I was skeptical. Eleven rounds of skeet later, though, I was hooked.

The next year, I took three 28-gauge over-and-under shotguns with me on my first grouse and woodcock trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The challenge was to decide which of the guns — a Browning Citori, Beretta Silver Pigeon and Ruger Red Label — was the best 28 for North Woods bird hunting. My only true revelation was that all were darned good guns, and that the 28-gauge is a worthy companion in the grouse woods, too.

Then I kind of lost touch with the 28. That is, until I had complete shoulder replacement surgery and found heavier guns — and heavier recoil — a bit beyond my comfort level. Now I'm happily back to preaching the 28-gauge gospel to all who will listen.

The fact is, the 28-gauge is a blast (ahem, sorry) to shoot. Here are 10



reasons you should give the 28-gauge a try sometime — and soon.

1. LOW RECOIL

Most of us who shoot shotguns a lot don't even notice Sir Isaac Newton's "equal and opposite reaction" that occurs when we pull the trigger on a clay target. But we all know some shooters who develop bad habits because of their adverse reaction to recoil, thereby hurting their scores. A 6-pound 28-gauge shotgun shooting ¾-ounce of shot at 1,200 fps yields 12.8 ft./lbs. of recoil energy, while a 7½-pound 12-gauge shooting a 1½-ounce load at 1,200 fps has nearly twice as much recoil at 23 ft./lbs. Shoot several rounds in a day with a 28-gauge instead of a 12, and you will definitely notice a difference in how your shoulder feels the next morning.

2. LIGHT WEIGHT

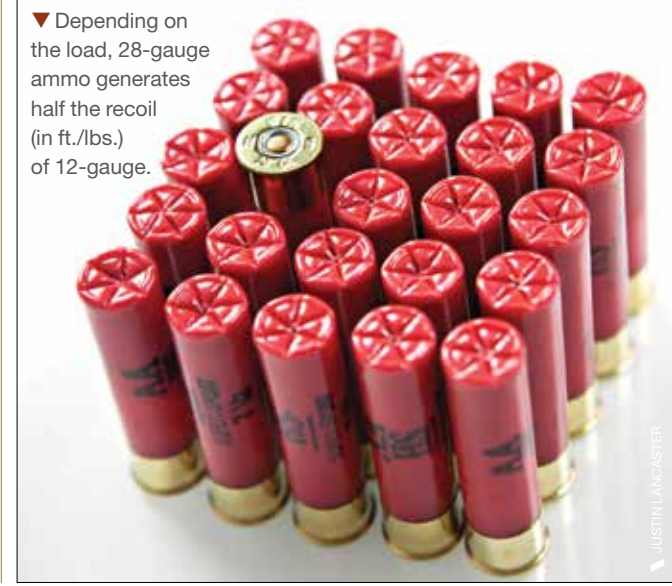
The light weight of most 28-gauge models, combined with the previously mentioned low recoil, is what makes the 28-gauge great for new shooters, smaller shooters and even older shooters who don't have as much upper-body strength as they once had. It also makes shooting the 28-gauge perfect for those who are going to be doing a lot of shooting at one time. Take a new person to the range and hand them a 28 instead of a 12 or 20, and they just might be more willing to come back and give the shooting sports a second try. If they do, the lighter weight will probably have factored into that decision.

3. EASY TO SWING

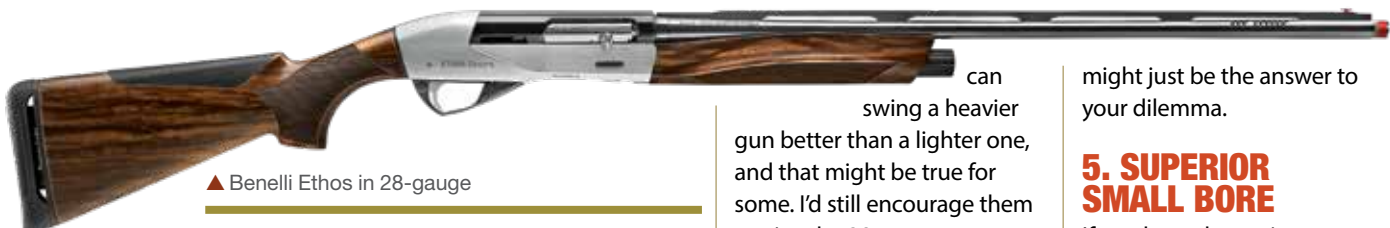
True 28-gauge shotguns, built on a smaller frame than a 20-gauge, balance well and are easy to swing on clay

targets or game birds. To use a word we don't often hear much anymore, they are quite "nimble." And nimble makes them quick! Just swinging one on a fast-flying clay will put a smile on your face — especially when it disappears in a cloud of dust. More than a few shooters feel that they

rounds of skeet or sporting clays a little less fun for them. Sometimes, they'll even abandon the shooting sports altogether. Those folks are perfect candidates to give the little 28-gauge a try. If you're extra sensitive to loud noise, even with quality hearing protection, the 28-gauge



▼ Depending on the load, 28-gauge ammo generates half the recoil (in ft./lbs.) of 12-gauge.



▲ Benelli Ethos in 28-gauge

A 28-GAUGE BEAUTY

When Benelli introduced its inertia-driven ETHOS semi-automatic shotgun in 28 gauge a few years back, I couldn't wait to get my hands on one. Unfortunately, with my filet mignon appetite and cheeseburger budget, getting my hands on one was as far as I got, spending a few minutes shouldering and swinging the diminutive beauty in Benelli's SHOT Show booth.

The 28-gauge Ethos weighs in at a svelte 5.3 pounds, with AA-grade engraved satin walnut stock and forend. The engraved nickel-plated receiver and polished vent rib barrel make it a thing of true beauty, and those who have tested it say it shoots even better than it looks.

The MSRP for the 28-gauge ETHOS is \$2,149.

can swing a heavier gun better than a lighter one, and that might be true for some. I'd still encourage them to give the 28-gauge a try. They might find the nimble factor much more desirable than they would have expected.

4. REDUCED NOISE

While good hearing protection makes this largely a moot point, the relatively quieter report of the 28-gauge does make it more fun to shoot for those who are extra sensitive to loud noises. We all know a few people who love to shoot, but the loud boom of a 20- or 12-gauge just makes shooting a few

might just be the answer to your dilemma.

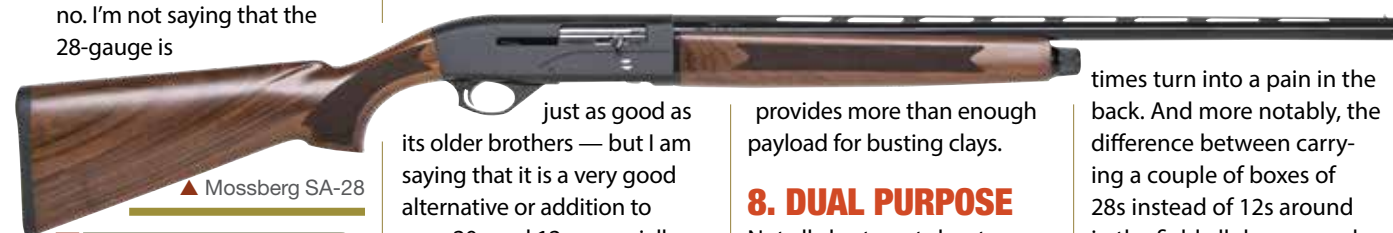
5. SUPERIOR SMALL BORE

If you have the notion that the 28-gauge is just a beefed-up .410, you are misunderstanding the gauge completely. The 28-gauge boasts a .550-inch bore, compared to the .410-inch bore in the less effective .410. In fact, the 28 is much closer in size to the .615-inch bore of the 20-gauge than to the .410. And the typical ¾-ounce 28-gauge load is only an eighth of an ounce less than the popular 7⁄8-ounce 20-gauge field load used by many. It's no knock on the .410, which many shooters

love. But the beginner to average shooter will nearly always break more clays with a good-fitting 28-gauge than with a .410.

6. GREAT PATTERNS

The ability to produce outstanding patterns in a smaller, lighter, nimbler gun helps bolster the argument for the 28-gauge for clay target sports. Will it provide a better pattern than the 12 or 20? Obviously, the answer is no. I'm not saying that the 28-gauge is



▲ Mossberg SA-28

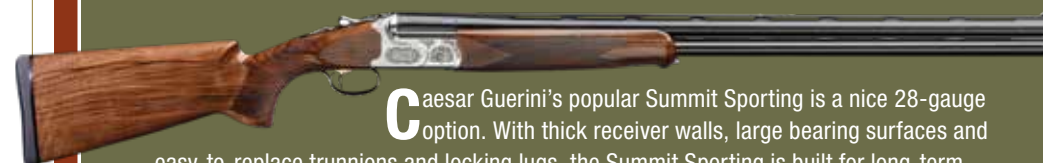
28 ON A BUDGET

The old rumor that you need to sell the farm to buy a nice 28-gauge shotgun is far from being true. Take Mossberg's SA-28 as a prime example. The sleek little gas-operated semi-auto weighs in at 6½ pounds and boasts a 26-inch vent rib barrel. It also features a high gloss-finished walnut stock and forend, both with laser-cut checkering, and a high-polish blued finish.

The MSRP on the little SA-28 is \$675, but it can be found for a lot less if you do a little looking. In fact, at the time of this writing, *budsgunshop.com* was selling it for just under \$500.

The SA-28 is also offered in a bantam version for smaller-framed shooters.

CAESAR GUERINI SUMMIT SPORTING



Caesar Guerini's popular Summit Sporting is a nice 28-gauge option. With thick receiver walls, large bearing surfaces and easy-to-replace trunnions and locking lugs, the Summit Sporting is built for long-term durability. The stock has a palm swell, cast off and toe rotation for either a right- or left-handed shooter. You can get the 28-gauge in 30- or 32-inch barrels, with a total weight of 7 lb. 4 oz. (30-inch barrels).

The Summit Sporting has Caesar Guerini's DTS trigger system with two trigger pull weight options. The trigger also allows for takeup, over-travel and length of pull adjustments. MSRP is \$4,115, with an additional charge for the left-handed option.

just as good as its older brothers — but I am saying that it is a very good alternative or addition to your 20s and 12s, especially if you mostly use No. 8 or smaller shot. Your 28 won't break as many clays with borderline poor shots as your bigger bores will. But if you shoot precisely and put your shots where they need to be, the 28-gauge will certainly reward you handsomely.

7. LIGHT IS RIGHT

The argument that the 28-gauge's payload is too small to make it as effective as a 12- or 20-gauge is true if you are talking about using large shot for bigger game birds like pheasants or waterfowl. But that's not what we are talking about here. A typical No. 8 28-gauge load holds 300 pellets, with No. 7½ boasting 269 pellets. That's not much less than many light 20- and 12-gauge loads. It's true that when you get down to No. 6s, 5s and 4s, you're going to be sending far fewer pellets downrange with the 28-gauge. But for most shotgunners, the 28

provides more than enough payload for busting clays.

8. DUAL PURPOSE

Not all clay target shooters also like to bird hunt, but many do. If you're one of them, you'll find the little 28-gauge to be an excellent addition to your hunting gun collection, too. Last year I hunted and harvested doves, woodcock, quail and chukars with a little model SA-28 from Mossberg (see sidebar). It was a pleasure to carry in the field, to swing on fast-flying birds and to shoot. If semi-autos aren't your thing for the field, that's no problem. Several manufacturers make over-and-under 28-gauges, and some are beautiful pieces of hardware. And if you're on a budget, a little searching might yield a used 28-gauge over-and-under that'll be a perfect fit for your budget and gun safe.

9. LIGHTER SHELLS

While not necessarily a great advantage for skeet or sporting clays shooters, lugging shells to and from the car and the range can some-

times turn into a pain in the back. And more notably, the difference between carrying a couple of boxes of 28s instead of 12s around in the field all day can make a significant difference in how you feel after a hunt. In fact, a few calculations using 40.13 kg/case of 28s versus 70.5 kg/case of 12s shows that your average box of 28-gauge shells is about 43 percent lighter than a box of 12-gauge shells. That might also save the UPS man being angry at you next time you order bulk ammunition.

10. JUST PLAIN FUN

I should have mentioned the fun factor much earlier in this article, as that's where the little 28-gauge really shines. All of the other positive attributes mentioned earlier add up to a healthy dose of fun, regardless of your favorite shotgun sport. After all, what's not to like about a light, nimble, great-patterning shotgun that is equally suited to accompany you to the field or range?

It's no-brainer. Give a 28 gauge a try soon. I think you'll be glad you did. *CTN*