

The Cartridge

The .375 Holland & Holland Magnum was introduced by the famous British gun firm back in 1912. It continues to surf at the crest of its popularity even today. Long thought to be an "African" caliber, many North American hunters shunned the .375 H&H as too big and as antiquated. Many are now discovering what some gun people have known for years—that the .375 H&H can be a great caliber for North American hunting. Whether you are hunting grizzlies or brown bears, the .375 H&H gets it done. The three-seven-five is the cartridge of choice for many bear guides and African professional hunters for use as a backup. These guys usually don't bring their rifles into play until problems are already occurring. That they can choose any caliber on earth to save their skins attests to the effectiveness of the .375 H&H.

The cartridge's long tapered case with a gentle shoulder is thought to be antiquated by many modern theorists, but that design allows the ammo to feed into the gun's chamber reliably. The biggest gun on earth is useless if it is jammed, and the H&H-style cartridge is designed to avoid that. That it slams the target with authority is frosting.

I used to think that reliable feeding was a desirable trait only in theory, but I learned differently. On one hunt I and a friend had worked our way between a rut-crazed bull moose and his cow before we called like a rival bull. The call worked. He came to us bristled up and blowing steam into the cold Canadian air. I hit him with a .300 Winchester. It only seemed to make him mad. He was coming straight at us when my rifle jammed. My partner hit him with his .375 H&H and stopped him cold. I noticed his gun didn't jam when he jacked in the next round.

Later analysis showed that my shot would have been fatal, but probably not soon enough. My partner's .375 H&H hit him in the same area of the chest, but had a more immediate effect.

Aside from its power, this cartridge also has trajec-

ries similar to the 180-grain .30-06 Springfield, and it can easily handle ranges out to 300 yards or more. While the .30-06 carries 1,975 foot-pounds of energy out to 200 yards, the .375 H&H has more than 1,000 additional foot-pounds at the same distance. That makes this a viable rifle for elk and moose.

Elmer Keith advocated this caliber for elk hunting, and with more and more of the best bulls hiding in the thick stuff where uncertain shot angles dictate extreme penetration, his reasons are even more valid today. Also, they make a top moose stopper. The largest huntable North American critter often weighs more than half a ton, and they are tough. I once watched a yearling bull soak up nine .270 Winchester rounds before taking one in the spine and dropping. Yet all three moose I have seen hit with a .375 H&H dropped with the first bullet. One was a bull I shot at nearly 300 yards that simply rolled over and stayed put. The guide said it was the "best damn moose gun" he ever saw.

The H&H's downside, of course, is recoil. Launching a big, heavy bullet at high velocity will generate some kick. Using the Recoil Calculation section of the Barnes Ballistics Computer Program, we see that a .375 H&H shooting a 300-grain bullet in a 9-pound rifle hits us with 36.8 foot-pounds of energy. The same weight rifle shooting a 150-grain .30-06 load generates 17.2 foot-pounds of recoil—less than half that of the big H&H.

To combat this, the .375 H&H has traditionally been chambered in rifles weighing 10 pounds or more. That's fine if you are hunting from a vehicle or you have a gun bearer, but try lugging that up and down a 10,000-foot high elk mountain for a week and see if you still love your rifle. Also, rifles chambered for the .375 H&H in the past have sported barrels 24 inches or longer. However, many hunters find a long barrels to be awkward and cumbersome for most hunting. This is particularly true if we are dealing with a charging bear in the Alaskan alders, but will be no less notice-

able in the thick brush and tangled mess of blowdowns in a bull elk's sanctuary.



Above: 375 H&H Magnum cartridges have trajectories similar to the 180-grain .30-06 Springfield; they can easily handle ranges out to 300 yards or more.



Above: At 200 yards, the .375 H&H has more than 1,000 additional foot-pounds of energy as a comparable 180-grain .30-06 Springfield. That makes it a viable rifle for elk and moose.