

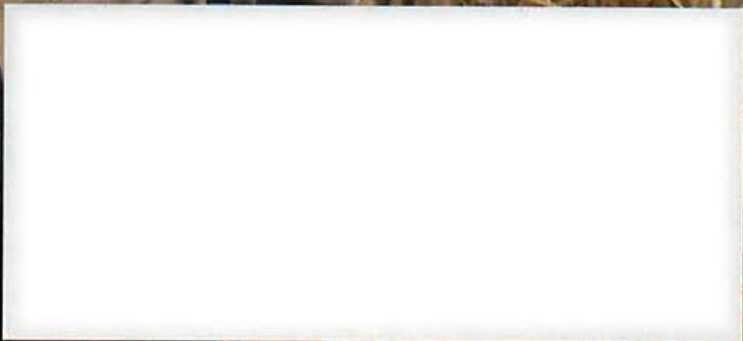
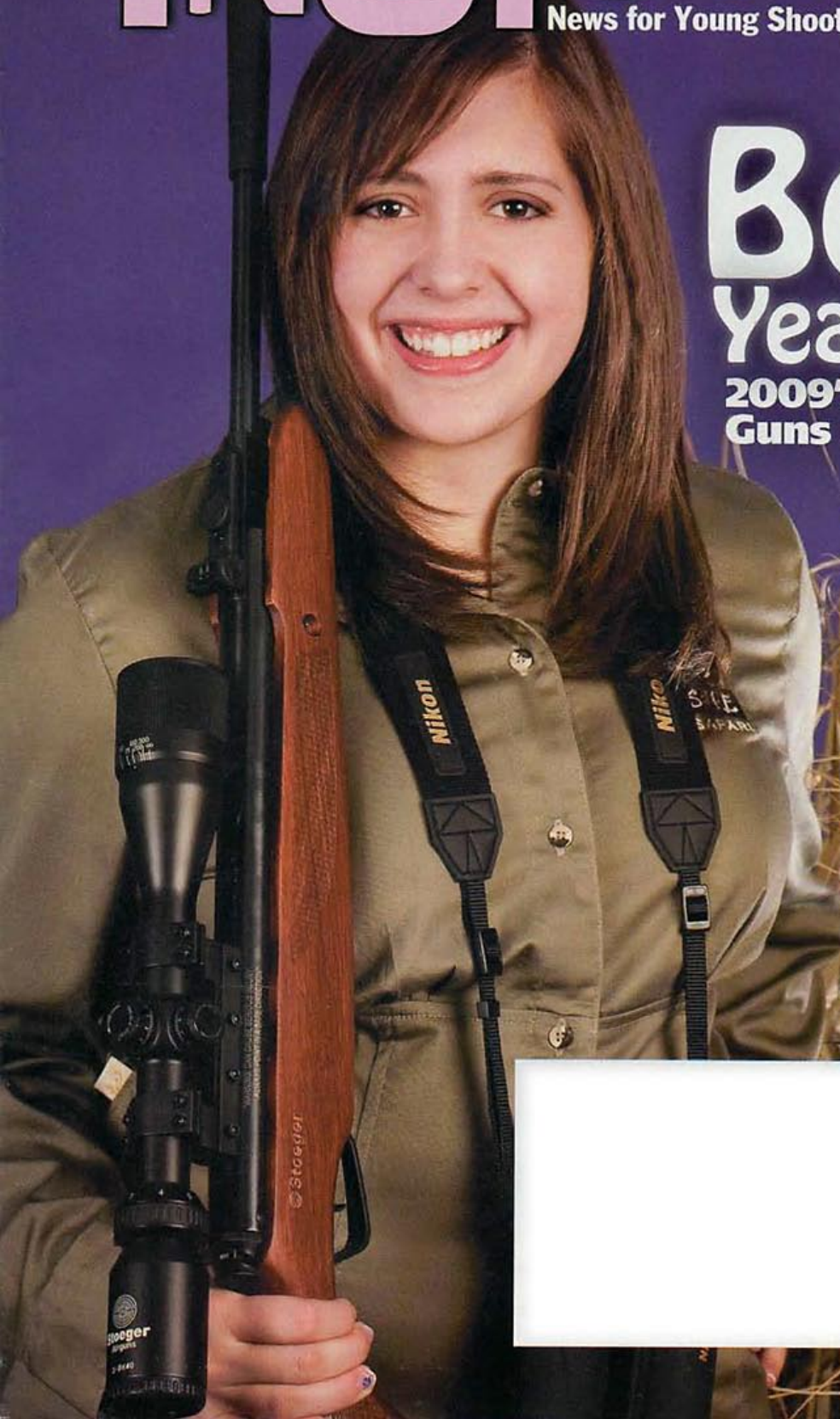
WHOOSH! FALCONRY TAKES WING

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News for Young Shooters

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TEST FIRE:



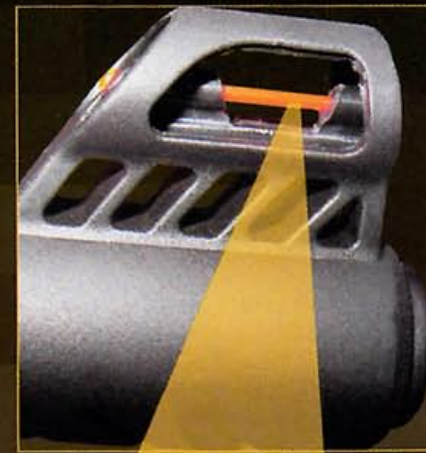
The hardwood-stocked X20 sports checkering and an elegant Monte Carlo comb.



The safety catch must be pushed in to disengage the trigger safety.



Although this version of the X20 is available as a combo package complete with scope, the top-notch iron sights display a commitment to quality.



The hooded front sight has a red fiber-optic insert.

PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

HANNELE LAHTI



The Stoeger X20 Air Rifle

BY J.I. GALAN

TAKE A SNEAK PEEK AT THE ALL-NEW LINE OF STOEGER AIR RIFLES!

Stoeger has had a long

and distinguished history as an importer of fine firearms and air guns since its foundation back in the 1920s. In the area of air guns in particular, Stoeger has in the past been a U.S. distributor of several top European air guns. This year Stoeger has launched a line of four powerful sporting-class air rifles of undeniable quality, manufactured in China and available with a choice of stock materials and finishes. The rifles in question are designated the X5, X10, X20 and the top-of-the-line X50.

We chose the Model X20, with an oil-finished hardwood stock, for this report. Three things common to all the air rifles in the Stoeger line are: (1) barrel-cocking spring-piston power plants; (2) .177-caliber (4.5mm); and (3) sizzling power.

The X20 on test came with a 3-9x40mm scope already mounted atop the grooved receiver. The hardwood stock sports checkering in the forearm and pistol grip areas. The ample ambidextrous Monte Carlo comb adds a decidedly elegant touch to the stock, along with a thick rubber butt-pad. All metal surfaces exhibit a rich blued finish.

Overall, the X20 measures a well-proportioned 43 inches, tipping the balance at a comfortable 8.6 pounds with its fairly large scope mounted. Removing the scope drops the

weight to a mere 7 pounds. If you elect to go with a version that is not sold as a package gun, never fear: The X20 is also equipped with a first-rate set of iron sights. The steel open rear sight is fully adjustable via graduated click dials. It incorporates twin green fiber-optic inserts on the sides of the square notch. Up front there is an elevated red fiber-optic element within a hood that's part of a molded synthetic cocking grip.

The X20 offers a finely rifled 16½-inch steel barrel. The cocking grip is a great aid during the cocking operation, providing a thick non-slip surface so the user can pivot the barrel open against the rifle's potent mainspring. The cocking effort is relatively stout, but I felt it could be easily managed by anyone over 10 years old. The single cocking stroke provides enough power to generate a muzzle velocity of approximately 1,000 feet per second (fps) with standard .177-caliber lead pellets and up to 1,200 fps with lightweight alloy pellets.

The smooth two-stage trigger is adjusted at the factory and normally should not require change. However, the user can modify the length of the second-stage pull using a screw that's accessible through the molded trigger guard. There is an automatic trigger safety located at the rear of the receiver. The ambidextrous safety catch slides out to engage as the rifle is cocked and must be pushed in to disengage. When engaged, a large white dot atop the safety catch is visible.

Initial test-firing the sample X20 revealed that the factory must have over-lubricated the compression chamber, causing "dieseling." (Dieseling is when excess lubricant ahead of the piston is ignited during the firing sequence as the piston suddenly compresses the air in front of it, causing a rather loud "bang," followed by smoke and an abnormally high muzzle velocity for the pellet being fired.) Normally, dieseling is encountered to a greater or lesser degree in most sporting-class spring-piston air rifles, but it tends to gradually diminish and eventually disappear with continued use of the rifle. This was the case with our test rifle.

Once the X20 settled into a manageable firing sequence, averaging 1,172 fps of muzzle velocity with .177 Gamo Master Point lead pellets weighing approximately 7.9 grains. Using the 3x9 variable scope that came with the rifle, the X20 on test printed groups averaging half an inch across at 20 yards, which is an excellent performance for a scoped sporting-class air rifle!

Retailing for approximately \$219, the Stoeger X20 would be a good choice for a variety of applications, including small-game hunting and pest control. It would also be ideal as an all-around plinker to keep those shooting skills sharp during the off-season. ↘

SPECIFICATIONS

STOEGER X20: www.stoegerindustries.com

Importer/Distributor:	Stoeger Industries 901-8th Street Pocomoke, MD 21851 (301) 283-6981
Caliber:	.177 inch (4.5mm)
Power Plant:	Spring-piston; single-shot
Action:	Barrel cocking
Length Overall:	43 inches
Weight:	7 pounds (8.6 pounds w/scope)
Barrel:	16½-inch rifled steel
Trigger:	Two-stage; adj.
Safety:	Automatic
Sights:	Fully adj. fiber-optic open rear; hooded front w/fiber-optic insert
Stock:	Oil-finished hardwood, Monte Carlo-style (synthetic-stocked versions also available)
MSRP:	\$219