



# BUSHNELL R5 SERIES

## PART 2: R5 2000 AB RANGEFINDER REVIEW

*By Selwyn Smith*

**The R3 and R5 Bushnell R-series features value-oriented optics: scopes, binoculars and the ever-important laser rangefinder. (this gives some room for the R7 to land as a more premium offering when it arrives).**

Bushnell R series of rangefinders feature the R3, which has 1200-yard capability, and the R5, with up to 2000-yard performance. Users can choose the model that best suits their requirements and budget. Alongside the R5 4-12x40 Illuminated DOA-LRH800, I was able to put the R5 2000-yard laser rangefinder through a pretty hectic couple of weeks hunting over the Roar.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Out of the box, I grabbed the unit to gauge fit and feel. The curved, rubber-ribbed base of the unit balanced nicely in my palm and afforded good grip. Bushnell call their textured rubber grip Diamond Tread – a functional ribbed finish to aid grip in wet weather and when gloves are needed. At just 181 grams, this is an ultralightweight

unit and, measuring just 110 x 120 x 70mm, is equally compact.

A small lanyard is included, as is Bushnell's neat little Vault Lite Pouch to house the unit. This simply clips onto your belt or bino harness. A coiled elastic safety cord will stop you leaving your R5 2000 AB Rangefinder on the hill when you're ready to move on to the next glassing spot.

Gone is the rubber, cushioned eyepiece/dioptre adjustment that we've all become accustomed to – it's been replaced with a simple plastic disk on this model. The Bushnell dioptre adjustment needs just a ¼ turn to cover the maximum range of eyepiece adjustment to get a clear image. While this seemed stiff enough while adjusting at the range, it was prone to moving in both the Vault Lite Pouch

and my bino-harness, meaning it needed adjusting regularly. A small niggle and not one I've had with the rubberised/cushioned eyepieces of more expensive models.

R5 rangefinders are all 6 x 25 magnification, feature EXO Barrier lens coatings to repel water, fog and smudging, and HD lenses for improved clarity and image resolution.

The battery housing sits under the rear seat of the unit and incorporates a clever flip-up plastic catch that sits proud, acting as a lever to undo the metal threaded battery cap to access the CR2 battery – nice.

### SET-UP - USING THE APPLIED BALLISTICS APP

Setting up the Bushnell R5 2000 is achieved either via the Applied Ballistics ►





**LEFT:**  
*Ergonomically, the unit is spot on.*



app, with data Bluetoothed to the unit, or by scrolling through the menu options via the handbook.

For those who don't want to use the app, the handbook is important here to get the rangefinder settings tailored to your preferences. There's only one button to press on this unit – so, it's very user-friendly once you've set it up. This does mean, however, that trying to make changes in the field will be fraught with bad language and plenty of head scratching ... so get your settings right before you leave home.

Users can select between three targeting modes:

**LEFT**

*One simple button to operate – very user-friendly.*

**BOTTOM:**

*Note the scalloped top to assist with grip when wet and when wearing gloves.*

1. **Default** – allows up to 2000-yard ranging on reflective objects. Bushnell claim 1200 yards (1097m) on tree-sized objects and 650 yards (584m) on deer-sized objects.
2. **Bullseye** (near mode) – ideal for small targets such as rabbits. Ignores distant objects that may have stronger reflective reading.
3. **Brush** (far mode) – ignores close readings such as branches or bushes and focusses on the most distant target. Ideal on those sneaky Stewart Island white-tailed deer.

Distance preferences: feet, yards or metres. Users then toggle through the three additional Angle Range Compensation (ARC) modes:

1. **Regular Mode** – no elevation or inclination data.
2. **Bow Mode** – displays inclination (degrees) and true horizontal distance in addition to line of sight. Can also be used if holdover/dial-up isn't required.
3. **AB/Rifle Mode** – calculates the

amount of dial-up/holdover/bullet drop in either inches, cm, mils or MOA once you've entered your data.

The three targeting modes, measurement optionality and ability to read down to under five yards make this unit ideal for bow hunters, those in a tree stand, airgun enthusiasts and long-range hunters alike.

While the array of options does seem extensive, once you've selected your preferred choice, you're unlikely to make too many changes until you find yourself in the bush for a week vs your normal high-country, red tussock hunting trips.

The final task in the set-up is to select your reticle option in the app:

Circle, Dot, and Circle + Dot (default)

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**RIGHT:**

*The Bushnell R5 scope and rangefinder were a great combo on this billy at 300m.*

options. I used the 'circle + dot' as the most user-friendly for open-country hunting.

**BUSHNELL APP - APPLIED BALLISTICS**

Let's have a look at Bushnell AB system – Bluetooth connectivity between built-in Applied Ballistics Ultralite and AB app – and how it drives the Bushnell R5 R2000 rangefinder. Bluetooth and AB Ultralite features only on the R5 and not the R3.

We saw the benefit of Bushnell's holdover system using the R5 4-12 x 40 scope and AB app tailored to the R5 scope reticle in the previous addition – an excellent system and more accurate than your CDS style turret. The AB app gives you actual dial-up figures, based on cartridge specs, and environmental outcomes as well as a host of features to correct for most variables.

Let's test this:

Once you've put your ballistic data into the app (velocity, scope height above bore, zero range, BC and the three Hs (Heat, Height, Humidity), you can run your numbers out to 800m.

Metric or imperial are options within each of the choices. Most apps will default to 'all metric' or 'all imperial'. Thankfully, the AB allows you to choose your preference for each setting – excellent!

The 'zero atmosphere' gives the calculator the ability to compare the atmosphere at the time you zeroed to another atmospheric reading. Equally, the app will take readings from the nearest weather station based on your GPS location if you cannot measure this yourself – another handy feature.

Wind direction and speed is entered manually. The R5 rangefinder will then read L+ or R+ for left/right wind direction.

Where this app starts to earn its keep is ballistic calibration. This allows you to correct for errors at longer range. Why do errors occur? The list is endless. Have you zeroed at exactly 100m/100yd? Are you shooting at an angle to the bullseye? Your



barrel is as individual as your fingerprints, and the theoretical data won't account for bore curvature, as a further example of deviation from the actual calculation. With two known distances – e.g., 500m and 700m – shooters calculate their errors and then often start to fiddle with their fps to get these to line up. This, of course, is fraught. The actual bullet speed is something we know to be true – so leave that alone. Instead, you should adjust the scope height, then BC (up and down) to try and get the ballistics curve of your cartridge to match the actual drop at your two known distances; you'll find the AB app solves all of this. Simply enter the two ranges and the drop – the app does the rest! Outstanding.

**LET'S GO HUNTING!**

"Bryce, that stag has snuck down into the gut – just below that hanging rock," I whispered, pointing across the gully.

"I can't see it," he said.

"He's dropped out of sight," I replied. "Along with those five hinds. We've got time to hatch a plan."

The R5 2000 AB Rangefinder was already in my palm as I scanned a few landmarks just above the stag. At four readings per second, the scan feature made short work of distances out to 500m across the gut.

"It's 474m away," I said. "Let's sneak up to that ledge and get set up. Those animals are bound to feed out of the creek at some stage." It was 4pm. We'd hunted all day with

no results. The other hunting parties on the block hadn't done our hunting odds any favours – they looked to have thrown the towel in and left the area, leaving us to glass the most prominent valley and gut as witching hour approached.

We snuck forward, quietly keeping an eye on movement below. I motioned Bryce to stop.

"We're being watched. Check out the hind on the far face," I said. "Her eyes are fixated on us ... 545m. She might struggle to make us out, so keep your movement to a bare minimum."

With the eagle-eyed hind watching, we very slowly slid down to the ledge in front and quietly got set up. The hind eventually lost interest and sat down in the tall tussock as I checked my numbers through the rangefinder.

I'd updated environmental data on the app back at the side-x-side so didn't have to run any last-minute amendments. I'd also taken a screenshot of the Bushnell R5 scope reticle holdover number for quick reference. One glance told me that 470m was 4x dots down from the floating crosshair.

Twenty minutes and no result. One of the yearling hinds suddenly appeared out of the gut.

"I might shoot that yearling," I said. "The stag is bound to head straight uphill."

I centred the fourth stadia line on the shoulder and squeezed off. The yearling collapsed as hinds suddenly ran up the ►





far face and stopped, confused at the suppressed shot.

"Stag, Bryce!"

I already had another round chambered, and the crosshairs settled on the stag's shoulder as he paused, equally confused.

The resounding whack saw him stagger. He was dead on his feet.

"On the far face!" I said.

"Okay. Got it!" Bryce replied.

Before I could get the bolt open to reload, Bryce had already squeezed off. The stag collapsed.

#### SUMMARY

With excellent optical clarity and a world-class ballistics app with top-end features, the R5 series really does it all.

The advertised 800m on deer-sized targets is true to form, despite numerous reflective rock faces and dirt banks. However, I couldn't get near the advertised 2000m maximum range, with the unit maxing out at 1045m. Lighting and atmospheric conditions have likely played a part when ranges were being stretched. For hunters looking at a value package with scope/rangefinder interconnectivity, the R5 series is significantly cheaper than the Bluetooth systems of some competitors.

Already have a dial-up scope? The integrated Bluetooth app, paired with AB Ultralite, allows precise elevation and windage tailored to your set-up.

Bushnell have got the combination of technology and value-focussed optical performance about right for the price. Feature for feature, the R5 series with EXO Barrier, excellent optical clarity and lifetime warranty will make it a winning combination with a wide range of NZ hunters. ■

**RRP** \$699.99

**MORE INFO** [www.bushnelloptics.co.nz](http://www.bushnelloptics.co.nz)



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