

Kelbly's Custom Rifle (Atlas) Tested



# predator Xtreme

America's #1 Source For Year-Round Hunting And Shooting Information

**USE SCIENCE  
TO BAG MORE  
COYOTES**

**HUNTING  
LIGHT  
REVIEW**



## **EASTERN 'YOTES**

**HARDER TO CALL OR JUST MORE SCARCE?**

**NEW AIRGUNS  
FOR 2013**

**COLD-CALLING  
MONTANA WOLVES**



# KELBLY ATLAS

Custom-Made Accuracy



**PRO STAFF  
STEPHEN D.  
CARPENTERI:**

Stephen Carpenteri has been an outdoor writer, editor and photographer for over 35 years. He specializes in shooting and hunting with anything that has a trigger attached.

**ONE OF THE PERIPHERAL JOYS OF OWNING A CUSTOM RIFLE IS THE ENVIOUS GLANCES OF THE REGULAR RANGE RATS WHO GATHER AROUND FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUR SPARKLY, NEW RIFLE.** Such was the case when I spent the day putting the new Kelbly Atlas through its paces. A beautifully-designed and crafted rifle, the Atlas was also supremely accurate, hence the clamor at the shooting range. Pretty guns are a dime a dozen, but gorgeous rifles that can print MOA at 200 yards are rare.

The Kelbly shop in Lawrence, Ohio, builds some 500 actions per year, with 30 percent of production going to its customers in the benchrest community.

The company stocks Hart Rifle and Krieger barrels in most of the common competition calibers, twists and tapers, and will special order other configurations. In addition to supplying basic bare steel and aluminum Stolle actions, Kelbly's also builds complete rifles featuring their own scope rings (in a variety of colors), fiberglass graphite stocks, barrels, Jewell triggers, aluminum butt plates, glue-in bedding and paint.

Actions may be ordered for right or left bolt, right or left port and bolt-face options. Complete rifles may be ordered including action type and configuration (caliber and neck diameter), barrel make (type and twist), stock and paint scheme, rifle class (for competitive shooting) and weight. Other design

options are up to the customer, but if it can be done, Kelbly's will do it for you.

My sample rifle came fitted with a March 2.5-25x42T duplex-reticle scope and shiny chrome mounts. Because the gun was a sample I overlooked the obvious glare factor from a predator hunter's perspective and decided to focus on function and performance rather than how far off a suspicious coyote could spot those glowing chrome mounts! After running 500 rounds through the Atlas at distances out to 400 yards, the scope and mounts remained solidly in place.

Kelbly is proud to mention that "every part of this rifle is made in America," a sure selling point for the largely patriotic shooting community. Stocks are supplied by Bell and Carlson with Stolle actions, Rifle Basix triggers and Krieger barrels. The action is a "semi-clone" of the Remington Model 700. It features a handy side-bolt release, trigger hanger and level mounting surfaces.

Meprolight Day/Night MIL-SPEC  
Reflex Sight and Magnifier

# PREDATOR ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

For the chemists in the crowd, the action is made of 416RS and the bold body is made of 4140 alloy steel. All bolts, mounts and action parts are precision machined in house to extreme tolerances — no jiggle or rattle in this gun!

Some actions feature a mechanical plunger-style ejector called the TG ejector, which will never fail because it does not use a spring. This also allows the shooter to check headspace and seating depth without removing the ejector.

The stock of the Atlas is molded around an aluminum bedding block that is perfectly level and features a cheek piece design that allows accurate, comfortable shooting at the bench or in the field. A Remington BDL-type floor plate is included for ease of unloading.

Adding to the Atlas' list of accuracy-enhancing features, the Krieger barrel's chamber is hand cut to competition standards. The muzzle boasts a recessed flat target crown as well.

Rifle weight, without scope, is 8 pounds, 8 ounces. Trigger pull is a super smooth 2 pounds. Overall length is 44 ½ inches. Stock colors include black or black/gray, gray/black, tan/black and olive/black Spiderweb.

Available calibers include .223 Remington, .308 Winchester, .22-250 Remington, .300 WSM and 7mm WSM. Calibers for the Long Action series include the .280 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum .30-06 Springfield, 65x284 Norma and 7mm Remington Magnum. Of course, not all of these are recommended for varmint or predator shooting, but if you want maximum downrange accuracy with any of these calibers, the Kelbly line is a logical place to start.

With all this in mind, my next stop was the range. With cool, calm conditions, no wind or humidity, I expected a show of superior accuracy, first because these rifles are made to competition standards. In fact, the majority of Kelbly's clients are high-end competition shooters who are used to taking home the gold at American and International contests. For example, is a 2.067-inch group at 1,000 yards competitive enough for you?

Also, I am a long-time fan of the .308 Winchester as a target round. I actually knew all about the .308 after several years of deer and bear hunting with it prior to being issued my very own M-14 while in the U.S. Marine Corps in the late 1960s. I knew that any sharp-eyed recruit could hit 10 out of 10 at 500 yards with open sights, so of course I expected much more from Kelbly's Atlas, and I wasn't disappointed.

At routine ranges such as 100 and 200 yards, MOA groups were almost monotonous even when cranked out five at a time, rapid fire. In my tests I look as much for function failure as well as accuracy,



## MEPRO MX3 MAGNIFIER

- ⊕ Compact, lightweight, rugged
- ⊕ Simple to attach to any MIL-STD-1913 Rail
- ⊕ Quick-release for instant mounting and removal
- ⊕ Increases effective range of MEPRO M21



## MEPRO M21

- ⊕ No Batteries
- ⊕ No Switches
- ⊕ Always Ready for Action
- ⊕ Large Field of View
- ⊕ Rapid Target Acquisition
- ⊕ Integral Rail Mount

Since you never really know in advance how far you will need to shoot, or how close, why not be ready for anything in your scope...or in your face.

Mount a MEPRO MX3 Magnifier behind a MEPRO M21 and have the best of both worlds: 3X magnification when you want it; instant zero magnification when you need it.

**Isn't it time you adjusted your attitude towards predator hunting?**



DEADLY. ACCURATE. INNOVATION.

[www.themakogroup.com](http://www.themakogroup.com)

631 880-3396 | [info@themakogroup.com](mailto:info@themakogroup.com) | [f](#)

The full line of Meprolight Optical Sights is distributed in the USA only by The Mako Group

and found nothing to complain about after a couple of hours of continuous load-and-shoot repetition. Even with a hot barrel the rifle printed outstanding groups (under an inch at 200 yards) even when switching through a variety of manufacturer's match-type rounds. I wasn't so much interested in bulls-eyes as I was in groups, and nothing I put through the Atlas failed to produce quarter-sized clusters.

My range puts an end to the fun at 400 yards, where I was able to bang the gong on coyote-sized silhouettes every time. A couple of random long-range misses were the result of my own frailties. When I took the time to settle in and fired a focused, controlled shot the bullet went exactly where I wanted it to, every time.

While it is difficult to look at a \$2,300 rifle and find anything

to complain about, I approach my testing as a representative of *Predator Xtreme* readers who, for the most part, are coyote, fox and bobcat hunters. The company's primary market is competitive shooters, so, to be honest; my sample Atlas is really too much gun for the guy who wants to spend his weekends brush-busting eastern predators. It's better suited to the long-range applications that are most common in the Mid-West and far West, where shots may be taken off shooting sticks or tripods at targets in the 400- to 500-yard range.

Plus, the .308 is not the best choice for predator hunters who want to recoup some of their expenses by selling prime winter hides, although FMJ and match target ammo is not as destructive as most "hunting" bullets can be, especially when exposed lead, hol-

low points or ballistic-tips are part of the equation.

With all that said, the Atlas is a superb firearm that, with some tweaking, can be the perfect rifle for a short range (under 200 yards) predator hunter using calls or bait. The guys at Kelbly's are more than willing to design a rifle that will fit any shooter's specific needs, so I would submit a design that incorporates a shorter barrel for a smaller caliber, a "carbine" if you will. Make the necessary adjustments in stock color and metal finish (particularly when it comes to those sparkling chrome scope mounts) so that a more covert hunting rifle ends up in your hands. Add sling swivels and a Harris bipod or other quick-detachable rest system and you'll have a rifle that combines the best of all worlds: superior accuracy, durability and function. Buy one of these custom tack drivers and you'll



## Introducing the **New ThOR 640x480 100mm 5X Thermal Weapon Sight**

Contact info:  
American Technologies Network  
1341 San Mateo Avenue  
South San Francisco,  
CA 94080, USA

tel: (650)989-5100  
800-910-2862  
fax: (650)875-0129  
e-mail:  
info@atncorp.com  
[www.atncorp.com](http://www.atncorp.com)



Manufacturer of Advanced Thermal and Night Vision Systems

never need another!

For more information on the Kelbly line of custom-built competition rifles, log onto [www.kelbly.com](http://www.kelbly.com) or call (330) 683-4674.

To find out more about the March line of high-performance, long-range rifle scopes, log onto [www.deon.co.jp/march/](http://www.deon.co.jp/march/) or send an e-mail to [info@deon.co.jp](mailto:info@deon.co.jp). 

## SPEC SHEET

### MANUFACTURER:

Kelbly's, Inc.  
[www.kelbly.com](http://www.kelbly.com)  
(330) 683-4674

**MODEL:** Atlas

**CALIBERS:** .223 REM., 308 WIN.,  
.22-250 REM., .300 WSM, 7MM  
WSM, .280 REM., .300 WIN.  
MAG., .30-06 SPRINGFIELD,  
6.5X384 NORMA, 7MM MAG.

**ACTION:** Bolt Action

**MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 4

**BARREL:** 23 3/4 inches (custom  
variations available)

**TRIGGER:** Single stage,  
adjustable

**SIGHTS:** None, Action drilled and  
tapped for scope sights.

**STOCK:** Aluminum reinforced  
graphite/fiberglass

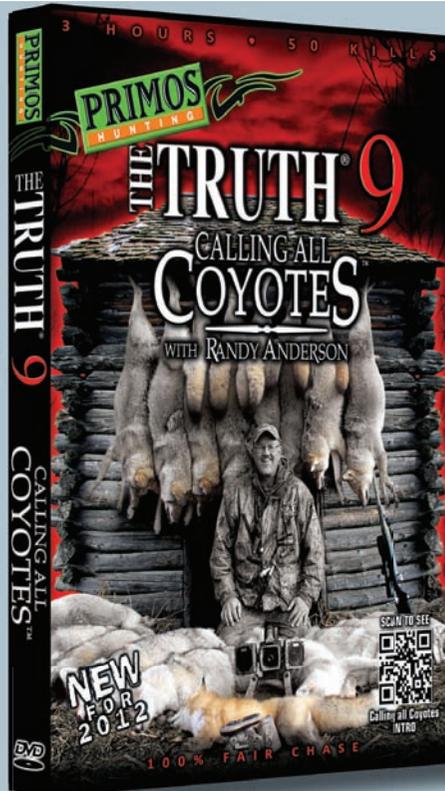
**OVERALL LENGTH:**  
45 1/2 inches

**WEIGHT (UNLOADED W/O  
SCOPE):**

8 pounds 8 ounces

**OTHER FEATURES:** Other Fea-  
tures: Side bolt release, trigger  
hanger and level mounting  
surfaces. All parts hand made to  
exact tolerances. Wide variety of  
custom action, barrel, trigger and  
stock options available

**MSRP:** \$2,300 (rifle only)



Well folks I've hunted coyotes for a very long time but I can honestly say this is one of the best years we've ever experienced. We called in more doubles, triples and even quadruples than ever before. We called up and killed coyotes on 60% of our setups! The new electronic calls, the Alpha Dogg™ & Turbo Dogg™, were absolutely phenomenal. So, if you enjoy the action packed excitement of Speaking the Language, I guarantee you'll enjoy watching the TRUTH® 9 "Calling All Coyotes™"!

3 HOURS, 50 KILLS

Randy Anderson.

**\$14.99**  
plus \$6.95 s+h

**ORDER ONLINE!** [www.callingcoyotes.com](http://www.callingcoyotes.com)

Phone Orders Call: (402)376-1120

Calling All Coyotes, Inc · PO Box 423 · Valentine, NE 69201

## SEE BETTER SHOOT BETTER YOUR SHOOTING ABILITY WILL IMPROVE

with a  
**BULZEYPRO® OPTICAL BOOSTER™**  
FOR A BRIGHTER, CLOSER, LARGER, AND CLEARER SCOPE IMAGE!

*Order Yours Today!*

**Your eyes are NOT  
what they used to be!**



**(207) 626-0000**

[www.BULZEYPRO.com](http://www.BULZEYPRO.com)

or write

BulzEyePro • P.O. Box 52  
Augusta, Maine 04332-0052



Dealer Inquires Welcome  
**BulzEyePro®**  
The Original Optical Booster

**HUNTING • COMPETITION • HANDGUNS • TARGET SHOOTING**