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Smoke 'em with mirrors

A radically new concept in hunting blinds incorporates mirrors to render both hunters and soldiers invisible

By Don Mulligan
 ESPNOutdoors.com
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COLUMBUS, Ohio — The words "revolutionary" and "groundbreaking" are probably used a bit too freely by outdoor product developers. There are lots of great new products every year, but to be honest, few have the potential to completely change the way we hunt or fish.

This year, there is one product that meets even the strictest definition of both words.

It's called Ghostblind, and it's truly unlike any other hunting blind ever made. Though it has been available through the Internet for the past year, Ghostblind's big introduction happened at the 2010



Don Mulligan

The Ghostblind is the only adaptive camouflage pattern in the hunting blind market. It perfectly mimics any environment.

Archery Trade Association show in Columbus, Ohio.

Ohio residents, Chet Burdette and Kevin Pottmeyer are the geniuses behind Ghostblind, which they appropriately call "adaptive camo."

"Ghostblind instantly changes to perfectly match any landscape," Burdette said. "It's like having thousands of camo patterns in one blind."

Ghostblind achieves its chameleon-like ability through the use of very specialized mirrors. The mirrored panels fold out to conceal the hunter and reflect anything in front of them.

Shooting ports between the panels allow a hunter to expose only a gun barrel or arrow to approaching game. The mirrors are slightly angled downward, which does a surprisingly effective job of eliminating any glare from the sun.

Like most great inventions, Ghostblind was the result of an "aha!" moment for Burdette.

"I was shaving one morning and got to thinking about the portable little mirror I was using. I took it outside and immediately knew it could make a person invisible if it were big enough," he said.

PHOTO GALLERY



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After talking to Kevin Pottmeyer, who has engineering experience, they came up with the first prototype. Both men agreed it was too heavy, not portable enough and needed to have round edges.

"We determined that square edges were unnatural in nature and spooked game," Burdette said. "We also knew it had to be portable, provide instantaneous setup and be a safe alternative to a tree stand for hunters to use it."

There are two current models available, with a third option ready for production in 2010.

The Phantom has two panels, only weighs seven pounds and retails for \$189. The Predator has four panels, weighs 13 pounds and retails for \$289. Both models have comfortable, attached backpack straps for easy transport to and from the field.

Despite the Ghostblind only being available on the Internet, Burdette and Pottmeyer were surprised recently when Cabela's approached them with interest in it.

"Unfortunately, we had to turn them away," Burdette said.

As a start up company, they were already getting more Internet orders than they could handle. The inquiry from Cabela's came a lot sooner than they planned on.

"To agree to a deal with Cabela's right now would make us like the dog that chases cars every day until he finally catches one and has no idea what to do with it," he said.

Which is not to say the Ohio entrepreneurs aren't hoping to someday snag a big box store or two.

Plans for Ghostblind in 2010 include quickly gearing up to accommodate stores like Cabela's and selling at least 20,000 blinds to hunters across America.

But those sales might just be the tip of the iceberg for this innovative product.

The makers have also been in talks with the U.S. military, which believe with a few changes, the Ghostblind might become an important tool for soldiers.

The military connection was an easy one for Burdette who has professional military experience on his resume.

"We are introducing a new model called The Sniper this spring that will only be 24-inches tall. It will be great for turkey and other hunters who like to sit directly on the ground," Burdette said. "It will also be the prototype for a blind made for military application."

At only nine pounds, the sniper fulfills the military's requirement that it be lightweight, small and portable. Burdette and Pottmeyer also added a bulletproof, Kevlar backing to the Sniper for obvious reasons.

The result is a product that will prove as deadly to deer and turkey as it will be to the enemies of the U.S. military.

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