

Review of the Bushnell “BackTrack” GPS

By Blake Miller

It's been a long, cold day hunting white tail deer in the north western corner of Pennsylvania. The late November snows and wind blowing hard off Lake Erie made the day miserable and now it's time to get back to camp; the sooner the better. The snow is blowing sideways and visibility is down to about 50 feet. It is bone cold. Simple navigation, a straight line back to the truck is all you want. There is no time for a compass and the map is in the bottom of the hunt pack. The new, round GPS points to the truck, it's not even a half mile away. Simple and straight forward, the BackTrack gives you a direction steer and distance. The BackTrack responds quickly and gets you moving in the right direction. Too bad that brook isn't displayed but you know that it's only a short detour to the bridge.

The Bushnell BackTrack is probably the most affordable (less than \$60) and simplest GPS on the market. But is it the right GPS for you?

Bushnell's information material and flyer tell you that:

- It “remembers” where you have been.
- It is the easiest to use GPS....”no maps required” (hmmm).
- Provides direction and distance to your destination.
- Rainproof.
- Advanced GPS and digital compass technology.
- Compact.

Well, great, is that right for you?

I have tested the Bushnell GPS and there are a lot of the statements above that I agree with.

The BackTrack is light, compact and an easy to use GPS receiver. There are two buttons and three options to save waypoints, and only three. Every new waypoint deletes a previous waypoint. It is reasonably accurate. There are no maps to download and no complex menu functions to worry about. If you can program your DVD or TiVo player then this GPS is a snap.

I did several side by side comparisons using the BackTrack , my Garmin Map76S and Map60CS. The information provided by the far less expensive Bushnell GPS matched

exactly with Garmin units in distance data to a destination. Bearing information provided by the BackTrack matched my two Garmins. The BackTrack doesn't provide numerical return bearing/"GO TO" information, just a simple arrow icon. That icon seemed to hop around more than did the bearing arrows in either Garmin.

If your GPS requirements are more detailed, then perhaps this GPS is not for you. For example, if you want a back country GPS that allows that has the following:

- Provide locating information (latitude and longitude) to Search and Rescue (SAR).
- Preprogram waypoints for specific points of interest.
- Interface with map software or up load/down load to a PC.
- Share information with friends and family.
- Waterproof.
- Have a map page that displays waypoints and points of interest surrounding your general location.
- Provide mundane information such as a digital display of sun rise/set, time, elevation, and latitude/longitude and GOTO bearing data.

Then the BackTrack is not for you. It just does not have those capabilities.

As a backpacker, hunter and SAR team member I demand more from my electronics. I want and require the details. I would like to share information with my hunt party. I also want to be able to see on my map display what is around me. I'd like to know where streams, roads and trails are in relation to my present position. And that doesn't mean I want to spend a lot of money for the most expensive GPS on the market.

The BackTrack is just fine for what it does. But keep in mind what it won't do and that is considerable.

Finally, there is always time for my map and compass. My map isn't at the bottom of my pack; it is in a zip lock bag in my pant cargo pocket.