

Ins and outs of suppressors



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

One of the most misunderstood things in the outdoor world has to be suppressors, often wrongly called silencers. Like many of you, my introduction to suppressed firearms came from the old James Bond movies with good old Agent 007. His weapon of choice was always the historic Walther PPK, a hundred-year-old design, with a “silencer” that made you hear a click when he fired the gun.

Later I watched the mob movies, and guys like Al Capone and his henchmen all had suppressors, especially on revolvers. Herein lies all the misinformation about suppressors, and I firmly blame Hollywood for their bad rap and misinformation. For the record, suppressors will not work on a revolver. Because of the way a revolver operates and is designed, a suppressor will do nothing to reduce the noise signature.

First off, a large caliber rifle, such as a 300 Winchester Magnum,



These little sound suppressing devices get a bad rap. Here is the truth about suppressors. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

produces around 170 dB, which a single blast can cause permanent damage to an unprotected ear. A well-made suppressor will reduce that sound to about 130dB. While this is a tremendous reduction in noise level, it is still loud enough to potentially cause hearing damage. Well-engineered suppressors generally reduce noise levels by about 25 to 35 dB, which is about equal to a quality pair of earplugs or earmuffs. You can see how the Hollywood term of silencer is very wrong. Even smaller cartridges, like a sound from a fired 22 long rifle, is reduced to about 115 dB.

For a reference point, two people talking outside would register at around 50 to 60 dB, whereas mowing the lawn or running a compressor

is around 90 dB. Riding a snowmobile or running a chainsaw scores around 100 dB. A car horn is around 115 dB and discharge of a firearm runs at 140 dB and all the way up to 180dB for some.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) says that habitual exposure to noise above 85 dB will cause gradual hearing loss. For unprotected ears, the allowed exposure time decreases as the sound intensity increases. Exposure is limited to eight hours at 90dB, four hours at 95dB and two hours at 100dB. The highest permissible exposure for an unprotected ear is 115dB for 15 minutes a day. Any noise above 140dB is not permitted at all.

The other myth surrounding suppressors

is that bad guys and criminals will use them for doing evil deeds in silence, and that they are linked to illegal and criminal activity. By the sound reduction levels mentioned above, you can see that myth was completely lost at sea. As to the criminal activity myth, suppressors are perfectly legal in 42 states, with 41 allowing their use for hunting. Hollywood caused this myth by portraying all the mobsters and assassins using them and never used by the good guys.

There are other reasons for bad guys not using suppressors, one being the costs, as a suppressor starts at around 500 bucks, and goes up from there. Suppressors are also fairly long, from six inches to some over ten inches. That extra length makes a handgun or rifle that much harder to conceal, and bad guys don't want their weapon to be seen. Not to mention the fact that they aren't really all that quiet.

Hiram Percy Maxim invented the first suppressor back in 1902, in an attempt to solve the noise complaints of his neighbors when he

would target shoot on his property. This same man also invented the car muffler and the two technologies work in the same way. They were sold in hardware stores.

A firearm suppressor reduces noise by trapping and slowing the rapid expansion of hot gases produced when a gun is fired. It acts as a muffler, using a series of internal chambers and baffles to allow these gases to expand, cool, and lose pressure before exiting the barrel, significantly lowering the sound level.

Suppressors are federally regulated under the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934, the same act that regulates machine guns and short-barreled rifles. These items, which fall under the purview of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), carry severe penalties for criminal use. To purchase a suppressor an individual must find a licensed dealer, send the appropriate paperwork to the ATF along with a one-time \$200 tax per suppressor, undergo an extensive FBI background check, and undergo a NICS check at the point of purchase. As of June 2023, wait times for this process average 8-10 months or more. The DOJ has reportedly directed the ATF to reduce wait times, but this goal is not being met with any consistency.

The United States is woefully behind many other countries, including much of Europe and Africa. In many European countries, particularly Scandinavia, the use of suppressors for hunting and target shooting has not been just accepted but expected for decades. Countries like Norway and Sweden have long considered it discourteous, rude, and potentially unsafe to hunt without a

suppressor. This cultural difference stems from a broader European hunting philosophy that emphasizes environmental stewardship, respect for both game and neighboring properties and hunter safety above all else.

The problem as I see it, is that in the U.S., suppressors are considered firearms, despite being a firearm accessory, and are strictly regulated pursuant to the National Firearms Act, and a purchaser must navigate through more legal requirements than they would to purchase an actual firearm. This is absurd because a suppressor without a firearm is useless.

Congress has since passed a law that the \$200 tax is no longer necessary for the purchase of a suppressor, but all the other legal requirements and licensing must be complied with. Perhaps it is time to get the legislators to wake up, and understand what a suppressor is, and what it is used for, rather than just lumping them in with every other piece of anti-firearm legislation they ram down our throats. Europe has found that it is better for the wildlife, and just plain rude to fire a gun unsuppressed, and we should follow suit.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for The Nautical Mile, and other saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. Personal email is elkhunter77@icloud.com For information about the Posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

TUNE IN...
DOWNLOAD THE APPS...
[from your favorite app store]

STREAM ONLINE!!





junction101.5
TOTALLY 80s AND 90s







GRAND JUNCTION INC.
media
PRINT • RADIO • DIGITAL • EVENTS

1	3-6
2	7
3	8
4	5
5	7
6	7
7	8
8	6
9	6
10	6
11	4
12	6
13	6
14	8
15	8
16	6
17	8
18	8
19	8
20	2
21	8
22	7
23	7
24	7



Colorado Parks and Wildlife releases five gray wolves onto public land in Grand County, Colorado, on Monday, Dec. 18, 2023; pictured is wolf 2302-OR. (Courtesy photo/CPW)

WOLF

FROM PAGE B1

statewide gray wolf coordinator for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, told The Sun in an interview.

Ranchers and wolf advocates are urging Hyde to approach his new job in the same manner Odell did.

“Eric stayed out of the policy debates and really focused on the field science, the logistics, the data collection and the mechanics of transitioning the agency from capture and translocation to building out the field program,” said Courtney Vail, a conservation biologist and community outreach advisor for the advocacy group Rocky

Mountain Wolf Project. “I think it’s important to have that impartial voice as scaffolding underpinning the wolf program.”

Odell brought an even-handed approach to addressing divisions over the native predator, Lenny Klinglesmith, a rancher from Meeker who worked with Odell both before and after CPW brought wolves to Colorado, said. “Whatever bias you might have had about wolves, he would kind of straighten it out. Wolves aren’t the devil, but they darn sure aren’t the saints they’re made out to be by some. He had a pretty grounded approach and realistic view of wolves and how to manage them.”

And having someone

with experience working on wolves in California could be a huge boon for Colorado, said Hunnicutt, whose agency dealt with nearly 200 confirmed livestock losses to 12 packs of wolves in 2025 compared with Washington, which had 17 confirmed losses to 48 packs of wolves, he said.

“So Matt’s coming from a very similar realm of a relatively small number of wolves that are expanding and causing conflict. I am sad to say for myself that he’s (leaving). But Matt is super stable. He doesn’t get super emotional. He’s very smart. He’s very empathetic. And I think that has resonated super well with producers in California.”