

FieldTest

GEAR REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

HEAD TO HEAD

What's the Forecast?

These handheld units are like having the Weather Channel in your pocket **BY J. WAYNE FEARS**

PORTABLE WEATHER devices may at first glance seem to be relatively simple, capable of recording wind speed and air and water temperatures and that's about it. But don't be fooled. They've undergone vast improvements in the past few years and can now provide data on barometric pressure, humidity, the heat index, air density, and much more. These gadgets can truly predict the imminent weather and give hunters the edge that might make a difference in their hunt. I tested four new models.

THE TEST: I checked wind-speed accuracy by holding each unit in front of a fan. All units measured a constant 4 mph. The temperature readings were gauged in a freezer set at 10 degrees and at a weather station where the outside temperature was certified at 89 degrees. To assess weather resistance, I set the units out in a downpour for 30 minutes. For a real-world trial, I took them on varmint hunts in Wyoming and Texas to see if they could really predict changes in the weather. All the units passed the tests, so I turned my attention to special features, ease of use, and functionality. —J.W.F.



BEST OF THE TEST

KESTREL 3500 (\$250)

THE LOWDOWN Not only is the Kestrel 3500 waterproof—it also floats. It measures the temperature of air, water, and snow; as well as the relative humidity, dew point, wind speed, windchill, and barometric pressure. You can quickly recalibrate the humidity sensor in the field to adjust to changing conditions. The display is very readable, with a backlight. There's a two-year warranty.

HITS The 3500 was easier to operate right out of the box than the others, and its cover is practically bombproof. It's so tough that you'll often see it being used on construction sites.

MISSES The cover is loosely attached. It could easily fall off and be lost.

WHO SHOULD BUY Sportsmen who spend a lot of time in the backcountry and need a unit that can take a beating and remain super accurate.

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