

IF there's one thing there is no shortage of in the shooting marketplace it's torches. All look rather similar and all work to a degree, but over the years I learned that, like most things, some work better than others.

When night vision burst on the scene around 15 years ago, there was a very limited amount of equipment available and much of that, compared with today's extremely wide choice, was fairly dire. Gradually things improved and soon quite reasonable (performance-wise) items of night vision began to appear.

Spearheaded by Pulsar, I think it would be fair to say things rapidly improved and some of the early night vision equipment was really good compared with some of the early generation one gear. However, almost all of the early night vision scopes and spotters had one thing in common; they were infrared (IR) hungry, so needed a quite powerful source of IR light to allow the unit to function effectively.

Night vision equipment is far more sophisticated

Today, things are very different. Night vision equipment is far more sophisticated, and sensors are very sensitive which can lead to one major problem where the IR light source is concerned – white out. This is where the amount of IR light overwhelms the sensors in the night vision device and everything appears a very bright, often quite fuzzy white, and is totally useless for shooting.

Many of the leading IR torch providers have addressed this problem by fitting a dimmer system which sometimes is operated by a touch system on the on/off switch that usually gives three levels of brightness, or a tail light switch which allows infinite variation. This is ideal as you can tailor the amount of IR your night vision device requires to get the best results.

There are a few of this type of IR torch already on the market but with night vision equipment becoming ever more efficient,

The NM1 – built to go all night long!



The NM1 mounted on a Longbow.

there was room for something that addressed the IR source problem.

Night Master, who were one of the very early suppliers of quality IR torches and became a market leader in night shooting torches of all types, have come up with what, I think, is an extremely good piece of night vision equipment – the NM1.

This torch can be ordered in a format that suits the night hunter's particular requirements, be it for conventional lamping or for use as an IR provider. Anyone who does a lot of night shooting will know it's almost impossible to get one torch that does everything perfectly.

For example, I spend the majority of my time after foxes, however, I do enjoy rat shooting with either a 12ft lb air rifle, a FAC air rifle, or a .22LR, depending upon where I'm shooting and the distances involved. Sometimes I use a conventional red-light LED torch, sometimes night vision and so on.

Despite having built up a bit of a collection of torches over the years, it would be nice to have one that could be tailored to use for a specific purpose and it's here that the NM1 comes into its own.

There are three versions at present: the XL, the SL and the

CL model. Again this torch can be supplied with whichever of the LEDs you require, but it is intended for closer work such as around barns, smallholdings etc. where a wider spread, less-intense beam is better suited for shooting purposes. The torch can be supplied with any combination of LEDs and in due course, it will be possible to purchase the heads separately.

Even by Night Master's high standards this is an extremely well-made torch

Now, look at the NM1 itself. I have to say that even by Night Master's high standards this is an extremely well-made torch. The workmanship and attention to detail is excellent. The LED modules are well put together and give the feeling they will last and last. On that front, I asked the guys at Night Master what the expected life of one of their LED modules is and was a bit taken aback to hear the figure of 50,000 hours.

CL. All three have the same LED options, white, red, amber, green, and blue then there are two IR options 850nm and 940nm (covert) and finally, UV.

The XL torch head is the largest and gives the most concentrated, long-range beam of the three models. The white beam is one of the cleanest and tightest I've seen and in any of the normal formats makes a first-class foxing/rabbiting lamp.

The middle of the range SL model can again be termed a long-range torch as well, but for those who don't need the ability for really long range, the SL will do the job.



The SL (left) and CL alternative torch heads.

There are several excellent features built in to the NM1. The tail-cap incorporates the on/off switch which in turn is used for adjusting the brightness, has a battery indicator, lock out facility and a light advising when the torch is switched on, particularly useful when the IR is in use.



The LEDs are very high quality.

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The Night Master NM1, a very versatile torch.

The body of the torch holds the 18650 battery which is a high power 3.7v 2900mAH unit that gives excellent life. As an indication of what you can expect from one battery on full power, the IR LED will give from 3-3½ hours continuous usage. The white – 2.45 hours, red – 2½ hours, and the rest of the range from 2½-4 hours.

The NM1 comes with two batteries so between them you will have more than enough power for an all-night session! Remember the above figures are for continuous use which would seldom, if ever, happen.

To vary the focus of the beam you twist the end cap section of the torch which moves the LED forward or back. The movement

is very smooth and positive. To change the LED, you unscrew the head of the torch and slide the LED unit forward as if focusing, this exposes the LED unit which can be unscrewed and replaced. All very easy.

The torch also has a lock-out facility which, when you've finished using it, can be activated to prevent accidental switching on.

The NM1 comes with a three-year warranty and a limited lifetime warranty. Night Master have always been noted for their after sales service, so customers can buy with confidence. The NM1 range of torches, as the Night Master team say, "is designed and developed in the UK for hunters, by hunters."

I have used the NM1 both in conjunction with my Longbow, PARD, Archer and F455 and all operate faultlessly with it. The dim control removed the aforementioned problem of 'white out', particularly when used with the F455.

I also had brief run outs with the white and red LEDs and found they worked perfectly. For anyone who goes night shooting, to have a torch that is ultra-reliable and can be converted very quickly, and easily from IR to conventional lighting, the NM1 is ideal.

I have only used the torch for a couple of weeks but already it has a regular place in my night shooting kit.

Prices are as follows. NM1 XL – £179.95, NM1 SL – £149.95, CL version – £119.95. All torches come complete with the torch, the LED of choice two 18650 batteries, and an intelligent charger that has the ability to charge a completely dead battery, which not all chargers can do. Additional LED modules can be obtained for £29.95, these come packed in handy, labelled plastic containers which keep them safe and easily identifiable.

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