

# Angry Bird

The Desert Eagle Mark XIX is now taking flight in .429 DE.

Certain handguns trigger recognition that transcends politics and lifestyle by the increasingly rare phenomenon of shared experience. In this case, the communal experience is watching action movies. Those who've seen a few shoot-'em-ups are likely familiar with the Desert Eagle. It is simply the biggest, most distinctive, currently available semi-automatic out there among handguns not derived from a rifle platform. As such, directors love it. Its over-the-top size can evoke awe, intimidation or laughter—or sometimes all three (see “Snatch.”) In fact, Magnum Research promotes its use in motion pictures, and the Desert Eagle has reputedly appeared in more than 500 films.

## .429 DE Debut

The Desert Eagle Mark XIX is not new (nor very old, either). What is new is the .429 DE chambering. It is, more or less, a combining of the original Desert Eagle big-bore chamberings—.50 AE and .44 Mag. The .429 DE cartridge is essentially a .50 AE necked down to .429 (the actual bullet diameter of the .44 Mag). All three cartridges have the same rim diameter, allowing easy caliber/chambering changes by swapping out barrels.

The new chambering is touted to produce a 25 percent increase in velocity and a 45 percent increase in muzzle energy compared to the .44 Mag. Only two loads are presently available, both



from Glacier Ridge, Magnum Research's ammunition division. One features a 240-grain jacketed soft-point bullet achieving a claimed 1,600 fps, while the other utilizes a 210-grain jacketed hollowpoint at a reported 1,750 fps.

## Always a Stunner

This Desert Eagle is one of those guns whose case you'll like to open in front of others. From the most-incurable gun nut to those who have no particular interest in firearms, the response is the same: The eyes flare wide and the jaw drops. We noticed years ago that new introductions of Desert Eagles in special-finish runs consistently elicited the greatest response on our Facebook page.

Complete with all the bells and whistles, the .429 DE is an integrally ported, stainless steel Mark XIX. Also available are unported, 6-inch carbon steel replacement barrels in a choice of black, Burnt Bronze Cerakote, brushed chrome or polished chrome.

Headspace on the 30-degree shoulder, the .429 DE is touted as having enough neck length that a firm crimp is possible, improving on earlier efforts at a similar cartridge.



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**Top:** A slide-mounted dual safety lever locks the hammer of this single-action handgun.



**Above:** Unadorned with dots, the post front and square-notch rear offer a clean sight picture.

### First Impressions

Hoisting the Brobdingnagian handgun, you quickly begin to recognize it not as cartoonish, but as a study in the attenuation of felt recoil. The mass alone may accomplish most of that. However, there is also a broad, deeply contoured beavertail that distributes energy across a wider area of the palm while also allowing the pistol to rock upward. The grip frame is large, fairly flat and designed to permit a comfortable two-hand hold. Moreover, Hogue rubber grips aid in control and dissipate some of the felt recoil. The barrel ports direct propellant gases upward, creating downforces that diminish muzzle rise. The thick, Picatinny-railed barrel and similarly rail-equipped dustcover add mass and the option of even more in the form of an optical sight, and light and/or laser units.

And don't forget, this is a gas gun, so some of the felt recoil is reduced by the action itself. A big, multi-lug bolt turns radially to lock up with the barrel extension, much like an AR platform.

In total, all of these features combine to largely tame this beast.

The Desert Eagle isn't merely big and unique. It's also a well-made firearm. The fit and finish are good, the surface polishing smooth and even. There is some play in the barrel at slide lock, but things lock up tight in battery. Once you get over the gun's sheer size, you appreciate its lines. I'm not sure the term "graceful" applies, but this is a nice-looking gun. Moreover, the pistol actually balances very well, the muzzle remaining dead-steady as you extend your arms.

### Shooting Impressions

As a single-action, the trigger is inherently decent; good, not great. There is some take-up, a little creep and then a break at about 6 pounds, 6 ounces of pressure.

Clean and simple describes the iron sight picture. Of course, installing a red dot on top or a laser below is pretty easy, thanks to the rails above and below the barrel.

Usually, the bolt locked up smoothly, aided by a chrome-lined chamber and the fact that the .429 DE is a bottleneck cartridge. However, there were a few times the slide had to be nudged 1/16 of



### Specifications

<b>Manufacturer:</b> Magnum Research; (508) 795-3919, magnumresearch.com	<b>Sights:</b> Fixed. Post front, square-notch rear
<b>Action Type:</b> Gas-operated, rotating bolt semi-automatic	<b>Trigger Pull Weight:</b> 6 pounds, 6 ounces
<b>Caliber:</b> .429 DE	<b>Length:</b> 10.75 inches
<b>Capacity:</b> 7+1 rounds	<b>Width:</b> 1.25 inches
<b>Frame:</b> Stainless steel	<b>Height:</b> 6.25 inches
<b>Barrel Length:</b> 6 inches	<b>Weight:</b> 68.3 ounces
<b>Rifling:</b> 6 grooves; 1:18-inch RH twist	<b>Accessories:</b> Disassembly combination tool, hard case, lock, manual
	<b>MSRP:</b> \$2,143

### Shooting Results

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Glacier Ridge 210-grain JHP	1,676	3.2	5.6	4.5
Glacier Ridge 240-grain JSP	1,563	2.7	4.3	3.6

Velocity measured in fps at the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with an Oehler Model 36 chronograph. Temperature: 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups from a rest at 25 yards.

an inch or so into battery, despite being lubricated. That may well have simply been break-in of a new gun.

The gun bucks, but not that much. The ports reduce muzzle rise and the beavertail allows you to lever the pistol back on target surprisingly quickly. While we wouldn't want to spend an entire afternoon firing it, it was much less punishing than, say, a 13-ounce,



**Above:** Integral ports reduce muzzle rise. Follow-up shots were faster than expected.

**Right:** New and stiffly sprung, the magazine couldn't quite be filled to capacity.



**Above:** The familiar-looking bolt locks securely into the breechface.

**Right:** Small in comparison to the rest of the pistol, the trigger and guard are adequate for most any hand.

**Bottom Right:** Beveled edges help guide the Desert Eagle's magazine into the mag well.




small-frame .357 Mag. revolver loaded with full-power cartridges.

We have a complaint about the stiff, dual, slide-mounted safety levers. It was fairly impossible to operate them with only the thumb of the strong-side hand with the gun in a firing grip. We most often had to bring the gun into our body, hold with the weak hand and move the lever with considerable pressure from the strong hand. Stiffness was also a problem with the magazine spring. The magazine is supposed to hold seven rounds, but we could force only six into it. Our last annoyance was the pistol's tendency to eject brass straight up rather than to the side. Expelled brass would often bounce off the target-return beam, ricocheting toward our heads.

Accuracy was just satisfactory, with good groups marred by first-round fliers. This gun cries out for a laser, what with all that rail area available. Due to limited test ammo, we weren't able to shoot it with a laser at longer ranges, where the .429 DE's

flat trajectory (compared to the .44 Mag.) likely would have revealed itself.

Some may scoff at this gun, but what they find wrong with it is likely what others find so right: Its excess. It's way too big to conceal or deploy quickly. It's verging on too powerful for home defense. Oh, you might carry it afield in a big shoulder holster for handgun hunting or protection in the wild from large predators. You might even compete with it in handgun silhouette. But if you really try to justify the Desert Eagle in practical terms, you're missing the point. The Desert Eagle is about impracticality; the absence of moderation. Pride of ownership? Hell, how about conspicuous, booming consumption? This is the ultimate "just because" gun.

Yeah, it's aspirational, but there are very few consumer items worthy of that description that can be had for \$2,200. Grandly opening the case to the "oohs" and "ahhs" of your friends at the range may itself be worth the asking price. 



Removing the slide for cleaning or for a caliber/barrel swap is fairly easy.