

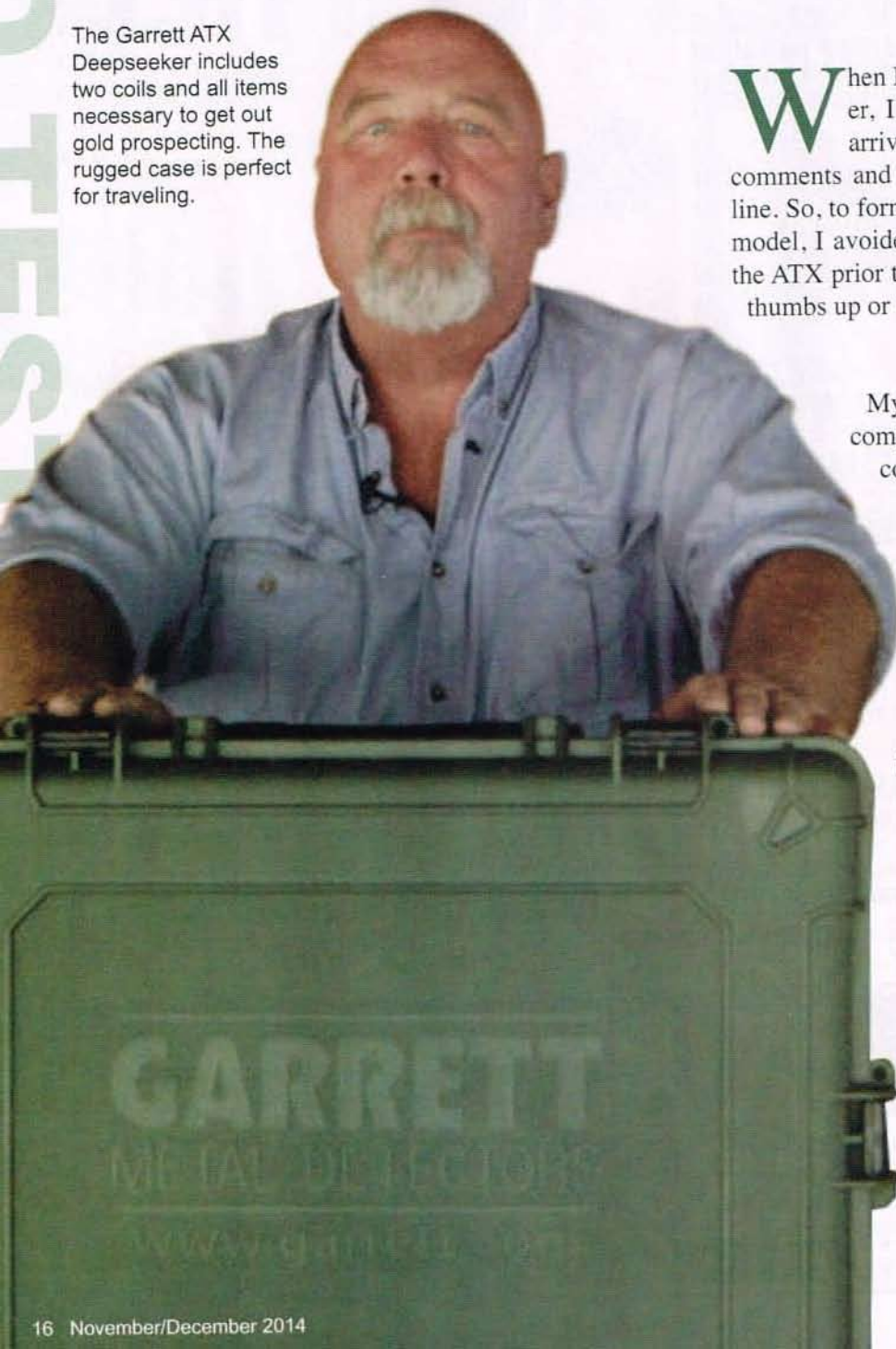
A FIELD TEST

GARRETT ATX DEEPSEEKER

By Kevin Hoagland

GARRETT DEEPSEEKER A GOLD CHAMP. *ATX detector delivers knockout performance*

The Garrett ATX Deepseeker includes two coils and all items necessary to get out gold prospecting. The rugged case is perfect for traveling.



When I set out to test the Garrett ATX Deepseeker, I had a few reservations about this late arrival on the pulse-induction scene based on comments and videos that had already been posted online. So, to form a more objective opinion about this new model, I avoided the Internet chatter. I had already used the ATX prior to this field test but not enough to give it thumbs up or thumbs down.

First impressions

My first impression of the ATX was that it was compact, heavy and built like a tank, and all connections are waterproof.

Everything is attached or tethered to the machine, with the exception of the battery compartment doors, which are tethered to each other but not the metal detector itself. Common sense dictates that when changing batteries you should do one side at a time to eliminate the possibility of dropping or losing the battery door covers which are necessary for the ATX to operate.

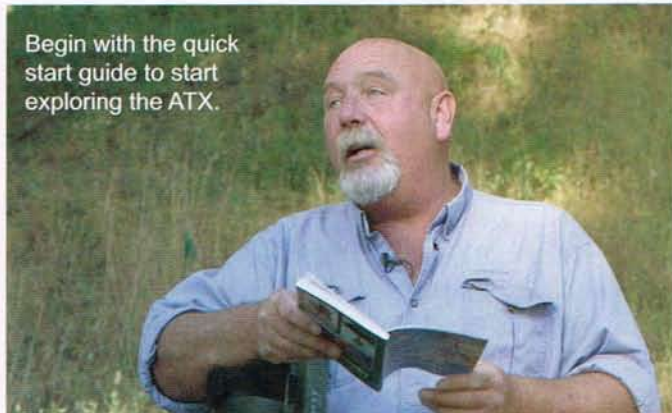
Battery installation is simple. The ATX uses eight AA batteries in two four-battery drop-in packs and comes with an eight slot AA battery charger.

Not only does the ATX include a rugged case and carry bag, but everything you need to get out detecting. And, because the ATX runs on AA batteries, there was no charge time needed before hunt time.

Barely glancing at the manual, I set it aside to perform what I call an "intuitive build." My goal was to determine whether or not I could simply assemble the unit and go detecting without reading the manual. The ATX is close, but



Unpacking and getting the ATX ready for first use is simple.



Begin with the quick start guide to start exploring the ATX.

completely there.

The unit ships with the 20" mono coil already installed. To test how easy it is to swap coils, I installed the smaller DD coil. It took a few minutes to swap coils, and there were a couple of times I had to give some thought to the steps because I hadn't read the manual, but all in all it was simple enough. After I did read the manual, I found that Garrett left nothing unanswered in the coil swap instructions. If I had read the manual, the coil swap would have taken less time.

The ATX is shipped with headphones that are screwed into the back of the unit. I'm not a big fan of factory-supplied headphones. Though there's nothing wrong with them, they aren't my first choice. I prefer a variety of headphones for different types of detecting, so I would recommend purchasing the adapter cable, which allows you to use your favorite headphones by converting the connection to a 1/4" plug. It is a short cable and well worth the investment.

Waterproof headphones are also available as an accessory, and if you have any plans to dive or work in water deeper than knee level, I highly suggest purchasing these phones. I have ruined more than one set of headphones in the surf over the years.

With the coils swapped, shaft extended and locked, headphones on and some fresh batteries installed, I slipped my arm into the adjustable cuff, and grabbed the control pod. There was no unnecessary torque on my wrist, which gave it a perfect fit and feel, and allowed me to work all of the control buttons easily with my thumb. I pushed the unit out in front of me a bit and turned on the power switch, which is located on the back of the unit.

The ATX goes through its startup and what I would presume is a self-diagnostic test. Every light on the control pad comes on and the unit emits several different sounds before settling into a comfortable, but high, threshold.

I was ready to detect, or so I thought. Looking over the control pad, I instantly realized that a new user would have no idea which button to push first to begin metal detecting. This is not a turn-on-and-go detector.

The quick-start guide

What's that you say? You don't want to read the entire manual before going out detecting! That's fine. You don't have to. The first two pages of the manual are dedicated to the quick start (page 1) and an explanation of how to access the functions of the ATX quickly and where to find more information concerning the functions (page 2). These instructions include the important factory reset function, which I used more than once while pressing buttons here and there. I like to use the 'What happens if I press this?' test while learning how to properly set up new detectors. If you do nothing more than read these two pages, and learn how to reset ATX, you'll be up and hunting with success in just a matter of minutes. You can read about the rest of the functionality later, if all you want right now is to hear a target to dig. But, eventually, you'll need to spend some time with the manual, and I suggest that you do this with the ATX in hand.

What are the functions?

There are five major functions that are completely user-adjustable: Mode, Sensitivity, Threshold, Volume and Ground Balance. All functions are easy to adjust with a basic understanding of the ATX and more tunable as you become more proficient. Secondary functions include iron check, tracking, discrimination and frequency shifting, to name only a few.

In areas of varied electromagnetic interference and mineralization where I tested the ATX, there was one spot where I had to make frequency adjustments more than once. There was one other spot where the EMI from power lines was extreme and the ATX could not remove all of the interference. To be fair though, I have had to use advanced settings on other detectors I've used and tested in this area.

When this happens, I'm faced with two choices: Install Coiltek AI coils or leave the area, which is what I ultimately had to do with the ATX. In normal hunting areas with lower levels of EMI, the ATX functioned as expected but the struggle in high EMI areas did concern me somewhat.

Accessing the frequency scan feature on the ATX is simple and straightforward. One quick press of the function button starts the process. The process takes about 35 seconds. And, once completed, the ATX sounds three beeps.

The weight factor

This detector, as with most large PI detectors, is not light, and in the case of the ATX, the waterproofing adds extra weight to the unit. Were it not for the ergonomic design, detectorists not accustomed to the weight of these machines could tire very quickly. The supplied sling is easy to use, adjust and offers a fair way to alleviate some of the weight, but I found it uncomfortable for long periods of use. I ended up using an after-market system which worked perfectly and fit easily to the ATX. There are other harness systems available, and many avid detectorists use them. It might be worth looking into these after-market harnesses if you plan to spend long days detecting.

Detecting with the ATX

With the Deepseeker on standard quick-start settings, and sensitivity just stable, I moved into the test garden. My test garden is well-established, having been planted for 18 years. Located in a natural setting, it has medium to high ground iron mineralization and is high in small magnetite hot rocks scattered throughout the testing lane. One section of the lane borders a small water channel that becomes extremely compacted iron, mineralized during Arizona's monsoon season. This affects the signaling of detectors when changing mineralization quickly in a normal swing path.

Testing the standard 12" DD coil

■ **First target:** 5 gr. flat water shot pure lead target at 6". The ATX hit this target as expected with a precise and perfect signal. Excellent response on the signal strength meter.

■ **Second target:** 5 gr. flat water shot pure lead target at 8". The ATX hit this target as expected with a precise but softer signal. Excellent response on the signal strength meter.

■ **Third target:** 5 gr. flat water shot pure lead target at 10". The ATX hit this target with a soft response that was noticeable in the ground noise and recoverable. Low response on the signal strength meter.

■ **Fourth target:** A 5 gr. flat water shot pure lead target at 12". This target was not detected.

In this area of the lane, the ATX responded as expected. With the 20" mono coil, the results were similar with the exception being that the 10" target was a bit sharper

in response, and the 12" target was just audible. I believe that inexperienced users may have mistaken this signal for slight ground noise and not dug the target. At the 12" depth, there was an audio response with only a intermittent quick and slight response on the signal strength meter

These tests were repeated moving down the lane with each set of the three additional target sites becoming larger up to 1.5 grams. As expected, the larger targets were all found with both coils with the signal strength meter and audio response increasing as well.

Final tests

Final tests were conducted on three 3/4-ounce, water shot pure lead targets varying in shape.

■ **First target:** At 16" found with 20" mono. Just audible with 12" DD

■ **Second target:** At 18" found with 20" mono, not found with 12" DD

■ **Third target:** At 22" just audible with 20" mono. Not tested with 12" DD. This target, with inexperienced detectorist, may have been missed.

Separating junk from the gold

With the testing completed, I headed to the field to further work with the ATX, which performed exceptionally well. The unit demonstrated almost complete immunity to all but the worst hot rocks I encountered. The ground balance and multi-speed ground tracking worked great, but I found that I rarely used the ground tracking as the ATX handled most of the soil mineralization in the OFF position. The threshold was quick to respond to ground changes and a simple ground balance was all that was needed to bring the ATX back into maximum depth and sensitivity.

The Iron Check works well, but I'm afraid it may work *too* well. I dig everything no matter what and I have had a very successful nugget-hunting career doing just that. I have found good targets under junk on many occasions.

ATX users who become dependent on the Iron Check function may be embarrassed when someone follows behind them gladly digging junk targets and swinging over the hole to find a faint gold signal. Be careful and be mindful that gold, like junk, is where you find it, and there is no law of detecting that states there will be no gold under junk.



The ATX is a champion

Though the ATX performed like a champ in the field, it's not without its shortcomings. It is heavy and the supplied sling is not sufficient for my type of metal detecting. Until Garrett addresses this, an after-market harness is the best advice I can offer.

EMI is something else that I have to take into consideration. While there are thousands of areas that are not affected by high EMI, there are those that are, and I want to be able to hunt them without contending with excessive noise and false signals.

Regardless of your level of detecting expertise, it will take some time to get comfortable with all the functions and navigating the menus of the ATX. With multi-button presses to access some functions, it's important to take time to learn the machine well beyond the quick-start level. The Deepseeker offers a lot more to explore.

Over all, Garrett has created a PI Detector that is extremely well made with solid functionality. The ATX offers great value for your dollars and is surprisingly affordable. Garrett has again carved a niche in the metal detector market, and the ATX perfectly has met the needs expressed by detectorists worldwide. Fifty years of Garrett dependability, rock solid platform, waterproof, with a reasonable learning curve, and a few coil choices (and I bet more on the way) make the ATX a detector that I will add to my tool box of prospecting equipment.

Kevin Hoagland is the Executive Director of Development for the Gold Prospectors Association of America and Lost Dutchman's Mining Association. He can be reached at khoagland@goldprospectors.org.

Garrett ATX Deepseeker

Specs:

- **Circuit Type:** Advanced Pulse Induction
- **Discrimination:** Adjustable, 25 settings
- **Search Modes:** 2 (motions and non-motion)
- **Ground Balance Range:** From ferrous ground (ironstone) to saltwater
- **Audio Threshold:** Yes, adjustable
- **Detection Frequency:** 730 pulses per second
- **Submersion Depth:** 10 feet
- **Sensitivity/Depth Adjustments:** 13
- **Standard Search Coil:** 10" x 12" PROformance™ DD
- **Standard Land Headphones:** Included; weight 16 oz. (.45 kg.)
- **Length (Adjustable):** 20" to 68" (.51 m to 1.72 m)
- **Total Weight:** 6.9 lb. (3.13 kg) including batteries
- **Batteries:** 8 AA (included); rechargeables and charger also included
- **Warranty:** Two-year limited parts and labor
- **Electronic Pinpointing:** Yes
- **Price:** \$2,495 US

Garrett Metal Detectors

Ready to hunt!

