

Opticron Aurora BGA VHD 8x42

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I just had the most incredible day with the new Opticron Aurora BGA VHD 8x42 binocular! I'm a bit of an optics geek and really appreciate quality. I've grown to expect that with Opticron products at the various price points but this new top-of-the-line Aurora really exceeded my expectations when I used it on a 4.5 hour pelagic trip that was part of the Acadia Birding Festival in Maine. Imagine Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Common Murres, Black Guillemots, Arctic and Common terns and Herring, Laughing and Great Black-backed gulls wheeling around in all directions!

Clarity and brightness (and knowing what to look for) are one of the things needed to tell the difference between the Razorbills and murres and the different terns and gulls amid the fray. The Aurora did not disappoint! Known as the company that produces optics that are "Smaller, Lighter, Brighter, Sharper," the new Aurora is quite a bit lighter than the comparably priced Zeiss Conquest HD and right between the Leica Trinovid HD and Vortex Razor HD – also similarly priced.

Where the Aurora excels is in boasting 2-3mm more eye relief – very important for eyeglass wearers – AND in blowing them all away in Field of View (FOV). At 8.1 degrees in the 8x42, the Aurora allows you to see 423 feet at 1000 yds. That's 35 feet wider than the next closest competitor – the Vortex Razor HD – and 51 feet wider than the Leica Trinovid HD!

I've always felt that FOV is extremely important for seeing more birds as the tunnel vision that results with a narrow FOV causes you to miss detection of movement in your periphery that could be your next Lifer skulking in the bushes. That is one reason why I prefer 8x to 10x binoculars for birding too. FOV alone was enough to sell me but the brightness and edge to edge clarity, coupled with nice 4 stage eyecups, a small width hinge that allows a firmer grip around the barrels for hands of all sizes, and a cool neck strap with quick releases and the ability to connect the ends together to make a carrying handle sans the neck strap part sealed the deal.

And I want to share a story from our Maine pelagic trip. There was also an American Oystercatcher cryptically camouflaged and fairly distant at Petite Manan Lighthouse. As I tried to describe its location to several birders around me, this lady just couldn't get on it. I tried to talk about distance from a yellow lobster cage that had washed ashore, where the brown tide line met the rocks, etc. but she just couldn't see it. I handed her the Auroras and she let out an audible, "WOW!" Her face lit up as she exclaimed, "Oh, there! Just where you described it." She then took a picture of the binocular, not the bird, and said, "I need these!" I just love it when folks finally realize that investment in a good binocular will enhance all their outdoor experiences. And the Aurora BGA VHD is well worth the investment! Also available in 10x42, check out Opticron's best binocular as soon as you can!

