

## DBA VHD+ 10x42 Ray Scally (April 2018)



Having reviewed the original Opticron DBA VHD, I was intrigued to test the new VHD+ which has been introduced as the top model in Opticron's range. Compared to its predecessor the only physical difference I could see is the suffix + sign after the VHD and a different colour to the coating on the ocular lenses. All other physical aspects remained the same. The general feel and build quality of the DBA is very high. The binoculars are compact yet they feel robust in the hand and are finished in good quality rubber armour. The open bridge design seems to be the most amenable and favoured in the current market. On the DBA VHD it makes several holding positions possible including single handed.

The rubber armouring has a matt non-slippery feel and the focus wheel size and position made one handed focussing a dream. The armouring is also much more substantial around the objective lenses than past Opticron models better protecting the threaded barrels from impact. The eyecups are very comfortable on the eye socket with nice rounded edges and click stops to allow multiple positions.



The focus is smooth and precise and is set to 2 turns to go from close focus to infinity. The dioptre adjustment is housed on the focus wheel and once set can be forgotten. I particularly like the locking system as it cannot be adjusted by accident.

As with the previous VHD the optics are very sharp with excellent colour saturation. It is not artificial in anyway and very neutral. I could not put my finger on the difference with the earlier model but came to the conclusion it affected the cast giving a very natural clear view. I was particularly fortunate midway through the review period to experience a substantial snow fall

which allowed me to use the binoculars in contrasting conditions. The binoculars performed very well, focus stayed free in the freezing conditions and the contrast looking into shadowed areas against the snow was excellent.

When viewing branches against the sky chromatic aberration was non-existent. I used the binoculars in most lights and found light gathering superb. In spiralling rainy dull conditions the binoculars didn't let me down either, the images were sharp and very good indeed.

The binoculars come with good quality accessories. I prefer the tight fitting 'canvas' case to the older larger leatherette version. The strap is as good as any on any binocular no matter what the cost. The rainguard is hard plastic which I am not a fan of. I prefer a heavier rubber type which are easier to get on and off. The binoculars also have the option of using them on a tripod with an inbuilt screw thread.



It is difficult to categorise the DBA VHD+ as an upper end instrument if you consider comparable models from other brands can cost two or three as much. I think a better question is would I consider these if I had no budget? The answer would be yes. I cannot see any major gain with spending double the money. Everybody has their own view of what makes a great binocular and at a certain level it can come down to personal choice in relation to any number of factors. Having owned the Zeiss Conquest and Leica Trinovid HD I would have to say I would opt for the Opticron VHD+. This is however a matter of preference as everybody has their own reason for choosing their binoculars and priorities vary from user to user.

## **Conclusion**

Pro's - The weight, ergonomics, size and balance make it the most comfortable 42mm binocular I have used and is and can be operated with one hand which is important to me. Optical quality is at a position that I don't feel I am missing anything from using binoculars £1k plus and good CA control is a plus.

Con's – The rain guard I don't like as it is hard plastic, my preference is for rubber which seems to blow around less in the wind and more pliable putting on and off. The stated close focus of 2.5m may be limiting to insect watching but didn't affect my usage at all.

*Ray Scally is a birdwatcher and international bird artist widely published in ornithological journals and books and is well known for his work illustrating the two Birding Frontiers Challenge Series bestselling identification books, Autumn and Winter. Other publications include The Birds of Spurn by Andy Roadhouse, The Ultimate Site Guide to Scarcer British Birds by L G R Evans, Rare Birds Where and When Vol. 1 by Russell Slack and British Birds Magazine amongst many others. Ray exhibits annually at the Spurn Migration Festival and is currently working on illustrations for Cape May Bird Observatory in the US. When he's not at Spurn, Ray can be found birding in his East Cheshire square/ Peak District Hills.*