

DBA VHD+ 8x42

Paul Brewster (April 2018)

As a lifelong fan of the Opticron DBA binocular family I was eager to see what the latest incarnation could add to the legacy of this top optic in the Opticron range. At first glance the binocular is a stylish roof prism with grippy black rubber-armour and an open-hinge design. In the hand the balance feels comfortable and the open-hinge allows a firm hold, instilling confidence in the use of this optic. In addition the low weight of the 8x42 at only 696g makes prolonged use easier with less chance of fatigue. The quick release system on the neck strap allows for removal of the binoculars if the strap is still inside your coat; useful if you want to remove them but leave your winter clothing on. As a glasses wearer I didn't use the twist-up eyecups, but the four stage eyecup adjustment would cater for all preferences.

In the field the binoculars were put to the sternest test at the end of a dull winter's day and performed up to my high expectations in all conditions. The 7° field of view made finding birds easy, even small ones, like the Goldcrest I watched flit about in the canopy of pines. In this situation the excellent light gathering capacity of this optic helped locate and identify the tiny quarry high amongst the branches. When birds were close the binoculars could focus down to just over 2 metres and I can see this being perfect for butterfly viewing in the summer months.

The lockable dioptre adjustment is something I think that all binoculars should have. It makes it so simple to keep your own settings dialled in to your own binoculars without the worry that others will change it if they borrow your optics. At times I used the optic in torrential rain but as this model is nitrogen filled, and even submersible under water, I wasn't worried about fogging or moisture entering the binocular. In woodlands under these conditions, when it was so dark that my eyes were struggling, simply by lifting the binoculars up to look through them the ED glass and improved coatings came into their own and it was as if 'a light had been switched on'. The image produced was brighter than the ambient light in the woodland and birds could be picked out so much more easily.

These binoculars are built to a tried and tested design, looking to all intents and purposes identical to its forerunner, the DBA VHD, and why change something that works so well? The change that has been made is an improvement in the optics, with the new higher light transmission system, which delivers bright, edge to edge sharp images with no colour fringing at all under my test conditions. This Japanese optic has a 30 years warranty and deservedly takes its place as Opticron's flagship binocular; one that deserves consideration when looking for the best binocular in the mid-price bracket.

Paul has been birding over 35 years enjoying all aspects of the hobby from local patchwork to twitching and is now working in his hobby, as Manager of Focalpoint Optics near Northwich in Cheshire. He is a keen digiscoper, which he has enjoyed for over 10 years and has taught it as well as leading on birding holidays. He was Assistant County Recorder in Greater Manchester, Rarity Committee Member, Bird Report Editor and has done BTO Surveys and recorded for the Cheshire Breeding Atlas. He has written for birding magazines and is a freelance Environmental Consultant when time allows.