

Discovery WP PC 10x50

Federico Buldrini (Bought in early November 2014 and used on a daily basis since then)



Before purchasing these bins I've used and tried both porros and roofs of various quality, both vintage and recent: Baigish БПЦ5 8x30, Bresser Travel 10x32, Luger ST 12x50, Minolta 7-15x35, Zenith 10x50, Ziel Z-CAI 8x42, Ziel Z-PRO 8x40. Of all these the ones I liked the most are the Baigish, the Luger and the Zenith.

I purchased the Opticron Discovery after my pursuit for a rather compact 10x with reasonably wide FOV and good close focus, mainly for wildlife and bird observation. After some research among various brands, I was finally leaning towards the Discovery 10x50 and Explorer 10x42, liking their combination of low minimum focus distance and wider than usual field of view, despite the number of magnifications and their price range.

It's worth knowing that the Discovery and the Explorer are the two top end roof prism models from Opticron China made series. Since I was unable to test them side by side (no Opticron distributors in Italy), I contacted Opticron directly and discussed my needs, ending up for the Discovery, being advised that image quality would have been the same, but the 10x50 would have obviously gathered more light. So I placed my order and received the package four working days after the payment.

Accessories

The bins come in a nice soft plastic bag, well padded inside, with Velcro opening, without lanyard but with a large belt loop. The cleaning cloth comes in a small soft plastic wallet. Opticron provides a honest nylon neck strap, nothing fancy, but it has proved to do the job well. The plastic rainguard and lens covers stay well in place and have good friction retention.

Weight issue?

One of the negative things I've always heard about 10x50 is their weight, even for roof prism. I may agree if talking about old school porros, like the Zenith (1089 g) which was manufactured with a brass body: these are quite heavy and a bit bulky, but widely compensated by their image quality. For those who may fear the Discovery 10x50 to be awkward, I'd say that they would feel it "not light" rather than "heavy" and easy to get used to quickly. I haven't found it hard to be held steady and used efficiently, even with one hand while keeping the other in the pocket or free for eating.

Body and mechanics

The body build quality proved itself good, giving also a solid feeling and a good balance. There is no texture on the armouring except for two small areas for placing the thumbs, but despite this I had no grip problems at all: the size of the barrels alone is more than enough to get a stable and comfortable grip.

Both the dioptre adjuster and hinge are quite tight, still easy to adjust precisely. The eyecups can be twisted up twice and when set stay well in place, without "play" or movements. The focus wheel is smooth, sensitive and quick; it takes one and a half turn from closest point to infinity. No fogging or water leaking issues happened and no problems could be detected after the binocular took few blows.

I can list few minor flaws. There are a few scratches around the WP logo. There is a point on the right barrel, where the armouring meets the end of the hinge, in which the rubber is sealed but not perfectly in contact with the body below. After four days of use, due to traction from removing the rainguard, the glue of the right rubber eyecup loosened a bit. I contacted Opticron about it, asking what glue to use (eyecups aren't covered by guarantee), should the eyecup get completely loose. They promptly replied suggesting few small drops of super glue (cyanoacrylate adhesive). After a couple of months the left rubber eyecup started to slightly loosen up as well. To date, though, they haven't needed any fixing and haven't loosened any further.

Optics

The Discovery sports Schmidt-Pechan type prisms. The image delivered is bright, crisp, good contrasted. Colours reproduction is neutral, maybe just a hair on the warm side. To my eyes the image is almost edge to edge sharp, with about 90% of sweet spot. The wide FOV is paired by a decent depth of field when looking to the distance and by a quite short one in close observations, compensated by the extremely quick focus. These factors together also do for easy "spot and follow" operations. The subject particulars

really pop out, allowing a very precise and enjoyable observation and providing a nice 3D effect. While observing in daylight within 10 m range I was able to count the feathers and easily pick the rachis of both wings and tail ones of small birds down to the size of long tailed tits. I was able to appreciate the same amount of details on medium size birds within 50 m and on large birds within about 100m. When observing at the same distance, but only some minutes before darkness, I was still able to appreciate a good amount of particulars, but not to count the feathers. The rachis of the tail feathers was usually still visible.

The amount of details at given distances remains basically the same in cloudy days, while obviously decreases when observing in misty and foggy days. When checking night vision in a city park, around midnight, far from artificial lights, I had a pleasing slightly brighter than life image. When looking at a few mallards sleeping at 50 m in a pond, the far light was enough to clearly discern males from females. I could find just a hint of edge softening and could also see some field curvature when moving quickly the binoculars to change subject. It's not really perceptible when following wildlife, more when just panning an area. If observing with low sun behind or just above the binoculars there might be some light reflection inside the oculars: this is affected by the light's angle of incidence. I could see a bit of chromatic aberration only in very high contrast conditions (e.g. birds in extreme backlight or dark subjects against cloudy sky with whitish light) but it wasn't always perceptible. Its amount can vary depending on the light, its angle of incidence, if looking through/to a somehow reflecting surface like window glasses, ponds etc. I've noticed sometimes, only during foggy days, a bit of green fringing when observing in backlight at certain angles.

For my experience, the best closest focus can be achieved around 1,7 m, but it's possible to still focus sharply even at 80 cm. Though, to get a really circular picture when closer than 1,7 m, I had to fold the oculars towards each other a bit and slightly retrocede the eyes.

Conclusions

I don't want to give absolute judgments since optics, like woodworking tools, are highly subjected to personal preferences and user's own way of working. However I can say the Discovery 10x50 has proved itself a nicely versatile companion.

Federico Buldrini has been interested in nature since the earliest childhood. He currently studies Natural Sciences at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy and cultivates his interest in ethology. He also took part in the IWC and CorMan Project bird census, in 2014 and 2015, in three areas of his province.