

Discovery WP PC 7x42

Lee Thickett (June 2018)

You know the old joke about how you wait for an hour for a bus and then three arrive together? Well this is the kind of situation I find myself in, having reviewed my very first 7x bino very recently and having received this unit from Opticron. The difference here is that the Meopta MeoStar that I reviewed had been discontinued whereas this model is newly launched, as a result of a request from one of Opticron's USA customers.



Binoculars with 7x magnification are a dying breed and according to comments from several brands are normally loss-makers due to insufficient sales, so Opticron is to be commended for supporting their customer with this model. It is not entirely alone as brands such as Kite, Optolyth and Eschenbach also sell 7x roof prism models in a price band from £375 to £900, but as far as I have been able to find, Opticron are the sole brand fielding a roof prism 7x bino at or around the UK price of £189 and US price of between \$249 and \$285. As a result I have none of the usual price/field of view/length/weight comparisons of competitor models to make on this occasion.

The specifications for this model state that the field of view is 136m or 408ft, which looks correct when checked against other models I have to hand, as well as a generous eye relief of 25mm. This latter figure does seem large but see my experiences described below which seem to confirm a large eye relief. At 133mm long and weighing 690g (24.8ozs) it can truly be described as compact and lightweight. In the hand they feel comfortable and nicely balanced. The focus wheel rotates anti-clockwise to infinity and the dioptre ring on the right-hand barrel needs a strong grip to shift it initially, after which it readily rotates to facilitate adjustment and when set, it doesn't move. The focus speed is 'medium fast', so over my usual test distances, refocusing from a target 4km / 2.5 miles away down to 2m / 2.19yds from my work station, the Discovery is noticeably faster at 0.75/turn than a Zeiss SF with one full turn, but is not quite as fast as a Zeiss FL 8x32 which accomplishes this with 0.65/turn, or a Zeiss Conquest HD 8x32 which breezes through this distance with only 0.5 of a turn.

As with other Opticrons I have reviewed, the rainguard only attaches securely at one side, which I think restricts the customer's choice. If the guard could be attached at both sides the customer could choose a left or right or both sides attachment. In addition the deep cups of the rainguard 'suck' onto the eyepieces if pressed down all the way due to rain, and take a moment or two longer than one would wish to remove. However, aftermarket rainguards are widely available so this is no deal breaker.



The eyecups and eye relief combination was a problem for me.

As I posted a few weeks ago, I encountered blackouts wearing spectacles and with the eyecups screwed down, and these did not diminish until I set the cups at the middle position. Some users may be surprised to learn there is a middle position as it is barely detectable and easily missed when screwing the eyecups up or down. However a middle position is there and amazingly it is reliable too, but although it nearly got rid of the blackouts for me, I was losing field of view at this setting. As a result I never felt at ease with this model but don't let this put you off for the following reasons: I handed them to my wife, Troubadoris, (who also wears spectacles), without any explanation and asked for her opinion and she had absolutely no blackout problems at all and in fact neither did I when using them without spectacles. It is also a fact that since obtaining these spectacles I have encountered similar issues with a range of models that were previously OK for me although these issues were easily solved.

Out in the field I found a nice big field of view although not on the scale of a Zeiss FL 7x42 but let's not lose sight of the price of this unit and the fact that with a fov of 136m it is within sight of Leica's much more expensive Ultravid HD-Plus with its 140m. The sweet spot is large and with nice natural colours and

decent contrast and sharpness, and above all, the spaciousness that comes with the extra depth of field conferred by the 7x magnification. I never felt deprived by the lack of the 1x compared with my usual 8x instruments and always appreciated the extra depth of field.

I took the test unit to the Ardnamurchan in Western Scotland and proceeded to give them a workout over several days in the field during an unprecedented heat wave which boosted temperatures to Mediterranean levels. Firstly it is hard to describe adequately the effect that the extra depth of field has when simply scanning around the big landscapes and seascapes of west Scotland. It truly does give an added dimension to the view, and in the breezy conditions that can add to bino-shake the 7x is of course, very forgiving.

Out on the open hill with just a few areas of scrub, our attention was captured by the characteristic calls of a chat, but this was unfamiliar so definitely not a Stonechat or Wheatear. Scanning with the binos I found it at the same time as Troubadoris got her Leicas onto it: Whinchat! We hadn't seen one of these for many years and here was a pair of them looking simply magnificent through the Opticrons. The prominent supercilium, dark cheeks and complex mantle looked stunning and we couldn't have been more delighted if a Sea Eagle had landed and asked for directions.

Later the same day, a Whitethroat decided to sing from the top wire of a deer fence only about 10 metres away and he just sat there for ages allowing me to examine him and enjoy the subtle tones of the mantle, the rusty brown on the wing coverts and its eponymous white throat.

Scanning the hillsides on the next day and enjoying the spacious feel of the field of view, I found a few Red Deer near the skyline and was startled by a pair of Roe Deer pretty close-by that I hadn't noticed. These are the most beautiful animals. Out to the north-west a heat-haze shimmered over the sea but the characteristic outlines of the islands of Eigg, Rum and Muck completed the familiar scene. Nearby a flurry of wings drew my attention to a Mistle Thrush that landed on a lichen-covered rock. With its beak held high it seemed to think itself a bit superior with that same tilt of the head that Red Deer stags have. Mistle Thrushes might be a familiar bird but looking at it in detail reminded me of how familiarity can cause you to overlook how magnificent a relatively common bird can be and the 7x42s brought this home forcefully.

These Discoveries aren't much bigger than a 32mm so carry easily on a hike and reward with their expansive view. Birds flitting from bush to bush and dragonflies patrolling boggy pools often remain within the depth of field so reducing the amount of re-focusing required, and when focused on an individual bird the amount of the in-focus habitat both in front and behind the bird, brings an added pleasure to the experience.

Summing up, these compact and fine-handling little binos, with a sound optical performance, give you the chance to get a taste of what the 7x-enthusiasts have been talking about on Bird Forum for years and all for less than £200 or \$300.