

Opticron Explorer WA ED-R 8x42 Monocular

Kieran Lynn (June 22)

I am new to monoculars, never having used one before testing this Explorer WA ED-R 8x42. As a result I wasn't sure what to expect and didn't mind admitting I had a few preconceptions. I assumed they would be flimsy, have weak magnification and would never be able to compete with larger optics like binoculars or scopes.

Having used the Explorer for over a month I now know I was wrong on all counts. To help you get to grips with monoculars and help you understand if one might be right for you, this review explores what I thought I knew and why I was wrong to think it.



Durability

I'm not sure why, but I thought monoculars wouldn't be hardy or durable. Perhaps it was because they look small and so I assumed they might be somehow dainty. I can assure you they are not dainty at all. The Explorer is solid, sturdy and reassuringly heavy. Now, I don't mean heavy to carry, it's not at all and fits snugly into my pocket or around my neck, but it feels durable. It feels like it will handle being put in a bag for travel or a pocket on a long hike, and you won't have to worry about it.

Optics

For a small pocket scope, the explorer packs a lot of power. The first time I used it I was amazed at the view it gave me. Wide field, crystal clear with excellent range. It's also easy to use. I mean really, really easy. The focus wheel turns smoothly, the grip is ergonomic and remarkably intuitive. It pairs perfectly with a scope as you have the monocular for anything small and fleeting and the scope for anything large or stationary. That said, the quality is sufficient to be taken out alone without the fear of missing anything.

Binoculars or Monocular?

There are times when I'm going out for a long walk and want to take an optic with me in case I see a bird or mammal. On these outings, wildlife watching is not the primary goal so I don't want the equipment to take up too much space or add too much weight. If I'm climbing and want to check out wildlife in the distance typically I take binoculars but they are a little too large to fit in a pack and it can be frustrating to have them swinging around your neck all the way up a mountain. That's exactly where the Explorer will fit into my future plans. It's light enough to put into my pocket and forget about - only to be right there when I need it.

Overall

I'm a total convert to the monocular and I can see these Explorer WA ED-R 8x42 coming on lots of trips with me in the future. The combination of high-quality optics in such a small, lightweight unit is really appealing.

Conclusion

The more I learn about the different types of optics, the more I can see how important it is to have variety. Just as no two trips are the same or no two wildlife encounters are the same, the optics that you use should never be the same. Horses for courses, I believe, is the expression.

If you're like me, and you just have one optic that you use for multiple situations, I really recommend trying out something new and seeing how it will fit into your life. I wish I had done it much sooner. And by the way, the Explorer is a great place to start.