

## Imagic BGA VHD 8.5x50

**Paul Brewster** (March 2017)

A binocular with a 50mm objective isn't your usual birding bino so I was intrigued to see how the new Opticron Imagic BGA VHD 8.5x50 bins performed in the field and to find out if an 8.5x50 is a sensible choice for nature watching.

The first consideration is weight. At 795g they are in the same range as many 8x42/10x42's but around 100g heavier than an 8x42 Imagic BGA VHD. They felt well-balanced in my hands didn't feel heavy around my neck. Holding them up for long periods scanning for migrants was no problem and it was very easy to hold the bins steady when focussing on a single spot. First test passed with flying colours.

First impressions while out on a birding trip was just how incredibly bright and sharp the image which was. To me they seem as good as, if not better, than binoculars costing twice as much. With a focus wheel travel of only 1.25 turns from close focus to infinity rapid use for everyday birding was also easy. My only concern was the smaller field of view than I am used to with my 8x42's. Surprisingly after about an hour's use I hardly noticed it all. Close focus of 3.5m isn't ideal for butterflies and other insects and this should be factored in to any decision you make about going for a 50mm.

On my next trip the light was poor - a typical north of England Spring day, and the binoculars were very impressive. Light gathering is the stand-out feature here. Even in the murkiest of viewing conditions I was getting a sharp image with good brightness. Living in the UK, light gathering is always a consideration when purchasing optics and the Imagic BGA VHD 8.5x50 certainly delivers.

Build quality is superb and just what I would expect from Opticron especially as the model is made in Japan. The armouring feels pleasant to hold and is 'grippy', the focus wheel positive and smooth, and the eyecups feel secure in up, down or intermediate positions. The nitrogen-filled construction makes cleaning them easy, as dust or salt spray can be washed away in lukewarm water without fear of any ingress of fluid into the barrels.

When buying optics, the choice of a 50mm objective model will mainly be made with a view to higher light gathering but in my opinion the Imagic BGA VHD 8.5x50 could be considered as your main binocular whatever your requirement. It is light enough and bright enough to be an everyday binocular and this new VHD version performs at a premium level without costing a premium brand price.

*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.*