

Imagic IS 10x30 & 12x30 Ray Scally (September 2019)



Image stabilised (IS) binoculars are something I have rarely used so being given 2 pairs over a weekend was a great opportunity try them out and understand some of the differences between IS and conventional binoculars.

On first receiving the binoculars I confess I did ask myself what's best way to handle them? No problem. In a short space of time I found a way to hold them comfortably, focus and use the stabilisation.



The general feel and visual appearance of the Imagic is of a high standard. They have a robust feeling in the hand, quality click-stop eyecups and are a comfortable size and weight for a binocular that contains a stabilisation system. The rubber armouring has a matt non-slippery feel and the focus wheel size and position is perfectly positioned for dual operation with the "IS" switch. The eyecups are comfortable on the eye socket with click stops to allow different positions. As for other visible materials, the only plastic part I could see was the battery housing on the underside of the instrument.

The focus is smooth and precise with no hunting required. Both 10x30 and 12x30 had a surprisingly good depth of field. The dioptre adjustment is housed on the right eyepiece just like many conventional binoculars. I could immediately tell on my first views that they did not feature ED glass objectives, but the optical quality is sharp with excellent colour saturation.

I used the binoculars at dawn and in low afternoon sun and they were surprisingly good in both - particularly viewing into shadowed areas under bushes. When viewing branches against the sky chromatic aberration was apparent but unobtrusive. Considering the 30mm objective, light gathering was superb.

On the first day of testing I was out on a viewing platform in high winds where the image stabilisation really showed its benefits. Watching distant Starlings on a wire it was virtually impossible to avoid shake even with my personal 8x32's, but it was amazing when the IS mode was utilised. The view was steady and sharp, panning birds in flight was a dream and following a flock of pigeons locking on with IS ON allowed me to see details I would have been hard pressed to see with conventional binoculars.

It's easy to see the benefits of these binoculars. IS is invaluable for anyone wanting 12x regardless of how well they think they can keep a binocular steady. It only takes a light breeze to introduce shake and trying to keep up with a fast-moving bird in a bush is not possible without stabilisation.

One other point I never thought about when reviewing binoculars is their use outside birdwatching. After using the Imagic IS I could see their possible value for surveying buildings or reading signage on high level pylons as well as plane spotting.



Conclusion:

Pro's – Size and weight. Considering they incorporate an IS system they are compact to hold and to carry and weigh around 550g. The IS system is very effective and the build quality definitely high end.

Con's – Not a lot. Viewing adjacent to a low sun there was a degree of light arcing and black-out, but I managed to limit this by readjusting the eyecup and eyepiece positions. Close focus of 2.9m approx. maybe a limiting factor for those wanting to use them for insects, dragonflies etc.

After testing the 10x30 and 12x30 side-by-side, I found the 12x better for me. From a personal viewpoint, I wouldn't need a 10x IS binocular and would stick to a conventional type at this magnification.

Accessories were not supplied as part of the product review.

Ray Scally is a birdwatcher and international bird artist widely published in ornithological journals and books and is well known for his work illustrating the two Birding Frontiers Challenge Series bestselling identification books, Autumn and Winter. Other publications include The Birds of Spurn by Andy Roadhouse, The Ultimate Site Guide to Scarcer British Birds by L G R Evans, Rare Birds Where and When Vol. 1 by Russell Slack and British Birds Magazine amongst many others. Ray exhibits annually at the Spurn Migration Festival and is currently working on illustrations for Cape May Bird Observatory in the US. When he's not at Spurn, Ray can be found birding in his East Cheshire square/ Peak District Hills.