

MM3 60 GA Travelscope

Paul Brewster (May 2018)

As many birders are now looking to add a cheaper small 'travel' scope to their toolkit, I jumped at the opportunity to put the new MM3 60 through its paces and see if it is good enough to add to their wish-list.

The MM3 60 GA is an addition to the popular MM series produced in a non-ED version to trim costs for the end-user so making it a very affordable second scope. Like the other MM scopes it has dual focus which I find much easier when trying to get a precise focus - especially when phonescoping.

It also has the same robust rubber armouring giving it protection from minor bumps and a warm, grippy feel. I tested the MM3 with the popular 40862 HDF T Zoom eyepiece which gave a range of magnification of 15-45x. At just under 730g the body weighs less than many 8x42 binocular models. Adding the HDF T Zoom increased the weight to 930g, still relatively light and definitely possible to hand hold if desired.

The dull spring of 2018 proved to be an ideal testing ground for this scope. I went into the test with the idea that this would be a good cheap option for a second (especially for travel) telescope, but came out of it thinking that it would also hold its own as a birder's main scope if working on a lower budget.

My main testing was on my local patch in Cheshire, which has one sizeable water body; always a good test given the vagaries of light over water. Distant waterfowl were easily identified and the zoom was fully usable up to the maximum of 45x to check if it was really a Moorhen lurking under the far bankside vegetation!

When switching to closer viewing, in the adjacent fields and woodland, close focus was excellent, giving sharp and bright images of birds down to less than 4m using the 15x magnification. In dull conditions the scope exceeded my expectations, both in brightness and clarity of image. Even more surprising, and very pleasing, was the lack of 'fall-off' at the edge of the image, the sharpness being consistent across the whole field of view, at the lowest magnification right up to the top end of the zoom range. The field of view at 15x magnification was wide enough to make tracking birds in flight very easy, but as with all scopes the field of view diminished and brightness decreased as I zoomed up. There was no colour fringing noted during my several days of testing, but with no sunshine I couldn't test this feature to the full. However, during everyday use in 'normal' UK conditions colour fringing is minimal at worst and often totally absent for much of the time.

The MM3 60 GA has a 30 year guarantee which is more than most of Opticron's competitors and reflects their confidence in their products.

It bears repeating that this scope exceeded my expectations, especially given the combined price of body plus eyepiece being less than the cost of an eyepiece for some other makes. I can highly recommend it as a travel scope, a second scope when weight may be a factor or even as a main scope if working with a lower budget.

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.