



TECH REVIEWS

Travelscopes

Intuitive and fun to use



Opticron MM4 50 GA ED Travelscope
By **Nick Moran**

If size, weight and cost were no object, I think most birdwatchers would choose the largest, most robust telescope with the best-quality glass. However, the reality is that if a scope is to be carried any distance or packed in the equivalent of budget airline hand luggage, size and weight do matter.

The MM4 range are angled scopes, with objective lens options of 50, 60 and 77 mm. The MM4 50 ED is the smallest of the set, with the body of this model just 20 cm long. Coupled with the HDF T* zoom eyepiece, which adds 6 cm to the overall length, it gives a magnification range of 12–36x with the 50 mm objective lens. I knew of the predecessor to the Opticron MM range but never tried it, so I was keen to see how the MM4 50 ED would perform and whether or not a ‘travel’ scope would be for me.

This is a scope after BTO’s own heart: it punches above its weight! I was immediately struck by the image quality, particularly at the mid to lower end of the magnification range. The scope feels well made and is certainly user-friendly; I found it comfortable to use hand-held, without any form of stabilisation, up to about 25x magnification. For field-testing I attached a screw-on bean bag, which enabled me to rest it on solid surfaces without compromising its ‘transportability’ by carrying a tripod. This arrangement worked well, even allowing me to take some passable-quality photographs by holding my smartphone to the eyepiece.

Up to about 30x magnification, the image is bright and crisp. I found the results particularly pleasing at 18–22x with relatively close subjects, such as the Common Redpoll photographed. As expected for a 50 mm objective lens, the scope’s light-gathering capabilities are compromised; this becomes apparent

above 30x magnification in all but the brightest conditions.

The focussing is slick and intuitive, with a larger inner wheel for coarse focus and smaller outer one for fine focus. The close focus is impressive for a scope, especially at lower magnifications, allowing for observation of subjects such as insects at less than 2 m range. The only slight downside to the focussing mechanism is that the coarse focus wheel requires more than two full rotations to move from close to distant focus. Although strictly an ‘add on’, the Opticron case for this scope is well designed, providing good protection and with various handy features to keep the lens covers out of the way when the scope is being used.

Overall, I found this scope intuitive and fun to use, and was pleasantly surprised by its optical performance. It has certainly made me a travel scope convert!

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Price	£329
Value for money	●●●●●●
Weight	●●●●●●
Image (brightness, sharpness, colour correction)	●●●●●●
Build (durability, design)	●●●●●●
Ease of use	●●●●●●
Overall	●●●●●●



▲ A Common Redpoll ‘phonescoped’ with the MM4 50 travelscope.

COMMON REDPOLL: NICK MORAN, PEREGRINE FALCON: IVAN ELLISON/BTO