

Natura BGA ED 8x42

Estelle Somers (October 2019)



Earlier this year I had the opportunity to fulfil a lifelong dream to visit Papua New Guinea.

Growing up watching in wonder at TV documentaries describing the amazing and unworldly birds of paradise I always dreamed of seeing these remarkable birds for myself. With the dream looking like a reality, choosing the right binoculars to accompany me on my adventure was an important task.

Upfront, the questions running through my head were; what size binoculars should I go for? Should I buy heavier binoculars to achieve greater magnification? If I do, will I regret this when walking long distances, or trying to keep to my insanely low luggage limit? If I forgo greater magnification to get a lighter pair, will this risk ruining my view? How much should I invest? Will the binoculars cope with what could be very wet and humid conditions?

While deliberating all of this, I was recommended to try a pair of Opticron Natura BGA ED binoculars. I checked the spec. and was pleased to see that they ticked a lot of boxes. 8x42 but lightweight at 648g, reasonably priced and waterproof. I decided to trial them on my local birding patch. After only a few outings in different light and weather I felt very comfortable using them and decided to commit and take them with me.

Once in PNG they did not disappoint. The trip took me to a wide variety of terrains and light conditions. From mangroves and lowland forests to mountainous highland forests. I experienced varied weather conditions from bright sunshine, to rain and mist. Throughout the trip the binoculars delivered clear and bright vision with great colour and I was amazed that even with continued humidity and rain they didn't fog-up.

Being a keen walker I spend a lot of time carrying a small travel-sized binocular and wondered how I would get on with a bigger pair. The answer in a word was brilliantly! These binoculars are by no means a heavy - they are one of the lighter 8x42's I found during my research. Although they are heavier than my usual binoculars I can honestly say that I found them just as, if not more comfortable than my travel-sized pair. I found the neoprene neck strap very comfortable and did not notice much weight at all carrying them for long periods in sometimes hot and sticky conditions.

Being a glasses-wearer who occasionally alternates to contact lenses, I was delighted to find that the Natura BGA ED's were great in both scenarios. The eye-cups were quick and easy to adjust and gave me excellent field of vision when wearing glasses or contact lenses.



One of the many highlights of the trip was watching a beautiful male Raggiana Bird of Paradise displaying high up in a tree at Lake Murray. After trekking into the forest for about 20 minutes, we positioned ourselves directly beneath a specific tree, and looking upwards high into the forest canopy, we waited. I was poised, binoculars in hand and at the ready, waiting for my first glimpse. And then, there he was, suddenly appearing on his stage ready to perform. First a preen, then a few shuffles, and then the unforgettable calls and “dancing” began. Not wanting to miss a second, my head was cranked upwards with binoculars focused sharply on the show for over 20 minutes. Looking upwards with binoculars for such prolonged periods could have been quite painful, but I found them very easy to hold and I was able to stay in position very comfortably.

Whether I was studying ornate birds-of-paradise displaying high in the trees, viewing a panorama of hundreds of fruit bats crossing bright blue sky or appreciating a closer look at butterflies only a couple of metres away, the Opticron Natura BGA ED binoculars proved to be the perfect companion on my trip of a lifetime.

Whilst growing up in South Africa, Estelle developed a deep love for the natural world and travel, and has followed this love throughout her life. With extensive travel industry experience and many years of digital marketing knowledge, she combines these skills with her passion for wildlife and travel whilst managing various areas online marketing at Wildlife Worldwide.