

Natura BGA ED 8x42

Steve Young (November 2016)

I have to confess that when I saw the price of these new Opticron Natura 8x42 binoculars I wasn't expecting too much from them. In these days of super-expensive optical equipment even £259 doesn't seem to get you too much for your money, but how wrong those early expectations were. My first impressions of this new model when I took it out of the box were that this was a solid, lightweight, well-made and compact roof-prism binocular, with a very nice "feel" to them; my further tests revealed that these impressions were correct, but that there was a lot more to these binoculars than just a very nice "feel".

With the comfortable strap fitted it was time for a proper test and at just 648 grams I didn't find them heavy around my neck. I was immediately impressed with the true colours; everything was spot on, whether it was my garden Robin and Blackbirds, Lapwings at my local reserve or a mega-rare Cliff Swallow at Minsmere, Suffolk, the colours were true and neutral without any casts. These tests were conducted in very dull light, sunny conditions, early morning and at dusk, when light gathering power also appeared to be very good, with Pink-footed Geese flocks watched flying to roost on a dull day in good detail, and my Robin studied at close range when it came for a last feed of mealworms just before dark, probably testament to the light gathering power of the ED glass used.

As a spectacle wearer I can sometimes struggle with the field of view but not with this model; with the eye-cups clicked down to their lowest setting (there are three settings) I achieved full field of view without any problem. I didn't notice any chromatic aberration in my review pair and with ample close focussing down to 2.5m they handled every situation I found myself in and to be honest, if a bird is closer than 2.5m then you don't really need binoculars to see it anyway.

The Natura is waterproof, but as I don't like getting wet when I'm out birding this was something that only the binoculars were going to be tested for. Sitting in the comfort of my lounge on a wet day while watching golf on the TV I placed the binoculars in a large puddle while the rain was pouring down and went to make a cup of tea. Then I remembered about them twenty minutes later, but I needn't have worried; after drying the outsides with a towel then using the cloth provided with the binoculars I carefully dried the optics and looked through them. No steaming up, no rain inside, no problems, although the strap did take a bit longer to dry out.

With a 30 year guarantee included, plus rainguard, case, front eye cups and a cleaning cloth what more could you want from a pair of binoculars costing £259? Very impressive and highly recommended.

Steve Young is one of the UK's best known bird photographers; his work has been published in countless magazines and books and he is Photo Consultant for Birdwatch magazine. A keen bird watcher since the late 1970's Steve has used many different types of binoculars and telescopes over the years. He writes a monthly column for Outdoor Photography magazine, has written two books on bird photography, is the Photo Judge for Birdguides' weekly competition and was overall winner of the British Wildlife Photography Awards (BWPA) in 2010.