

Savanna R 8x33 & Savanna WP 8x30

Jono Leadley assisted by Adelaide Leadley (8) and Solomon Leadley (6) (July 2016)

A visit to Roseberry Topping on the North York Moors seemed as good a place as any to test out our new Opticron binoculars. A short but strenuous walk to the top is always good for some wildlife watching, and the views from the top are incredible. On arrival at the car park, I presented my two children with the binoculars; for Adelaide, who is eight, the 8x30 WP porro prism style and for six year old Solomon, the 8x33 Savanna R, in the more modern-looking roof-prism style. Usually, these two will fight over one particular thing, but in this case they both seemed very pleased! Addie was very impressed with the stylish neoprene black case, trimmed with silver as even at eight, looks are important! Sol was quick to grab his new bins from his more regular black nylon and leather effect case. Both pairs came with a comfortable neoprene strap, rubber eye-cups, a rain-guard- which I explained was essential – and cleaning cloth – again, a very useful item particularly for wiping away grubby kids' finger marks!



While I packed up the gear for our walk, the kids got busy with the bins. "Daddy, they are really clear" said Addie who was focussing on a chaffinch strutting about on the car park tarmac. Addie has used my binoculars before but has never managed to focus them and rarely managed to actually locate her target! I had previously explained how to focus, but in this case she had managed this easily with the smooth central focussing wheel easy for her small fingers to turn. Sol was more interested in flicking his rain-guard on and off as I had showed him, but I suppose this would be a useful skill to master. I suggested Sol focus on the same chaffinch, which he quickly did. "I can even see it's eye!" exclaimed Sol. "Is it nice and sharp" I asked and after explaining what I meant, he agreed that it was. I showed him how to make small adjustments to the focus as the bird walked away and Sol mastered this very quickly.



After a few minutes we headed off up the path to Roseberry Topping. Sol was keen to wear his new bins round his neck – like Dad – whereas Addie preferred to sling her pair over her shoulder in the oh-so-stylish case! When both children have asked to use my binoculars in the past, they have quickly decided that they didn't want to carry them, but in this case, both pairs are lighter and much more suitable for a child to carry – even up a steep hill! In any case, there was no way I was going to get the bins back off the kids this quickly.

As went up, I spotted a painted lady butterfly on some bramble flowers. Both children were keen to see the butterfly up close so we stopped to have a look. Again, both children managed to locate the butterfly with ease, indicating the decent field of view in both pairs. Also, both managed to focus even though the butterfly was only three or so metres away. I didn't believe them, so I had a look myself, and sure enough they were able to focus this closely. The kids love looking into ponds, and at dragonflies and butterflies, so this was great. "I can see it's curly tongue" said Sol, to prove the point.

We headed to the top almost without another pause and were greeted with the impressive view north to Teeside and the coast. Sitting down I decided to see if they could lock-on to flying birds as there was a hunting kestrel below us hovering over the fields and a large gang of gulls feeding in the ploughed field nearby. "It's really easy to find birds in these binoculars" said Sol. "They haven't got black heads" added Addie, who was doubting my identification of the black-headed gulls. Now, time for the swap. Addie had a go with the Savanna R and Sol with the Savanna WP. They both liked them and said the view was pretty similar – "nice and bright colours", was Addie's comment, but they were both keen to get their original pairs back. Both kids told me that they were comfortable to hold (with their small hands) and that once I had helped them set the dioptre adjustment – which took a little bit of explaining, they found them easy to focus, even on moving subjects. This was impressive and not something they had achieved before. These binoculars, aimed at kids like them, good & really open their eyes to the natural world as the up-close experience makes such a massive difference. Brilliant stuff!

Sol found that the twist up eyecups worked a bit loose and kept twisting in, the eyecups on Addie's binoculars did not move when twisted in to position.

"So, would you like to keep them?" I asked. "Can we?" said Sol, incredulous. "I really want them, they're really good!" said Addie. "Ok" I said.