

Savanna R PC 10x33

Ray Scally (April 2018)

Last year I was on the lookout for a pair of kitchen window binoculars for garden and bird table watching and visited the Opticron stand at a festival to try out some of their lower end binoculars.

I was pleasantly surprised at the range and quality available and my eyes were drawn to the Opticron Savanna R in particular. With their open bridge design and sleek lines I was impressed with build quality, twist-up eyecups and rubber armouring and accessories all for £120. When I put them to my eyes I was sold! The image was surprisingly bright, sharp with a really nice field of view for the price.



Ergonomically the Savanna seemed perfect. With a minimum IPD of 54mm, they are one of the few binoculars I have tried where I didn't have to close them in completely just to get a comfortable view for my eyes. The barrels are rubber armoured and my hands fitted very comfortably around them. The focusing felt smooth and precise. The eyecups were of a standard found in more higher end binoculars with intermittent click stops. I normally have them extended mid-way and gave them some vigorous use over the day and they stayed in place.

The image was very good for this price level. There is some chromatic aberration or colour fringing but not enough to put you off. The image is sharp and colours generally good. The binos were at their weakest when watching distant birds against the sky in poor light but are good enough to ID.

Recently I was praising my purchase to the Opticron Rep at the Spurn Migration festival and was invited to try out the new Savanna R PC. I was very interested, hoping the design had not changed but wondering what benefit the upgrades would have on optical quality.

I was sent the binoculars in 10x33, the same as my own so I could do a direct side by side comparison. On removing them from the box I was pleased to see the overall design had not changed. The only noticeable difference was the colour shade to the ocular lenses, everything else other than the letters 'PC' on the focus knob were identical so this was an instant thumbs up!



Naturally my first instinct was to check the optics. Taking both pairs into the garden and looking into the dark recesses and tree shadows, the new PC model did make a difference to the image. Accurate focussing was a tad quicker as there was a marginal improvement to both the sharpness and colour correction. Interestingly where the binoculars stood out the most was on distant viewing where trees and flying birds were sharper and colour saturation seemed deeper. I was very pleased with this improvement and think anyone would find it hard to find anything as well designed at this price level.



Conclusion

Pro's - Lovely to use particularly the weight, balance and field of view. Probably the only binoculars I have used that can be enjoyed by small children and adults. Extremely good optics for the money with the newly introduced PC correction. Accessories were of a high standard and I would say the rainguard is far better than the one included with the top of the range Opticron binoculars. It was rubber and not hard plastic.

Con's - I noticed that using the eyecups fully down without glasses as some people do, the focus knob

was touching my forehead. I don't use them like that so no problem for me. The close focus capabilities would be limiting for insect watchers and rubber armouring appears thinner than on some other models.

Ray Scally is a birdwatcher and international bird artist widely published in ornithological journals and books and is well known for his recent work illustrating the two Birding Frontiers Challenge Series bestselling identification books, Autumn and Winter. Other publications include The Birds of Spurn by Andy Roadhouse, The Ultimate Site Guide to Scarcer British Birds by L G R Evans, Rare Birds Where and When Vol. 1 by Russell Slack and British Birds Magazine amongst many others. Ray exhibits annually at the Spurn Migration Festival and is currently working on illustrations for Cape May Bird Observatory in the US. When he's not at Spurn, Ray can be found birding in his East Cheshire square/ Peak District Hills.