

Savanna WP 6x30

Liam Creedon, **Butterfly Conservation** (June 2016)



When it comes to lepidopterists and optics - it all boils down to a matter of scale. Unlike birders who want binoculars to get them up close and personal with far away targets, butterfly and moth watchers generally want their optics to deliver pin-sharp images of much smaller species that are close at hand.

Without investing in specialist optics, many lepidopterists are reduced to performing a bizarre ritual of pacing backwards in the opposite direction from their chosen target before their binoculars are far enough away to actually focus on the object of their desire.

Optics that would allow very close focus as well as decent mid-range capability are much sought after by butterfly spotters. Could Opticron's Savanna 6X30 model fulfil that need? Road testing a pair on a blisteringly hot summer's morning at butterfly hotspot Bindon Hill, overlooking Lulworth Cove in Dorset would prove a good challenge. The heat meant the butterflies were restless and moving at speed as well as providing opportunities for close observation when they occasionally opted to rest or feed. One key positive is that these binoculars let in a huge amount of light which produces consistently bright and clear images. This really helps with identification on tricky brown jobs such as the skippers in which the slightest detail, such as the colour of antennae, can help separate species.

The binoculars felt reassuringly chunky in the hand despite their small size and the large focussing wheel proved precise yet not overly sensitive. The light weight of the optics made following the frenetic dashes of Lulworth Skippers and a careering Dark Green Fritillary relatively straight forward and the comfortable strap and carry case felt well-made and tough.

Mid-range capabilities were good – the bins produced sharp, bright views of Whinchat, Stonechat and a Dartford Warbler amongst the gorse, but attempts at close observations of a resting Marbled White resulted in backing away from the butterfly to a distance of over two metres before a sharp image was produced. My normal 10x30 heavy duty birding bins delivered the same sharpness of image as the Savannas at close range yet gave better performance at mid and long range.

All in all these bins may not be the answer for lepidopterists looking to ditch their birding bins, but their light weight, bright image, small size and ease of use would make them suitable for youngsters wishing to get their hands on their first pair of optics.

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