

## Traveller BGA ED 10x32

Ray Scally (February 2017)



As someone who carries a scope, a camera, art equipment as well as a pair of binoculars, I take an interest in any new kit that promises higher quality or a better user experience in a smaller, lighter package.

Over the last year or so I have tried various small pairs of binoculars to accompany me commuting, and the double-hinge 10x25 binoculars I currently use, while optically good, are finicky to keep adjusting and rather small in the hand.

When asked to review a 32mm compact with the properties of the Opticron Traveller BGA ED 10x32 I was interested to see if they would be a good replacement. I was very impressed with the initial handling and build quality. The rubber armour looked like it would hide prolonged wear and was tight fitting and thick, giving good protection on the objective lenses. Another attribute which scored top marks was they fitted easily into my puffa jacket pocket!

The first time I used them properly I was surprised by the bright image and depth of field. I wasn't fiddling back and forth to focus as I have found on many binoculars of this specification. Focus was precise with only 1 turn between extremities. The focus wheel was stiff and this increased in colder conditions. I would have preferred the action to be looser as I do a lot of one handed focussing when field sketching.



I wasn't expecting the overall quality standard these binoculars produced - in particular the size of the sweet spot. I really had to look hard just to find where the image started to fall off. It was very close to the edge and certainly not noticeable during normal viewing. This characteristic was extremely impressive along with the wide field of view. The image quality, sharpness and saturation were also very surprising and very good for a binocular in this price range.

Given the opportunity I like to judge the light gathering qualities of binoculars at dusk in order to determine how long I can usefully use them. For how long are birds still identifiable as night falls? I compared the Traveller BGA ED 10x32 (EPD of 3.2mm) against an 8x42 ED binocular (EPD of 5mm). While the 8x42 were brighter and slightly sharper at dusk, I could ID with the Traveller pretty well in low-light conditions.

There was one area where these binoculars shone for me – stray light. It is an issue that forced me to stop using two other pairs of 10x30's I have owned in the past. Having the binoculars for a couple of weeks I was able to try them out in all weather conditions and relished the opportunity to use them on sunny winter's day when the sun is low in the sky. I purposely tried to get stray light arcing in the binoculars and it was minimal. On other smaller binoculars I have tried of this size and price range you didn't have to try and get it, it was there in most viewing conditions, but the Traveller BGA ED dealt with it very well.

The eyecups were another big positive to me; they were small and fitted my eye sockets perfectly reminding me of the old Opticron DBA. The click stops were precise and stayed in position during use. Chromatic Aberration was minimal towards the edge and not really noticeable until you look for it.

In summary the big positives for me were compact size and image quality, field of view and how they handled stray light. The only negative was that the focus could do with loosening up a bit but maybe that will change over time. Overall it's the top compact binocular I have used and although they are called 'traveller' they could be considered by many as a main binocular.

I did not have the rainguard, strap or case to review.

*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 best-selling 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.*