

## Traveller BGA Mg Black 8x32

Tim Sexton (June 2015)



With regular trips to the Czech Republic (both to visit family and for wildlife watching) I am often faced with the dilemma of what optics equipment to pack for the holiday.

As I mostly travel with budget airlines, and with a three year-old to pack for too, additional baggage and heavy equipment can often increase the price of a trip considerably. As a result, the spotting scope almost always stays at home. That said, in recent years as my interests have shifted from a life-long 'it's all about the birds' focus to 'invertebrates (mostly butterflies and moths) and a bit of birds', I can often live without the scope.

Despite just needing binoculars and an SLR to fit in my hand luggage, space saving and weight is still very important to me. I currently use a pair of Opticron BGA 8x42's (my main binoculars) along with various 'vintage' binoculars, however I often opt for just a small pair of compacts in order to fit another camera lens in the case. As a consequence, image quality is very much sacrificed for space.

So, when I was given the opportunity to try the new Traveller BGA Mg 8x32 binoculars on my last trip to Czech, I jumped at the chance. I wondered whether something that weighs less than 100g more than a typical pair of compacts could deliver the performance of a full-size pair of binoculars - whilst being small enough to fit in my jacket pocket.

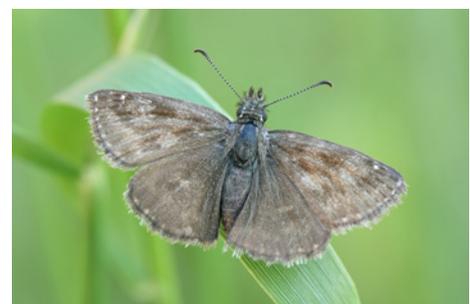
For anybody that hasn't visited the Czech Republic, the country has an abundance of amazing wildlife - particularly invertebrates. The unspoilt countryside and flower rich meadows attract over 150 species of resident butterfly (compared to our 59) and over 3,000 species of moth - I've seen more species of butterfly within 5 minutes' walk of the local village than can be found in the whole of Britain!

It is late May and despite the fact that there was still snow on the ground less than two weeks before my trip, I find to my surprise that many of the over-wintering butterflies had already begun to emerge - helped along by the bright sunshine and 30° daytime temperatures.

On the first morning I strapped up the binoculars (they come with a comfortable, padded bungee lanyard) and headed straight to a local south-facing hillside. I immediately spotted some familiar faces; peacock, brimstone and small tortoiseshell. Whilst it was still chilly I was able to get to within a couple of metres of the butterflies. At this range the Travellers were well within their advertised close-focus distance of 1.5m and enabled me to see individual scales on the butterfly's wings, with crisp lines and edge to edge sharpness - softening only in the very extreme of my peripheral vision.

The Oasis coating (a 64 layer coating) on the Traveller's prism gave amazing colour fidelity, enhancing the colourful eyespots on the peacock's wings.

A small brown butterfly suddenly shot past me, low over the grassland. With half a turn of the focus wheel (a full turn from close focus to infinity) I was able to pick it up in the binoculars and follow it to its final resting position about 100m away - it's a dingy skipper, a fast-flying, small species of butterfly. As a seasoned binocular user, the 6.4° field of view (narrower than most 8x32 models) didn't pose a problem for me to keep the butterfly in sight. I realise that in order to fit everything in to such a small housing, something has to give, and in the Traveller's case it is the field of view, however I can imagine that for newcomers this may require some practice.



In the bright morning sunshine, and watching the skipper at this range, I could only notice a little colour fringing (chromatic aberration) around the distant butterfly - and only then because I was being critical and looking specifically for it.

As I headed along the coniferous woodland margins I spotted a Camberwell beauty flying amongst the pine trees. The broken sunlight along with dark patches within the woodland made for interesting light

conditions, although again the Travellers coped with this well. Once settled I could see that far from beautiful, this butterfly could only at best be described as just 'Camberwell' - over-wintering as an adult had clearly taken its toll on this individual and with its ragged wings, it was merely a shadow of its former self.

At the end of a full day's butterflying and walking, and having spotted some 20 species, I hardly noticed that I was still wearing the binoculars (unlike my 8x42 BGAs or some of my vintage bino's). The sub 400g weight and soft bungee lanyard made for very comfortable all day use.

After the week was over I'd not spotted as many butterflies as I'd hoped to on the trip, but I plan to return again in the summer. At least next time there will be no doubt as to which binoculars I will be taking with me.

Plus points:

Close focus to within 1.5m – making them perfect for insect watching.

Oasis Coating gives bright, sharp images with true-to-life colours.

Magnesium body not only reduces the overall weight of the binocular, but they also feel more robust.

At around 10cm x 11cm they are compact enough to fit in a jacket pocket yet deliver performance similar to that of a full size binocular.

Click stop dioptre adjustment on the right eyepiece meant that whenever they were pulled out of the case, they were ready to use and set for my eyes.

Comes with; Soft case, padded bungee lanyard, rain guard (also stops sandwich crumbs) and cleaning cloth.

Nitrogen filled and waterproof to 3m (although I didn't test this out)

Come with a 30 year guarantee!

Only negative point was the narrow field of view. At only 6.4° it is a little narrow for an 8x32 (especially given that many other 8x32 binoculars in the Opticron range have a wider 8° field of view).