

than bright light. The full HD video is very impressive, though.

It takes a micro SD card, and is Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectable, and charges quickly using a USB-C cable. Once you have it fully charged, the battery offers about 150 photos, 60 minutes of movie, or 70 minutes viewing time.

The big question

But, I hear you asking, why would you use it? After all, if you're looking to take competition standard photos you'll probably already have something bigger and better, and if all you want is record shots, then can't phonescoping or a decent regular superzoom camera do the job?

Well, yes, to the first, and yes and no to the second. It was a really useful piece of kit to have to hand in the field, especially for short, spur-of-the-moment expeditions or lunchtime walks. It could take a very serviceable record shot, and it focuses down to 1m (at 100mm focal length), so I can imagine it getting a lot of use for photographing butterflies and moths, bugs, plants and the like.

And, even when I did have my main camera with me, I found myself using the Powershot for video so I didn't have to keep switching modes etc.

Finally, that portability is a real asset. I could carry it in a pocket at all times, and quickly snap anything that crossed my path, and the image-stabilisation means you'll probably also use it simply as a digital monocular at times.

SPECS

Weight: 145g

Size: 33.4x50.8x103.2mm

Sensor: 12MP

Zoom: 100x/400x/800x

RRP: £259

Web: www.canon.co.uk

VERDICT

Give it a try. It has its limitations, but it does a very solid job if what you want is something to document your wildlife-watching rather than to inspire you. Its diminutive size, and similarly small price tag, makes it easy to keep to hand at all times.

BACKPACKS

VANGUARD VEO ACTIVE BIRDER 56 £239.99

Review by David Chandler



This is designed to help birdwatchers carry a substantial scope "to the most remote and rugged locations" "over extended distances", or, "just to the park". And not just your scope. It can haul a tripod or two, has space for a 16" laptop and a 10" tablet, and various pockets and pouches. It's not small – its 47 litres are divided between 32 in the main compartment (front and top access) and 15 in the top.

The main compartment includes a lightly padded scope tube (134mm diameter). My 77mm Kowa, with stay-on-case, had room to spare. The tube is about 29cm long and there's an elasticated loop to go round the eyepiece. There's a good amount of space for other stuff in the main compartment too. They say it's not suitable for cameras... I put a Lumix G6 with 100-400 lens in there, in a padded bag. No problem. You could make it camera-friendly by adding a padded insert.

There are two options for carrying a tripod – strap it on the back or use a pocket and strap on the side. I thought the latter was a better solution, but you can't then use that pocket for a water bottle. There are options, though. On the other side is a waterproof pocket for

a two-litre hydration pack. Alternatively, each shoulder strap has a pocket that can take a bottle. There's a decent-sized pocket on the waist belt and a 'hidden' pocket on the rear – easily big enough for a passport. A lot of thought has gone into this pack – you have options. There's even a USB port to charge a device – the other end of the cable is in the top compartment – you plug in your power supply there. I don't have space to write about all the features – see the vanguardworld.co.uk website to find out more.

My test was a heavily laden, five-mile walk. This pack made that load portable without too much difficulty. I suggest lengthening the padded shoulder straps so that the (removable) padded waist belt sits on your hips, and using the adjusters at the top of the padded shoulder straps to pull the pack in if necessary – that improved stability. There's also an adjustable chest strap (with emergency whistle). Vanguard have given extra attention to the ergonomics – an aluminium frame is designed to follow the shape of your upper spine, and there was good ventilation between back and pack.

SPECS

Weight: 2,400g

Size: External:

[330x250x580mm](#)

Info: Green or grey,

[two-year warranty](#)

VERDICT

The Active Birder 56 seems well-made and tough. It's versatile and is supplied with a rain cover, removable bottle holder and accessory pouch. A minor gripe – I'd prefer the few shiny metal bits not to be shiny. And it's worth noting that this isn't a carry-on. I'd say it's best for carrying a good amount of kit quite a way – it's not designed for rapid, frequent access. If that's what you want to do it's well worth consideration.