



# GUIDE TO CHOOSING BINOCULARS



## What the numbers mean

First figure refers to *magnification* (generally 8x or 10x). This does not affect the item's weight.

Second figure describes *diameter of the lens* i.e. how much light gets in (greater diameter=heavier e.g. x42 is heavier than x32). If you are birdwatching in the evening or in lower light you might want a greater diameter.

## Magnification

### 8x magnification

- Holds the image nice and steady
- Good for focus on closer objects
- Wider field of view *e.g. for tracking birds in flight*
- Greater depth of view *e.g. for picking out birds through branches*
- General bird watching *e.g. garden, woodland, shoreline*

### 10x magnification

- Good for distance *e.g. estuaries, skyline*
- Larger image than 8x
- Beware: Also magnifies any unsteadiness (hand shake)

## What do you get for your money?

The price tends to reflect the quality of glass and any special coatings (e.g. 'ED'-see below), as this affects sharpness and brightness so you can see more detail and colour. The trade-off can be weight as better quality glass might be thicker. In terms of value for money, the following is worth noting:

- ED coated glass (=extra low dispersion): Reduces distortion, most of light gets to eyes giving crispness, sharpness, colour and definition
- Waterproof and Nitrogen-filled: Should never steam up inside as no oxygen
- Swarovski: Excellent customer service (repairs etc.).

## Other types of binoculars

### Compact

These are smaller and lighter but have less good light-gathering power and the image is less bright compared with full-sized models.

Good for casual weekend use or if hiking where weight might be an issue. However, a good quality neoprene strap can make a difference.

### Image-stabilized binoculars

These are designed to minimise the effect of shaking. There is some loss of image quality but they are good if you have a tremor or shaky hands.

## Trying out binoculars

Best to test on an overcast day, late in the day or in poor light conditions when performance differences between different optics are more readily apparent.

- If wearing spectacles during try-out, keep the eye cups in the down position. Otherwise, twist/keep eyecups in the up position.
- Adjust binoculars to the width of your eyes so that they are comfortable and you are not seeing any black edges around the object.
- First tune in your left eye with the main focus ring (in the centre), keeping your right eye shut and focussing on an object about 10m away until it becomes sharp.
- Then fine tune your right eye, shutting your left eye and using the adjustment ring to focus on the same object.
- Look through the binoculars with both eyes open and you should have a clear, crisp view of the object.
- Don't push too hard into eye sockets, rest on eyebrows.
- Don't have insect repellent or sun cream on as this ruins the coating.

## Repairs

If you wish to leave your optics with us at Waterston House, we can box up the item and arrange for our supplier, Viking Optical, to collect by courier – Viking will let you know cost of postage and repair. Repaired items can either be returned to Waterston House or direct to your home address.