

Ace Avian F Magnesium 8x42

Reviewed by Matt Merritt

THEIR Avian F binoculars established an enviable reputation for quality optics at a very affordable price, but the new Magnesium model promises to be lighter to carry, too. So, do they still punch their weight?

WHAT I LIKED

- The view is impressively bright, even when put to the test in dim light on a few dawn and dusk expeditions. It's very sharp, too, all the way up to the edges – in fact, this is one of its big selling points, I think.
- The image is wider than expected from the manufacturer's stated field of view figure – 6.5 degrees (roughly 114m@1000m). In fact, the aspheric lens elements make it feel more like 130m@1000m, a pleasant surprise.
- Contrast was good, and there was little sign of colour fringing.
- The water repellent lens coatings seemed to work well – I spent less time cleaning them than I might otherwise have done.
- Focusing is smooth and precise enough to make really tiny adjustments. Accordingly, the chunky, 1.5-finger wide focussing wheel offers a fair bit of resistance, but it's never hard work. It takes just over 1.5 anti-clockwise turns from close focus to infinity.
- More and more, I want binoculars to do a job where dragonflies, butterflies and moths are concerned, as well as birds, and these boast outstanding close focus. The manufacturer's stated figure of 2m probably undersells them a little – my eyes were fine right down to 1.5m.
- The design's what we expect from Avian – unfussy, uncluttered and functional. I had one or two initial concerns about the ridges on the top of the barrels, but what do I know? In extended use, they proved very comfortable, and I like the grip offered by the rubberised finish.
- That trimming of roughly 55g in weight, thanks to the magnesium alloy construction, makes a difference. They feel solid, but never heavy.
- Build quality felt excellent, especially at this price. They're really robust.
- The rubber-covered eyecups twist up and down to four positions, offering a maximum of 196mm eye relief. Take the time to experiment – with most bins, I use them at the full-out position, but here, I preferred one of the intermediate stops. Get it right to ensure the best field of view.
- The click-stopped dioptre adjustment on the right barrel works well, and it won't get accidentally nudged out of place.
- There are removable objective lens covers, and a rainguard that fits well – no time wasted getting it on or off. The case, with its own strap, is functional.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE

- There is a slightly blue colour cast (I usually prefer a warmer, more natural tone), but on the other hand, it probably goes with the icy sharpness of the image, and it was never distracting.
- I wouldn't want to use the pretty basic strap for too long. To feel the full benefit of the new lighter weight around your neck, spend a few quid extra to put a decent neoprene strap on them.



OVERALL VERDICT

There's little to quibble about here – the Avian Fs were always a very good package, and now they've been slimmed down (in terms of weight) and yet beefed up optically, thanks to aspherical lens elements and flat field coatings. The result is a really impressive, easy to use pair of binoculars for under £400. You need to take a look at them yourselves.



HOW DID IT SCORE? (OUT OF 10)

Design and ease of use 9

Optical rating 9

Value for money 9

FACTS & FIGURES

List price £389

Close focus 2m

Dimensions 145mm x 125mm

Weight 640g

Field of view 130m@1,000m

Eye relief 196mm

Also supplied Rainguard, objective lens covers, strap, vinyl case with strap.

Distributed by Ace Optics, 16 Green Street, Bath BA1 2JZ, tel 01225 466 364; e-mail optics@acecameras.co.uk; website www.acecameras.co.uk