



## Choosing Binoculars for Birding

Binoculars are essential to watching birds. A good pair of binoculars will allow you to see and appreciate details you would otherwise miss. They will add greatly to your enjoyment of birds and other wildlife.

Here are some guidelines on choosing binoculars for birding.

**Read up** – You will need to know what all those numbers mean in order to avoid buying more or less optics than you really need. There is a lot of good information available online.

For example: <http://www.binoculars.com/binoculars/binoculars101article.cfm>  
[www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/optics/choosing\\_optics.aspx](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/optics/choosing_optics.aspx)  
[www.birding.com/binoculars.asp](http://www.birding.com/binoculars.asp)  
[www.birdwatching-bliss.com/bird-watching-binoculars.html](http://www.birdwatching-bliss.com/bird-watching-binoculars.html)  
[www.birdwatching.com/optics/binoculars1.html](http://www.birdwatching.com/optics/binoculars1.html)

### Factors to consider

- Power – around 7x fixed is best, but lower may be good for children. More power brings birds closer but adds weight and narrows your field of view.
- Field of view – wider makes it easier to find the bird, but you will want to compromise with other factors.
- Light gathering (objective, exit pupil size, lens coating) – more of this makes it easier to see in dim light.
- Ease of focus – too stiff or too many turns wastes time – the bird is gone before you can get it in focus.
- Design (porro vs roof prism) – learn what these terms mean. Each has advantages and disadvantages and which you choose depends on how you will use them.
- Close focus - will you look at butterflies or other small things that are close to you?
- Eye Relief – do you wear glasses?
- Size and Weight – the binoculars you will carry with you are always better than any you don't because they're too heavy.
- Comfort – they should quickly feel natural in your hands.
- Quality – stick with name brands.
- Durability (armoring, waterproofing) – no worries if you get caught in a rainstorm or bump them on something.
- Cost – consider long-term cost – a \$500 pair, used 200 days per year, over 5 years costs only \$0.50 per day. Choose quality over low price; always buy the best optics you can afford.

**Try Before You Buy** – your binoculars have to work for you, in the conditions under which you will use them!