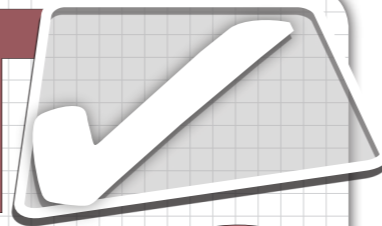


EXPERT REVIEWS



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New Kite is flying high

With a fresh design and superior optics, Kite takes its Lynx binoculars to a higher level. **Mike Alibone** checks out the popular choice.

Birdwatch
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REVIEW Review: Kite Lynx HD+ 8x42 binocular

I first encountered Belgian optics company Kite back in 2011, when I trialled its 80 mm KSP HD scope (*Birdwatch* 229: 43), which was launched to compete with the high-end models of the day but at a significantly lower price. And very nice it was, too. Since then, Kite has produced a range of birding binoculars and continues to do so, with more products in the pipeline.

Comprising five models, the Lynx HD+ was launched in June 2019 and sits close to the top of the company's binocular range, just below the Ibis and Bonelli series.

For the test run, I opted for the 8x42, which would deliver the optimum light-gathering capacity combined with the widest field of view, the latter described by Kite as an attribute that "no other binocular will match". More of that later.

Finished in matt black rubber over fibreglass-reinforced polycarbonate, relieved only by a slim, metallic-red band below the brand name on the left ocular, this binocular looks sleek. I am told this is the new Kite Optics 'design language' going forward. The rubber armour is, for the main part, smooth with only a mildly textured surface on the inner halves of the chassis which is in contact with your thumbs.

Textured rubber is also used on

the aluminium eye-cups, although here it is softer; the edges are almost rounded and they sit quite comfortably against the eye. Twisting out and click-stopping at two levels above the base setting, I was pleased to still be able to see the complete field of view when they were fully extended. Apply a little more pressure and further twisting enables the eyecups to be easily removed for cleaning.

The milled, single-eye focus adjustment sits on the right ocular, as is traditional, and exhibits an adequate amount of turning resistance, although I found it really rather sensitive when initially setting it up. Similarly milled, the central focusing wheel turns very smoothly and freely, with just shy of one and a half clockwise turns taking the image from its 2 m close focus to infinity. Within this, approximately one-third of a turn delivers near-distance to long-distance focusing. This appears to correspond loosely to the fine part of the defined scale on the flat face of the focus wheel. However, as this cannot be seen when looking through the binocular I was left wondering about its practicality and purpose.

It is, of course, the resultant image which is on trial here and Kite took steps to implement refinements to the model prior to

its launch, resulting in an up to 2% increase in light transmission over and above the existing Lynx. Coatings are key and while the company's proprietary 'PermaVision' and 'PermaResist' protect against water and dirt and provide enhanced scratch resistance, it is the use of Kite's top-end 'MHR Advance Plus' coating system which delivers the performance. All glass surfaces are fully multicoated and their best (of three grades) high reflective coatings are used on the prisms.



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58 November's photo challenge

One of our most photogenic waders, Ruddy Turnstone is the subject of this month's challenge.

59 A long time coming

Is this new country guide to the birds of Mongolia a must have for the visiting birder?

59 Covering Cambodia

The first guide to this ornithologically rich and varied country.

60 Visit Romania

Dave Gosney's guide to south-east Romania provides a great introduction to the best sites.

60 Bookshelf

New Gosney guides plus birding sites in New Zealand – check out this month's recommendations.

61 What's new in the Bookshop?

Start planning next year's birding with our Book of the Month: *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook 2020*.

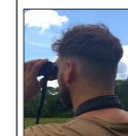
THIS MONTH'S EXPERT PANEL



MIKE ALIBONE is *Birdwatch*'s Optics Editor. He has been testing binoculars and telescopes for 15 years.



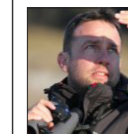
STEVE YOUNG is Photographic Consultant for *Birdwatch* and an award-winning wildlife photographer.



ED STUBBS is BirdGuides and *Birdwatch* Content Editor and has a keen interest in migration and patch watching.



HEATHER O'CONNOR is Bookshop Manager. She is enjoying encouraging her young son's growing interest in wildlife.



JAMES LIDSTER is an experienced field ecologist and ornithologist with an interest in sound recording birds.



TIM HARRIS is a former Deputy Editor of *Birdwatch* and the author of books about nature and wildlife, as well as a keen birder.



Feeling the heat

REVIEW

Celestron Elements FireCel Mega 6 and FireCel+

IT'S autumn and as the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, it could be time to take stock of your mobile equipment and consider how you might enhance your outdoor activities on those potentially lengthy trips to the coast. In this respect, Celestron have launched two new products, designed for both comfort and peace of mind, to augment the birder's armoury.

Components of the company's Elements family, the FireCel Mega 6 and the FireCel+ are two multi-functional units built to fully integrate a hand-warmer, flashlight and power bank into compact, hand-held devices. Both of these units essentially perform the same overall functions, but the specifications, including sizes and weights, differ somewhat, with the FireCel+ being 15% shorter, 25% wider and 16% lighter than the FireCel Mega 6, although both devices are the same depth and occupy almost the same volume.

They contain rechargeable lithium ion batteries, and although the larger of the two units has more power, it generates a slightly lower temperature range than the smaller FireCel+, which I also found sat more snugly in the palm of my hand. Each unit began to pump out heat within seconds of being activated and each reached its maximum temperature within one minute.

Below: Elements FireCel Mega 6 with accessories.

Right: Elements FireCel+.



The integral flashlights comprise separate red and white LEDs and operate in five (FireCel+) or four (FireCel) different modes, including constantly flashing Morse code S-O-S for emergency situations. Connecting via each unit's USB port, I was able to successfully charge my iPhone and my small Nikon compact camera, which I use for digiscoping. Both devices have the capacity to deliver two full smartphone charges before needing to be fully charged themselves.

A USB cable is supplied with each device, allowing its battery to be charged by plugging it into a PC, laptop, car charger or USB

adapter plug, and each comes with a soft, drawstring bag, which it fits snugly into. **Mike Alibone**

Further info

- Price: £719
- Size: 140x128 mm
- Weight: 690 g
- Field of view: 151 m at 1,000 m
- Light transmission: 89-90%
- Close focus: 2 m
- Gas filled: yes
- Waterproof: yes
- Guarantee: 30 years

Verdict

- ✓ Pleasingly low level of chromatic aberration
- ✓ Minimal curvature of field
- ✗ Not sharp to the very edge of the image

Further info

- Price: £39.99 (FireCel Mega 6), £29.99 (FireCel+)
- Size: 118x53x24 mm (FireCel Mega 6), 87x65x23 (FireCel+)
- Weight: 177 g (FireCel Mega 6), 148 g (FireCel+)
- Battery: rechargeable Lithium ion 6000 mAh (FireCel Mega 6), 5200 mAh (FireCel+)
- Hand-warmer temperature range: 40-45°C (FireCel Mega 6), 45-50°C (FireCel+)
- Hand-warmer continuous use time: 8 hours (FireCel Mega 6), 6 hours (FireCel+)
- Waterproof: showerproof only
- Guarantee: 2 years (FireCel Mega 6 only)