

Kite Lynx HD 8x30 binocular review
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<http://www.irelandswildlife.com/kite-lynx-hd-8x30-binocular-review/>

Kite Lynx HD 8x30 Binocular Review
Pros: Super compact and convenient, with great build quality. Exceptionally wide field of view and large central “sweet spot” give that elusive sense of immersion that marks a great binocular. Very bright, pin sharp image with excellent colour fidelity and contrast, surprisingly good low light performance considering the small objective lenses. Superb close focus makes them suitable for watching insects and plants at close range.

Cons: Very few. The folks at Kite have obviously worked hard to get this binocular right. Some reflection in the upper portion of the image when viewing against the light in difficult conditions (NB. this is only occasional, and disappears if I move the binocular a millimetre or so further from my eyes... so maybe an eye relief issue that won't affect everybody). Lack of click-stops on the twist up eye cups, no tethered objective lens covers could be an issue for some.

Price: c. €520 RRP (but shop around — you may find a better deal online).
Available in 8x30 and 10x30 configurations

Value: Outstanding

Rating: Highly Recommended

The Lynx HD exceeded my expectations in pretty much every department from the moment I lifted it out of the box. Great optics in a compact, ergonomic package that works beautifully. It's super convenient to carry — not a lot bulkier than many compacts — yet delivers an image that would put most full-size binoculars to shame.

This would be a fantastic binocular for safari or travel... and would make a superb second pair — but the Lynx HD is easily good enough to be far more than that. While I'm not about to replace my current binocular, I will safely say that the Lynx HD is the smallest binocular I've ever reviewed that I'd be happy to carry and use as my primary birding and wildlife binocular. That's quite an accolade. If you're looking for a small, lightweight all-round binocular put the Kite Lynx HD on your shortlist now!



Lightweight all-round binocular put the Kite Lynx HD on your shortlist now!

Kite Lynx HD 8x30 Binocular: Full Review

Kite Lynx HD 8x30 Binocular Review I hadn't heard of Kite Optics until I was approached by their UK and Ireland distributor (Alpha Optical Distribution) who suggested I review their new mid-size offering, the Lynx HD 8x30. On paper the specs of the Lynx HD looked excellent, and I do quite like compact binoculars, as long as they don't compromise too much on performance... so I happily agreed to take a look.

First Impressions

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover... and by the same token you should never judge a pair of binoculars by the box they arrive in. That said the Lynx HD arrived in a very striking black, red and white box that suggested an eye for quality and understated design (which for me is a good thing) right from the start. The binocular inside certainly lived up to that promise. The Lynx HD is sleek, modern and wonderfully compact. It feels very solid and robust, the quality of the finish is excellent and the whole thing works beautifully as a "package" — and then there's the view... but we'll get to that.

Balance, Handling and Build Quality

Being small is definitely a plus point when it comes to carrying or travelling with a pair of binoculars, but to be comfortable you don't really want a pair of binoculars to "feel" too small when you use them, if that makes sense. A good binocular delivers a seamless viewing experience — it should almost disappear when in use, allowing you to focus your attention to what you're looking at. Small binoculars struggle to achieve that: they often feel awkward and cumbersome, or compromise too much on performance to squeeze everything into a smaller overall package.

Despite its small size the Lynx HD doesn't suffer from those issues. It feels like a "proper" binocular in the hand, and particularly when you lift it up to your eyes. It's well balanced, the ergonomics are excellent, and while it's certainly light there's enough weight there (461g) to offer a bit of mass and stability when you're looking through it. Large padded eyecups and a full-size finger-width focus wheel that's perfectly positioned help the feeling of familiarity. Basically the Lynx HD feels and performs much like a pair of full size high-end binoculars — they essentially disappear in use, allowing you to concentrate on what you're looking at. I really like using these binoculars!

Lynx HD Binocular in the hand

The Kite website doesn't specify what the chassis of the Lynx HD is made of, but a bit of digging reveals that it's predominantly fibreglass reinforced polycarbonate augmented with metal components. It's strong and lightweight, and is covered with a hard yet tactile rubber armour that both protects the binoculars and offers a comfortable hand-hold. The single hinge high on the body leaves the lower portion of the barrels exposed allowing for a secure wrap-around grip that's augmented by the textured rubber armour. Your unlikely to drop them unintentionally, even when they get wet.



Mechanics

Mechanically the binoculars work flawlessly — hinges pivot and wheels turn smoothly and precisely. Everything feels well engineered and designed. The rubber coated, twist-up metal eyecups are large and very comfortable on the eyes. The twist up mechanism works well, but with no intermediate click stops between fully down and fully up it relies on friction if you want to set it anywhere in between. In practice the eyecups stay in place just fine while viewing, but they do move quite easily, and I found that if set to an intermediate position they would shift when fitting or removing the rain guard, or when carrying the binocular around.

This is unlikely to be an issue for most people who will use the eyecups in either the fully up (without glasses) or fully down (with glasses) position — but may be something to consider if you need something in between. The quoted eye relief is 15mm which isn't exceptional, but should be ample for most glasses wearers to experience the full effect of the Lynx HD's stunning field of view while wearing their glasses.

Weatherproofing

The Lynx HD is, of course, fully sealed and nitrogen purged, making them fully waterproof, fog-proof and impervious to the ingress of dust and other particles.

Optical Performance

Image sharpness and field of view

LynxHDFrontWhen I first looked through the Lynx HD I was amazed — and as someone who uses high-end optics all the time that doesn't happen often. I was stunned that a binocular this size, at this price point, could deliver an image this good. Naturally the first reaction was to start looking for problems... but it was very hard to find any.

The image is super sharp and crystal clear at the centre of the exceptionally wide field of view, and the central sweetspot extends almost all the way to the edge of the field, with marginal softening right out near the edge. It's very impressive for a binocular this size to offer this level of sharpness across so much of the view — doubly so given the extent of the Lynx's expansive field of view — at 151m / 1000m (c. 8.6°) it eclipses pretty much all of the competition here.

Colour fidelity, contrast and chromatic aberration

Colours are excellent, and to my eyes looked very neutral and lifelike, with no real colour cast or bias evident. Good contrast makes the colours look vivid and alive, and makes it easy to perceive subtle differences in hue and shading that can be so crucial to species identification. The incorporation of HD elements in the optical system means the binoculars control chromatic aberration (colour fringing) really well. I found it difficult to detect any when really trying to induce it, and I never managed to see any in normal viewing conditions.



Low light performance and coatings

Another area where the Lynx HD surprised me was its low light performance. I know Kite has used high-performance dielectric coatings on the prisms, and that the lenses and prism surfaces are fully-multi-coated with their blend of anti-reflective high-transmission coatings... but seriously, I wasn't expecting this level of low light performance from a binocular with 30mm objective lenses. The quality of the coatings must be superb.

Kite also adds a hydrophobic, scratch resistant coating it calls "PermaVision" to the external lens surfaces of the Lynx HD. This type of coating is becoming more common on higher-end modern optics, and basically means that the lenses repel water, grease and dirt, so they need cleaning less often. It also means they perform better in the rain (because the water simply beads up and drops off) and makes them easier to clean effectively when they need it.

The scratch resistant qualities of the "PermaVision" coating also serve to protect the more delicate coatings underneath, making it less likely you'll inadvertently damage your expensive optics during cleaning.

Bottom line: the view through the Kite Lynx HD is very impressive — not just impressive for a binocular of this size... impressive full stop. Top marks to Kite!

In the field

Carrying the Lynx HD in the field is a pleasure — its so small and light that you literally forget you have it around your neck until you want to use it... and then its there to deliver stunning detail and clarity. It really is hard to find anything negative to say about using the Lynx HD as a birdwatching and wildlife observation binocular... this is a genuinely accomplished all-rounder, that ticks pretty much all of the right boxes, and I still find it hard to believe that it achieves so much in such a tiny instrument.

It is much easier to carry than a full size 42mm binocular, and it's true that in very marginal conditions the very best x42 binoculars will outperform it... but even here the Lynx HD comes remarkably close — close enough to make me think about grabbing the Lynx HD instead of my Swarovski SLC HD 10×42 when I'm heading out around my local patch. More often than not I still grab the Swaros... but the fact I stop to think at all is testament to how impressed I've been with the Lynx HD.



Accessories

LynxHDAccessoriesThe Lynx HD comes with a very functional two-tone cordura-style soft carry case, a good eyepiece rainguard cover, a choice of two neoprene straps — a wider one and a slightly narrower but fatter / more padded one, and push on objective lens covers. While these have a groove that allows you to attach them and detach them to the binocular strap when not in use, they can't be tethered to the body like most objective covers on binoculars at this level. That may or may not be an issue for you. I typically throw the objective covers in the case, and throw the case in a drawer when I get a pair of binoculars. I want my binoculars ready to use as seamlessly as possible — cases and objective covers just get in the way. Your mileage will, of course, vary.

Strangely, Kite don't include a lens cleaning cloth in the package — which is a cheap, but handy addition that they probably should include. That said, by and large the accessories with the Lynx HD are very good, as you'd expect with a high-performance binocular.

Warranty

Kite offers an excellent 30 year warranty with the Lynx HD covering all parts and labour for faults not caused by the user and they quote a 1-3 week turnaround time for repairs. For out-of-warranty repairs parts are provided free of charge... the user only pays for labour costs to carry out the work — which is a nice touch on Kite's part.

Conclusion

The Kite Lynx HD is an exceptional binocular. Its expansive field of view, outstanding ergonomics and excellent all around optical performance make it a superb all-rounder ideal for birding and general wildlife observation in all sorts of situations, while its compact, lightweight designs makes it the perfect safari or travel binocular. It's the perfect option when you'd rather not carry a bulky-full size binocular, but don't want to compromise on performance. If you're in the market for a compact, convenient, high performance binocular that delivers on all levels, you're going to want to take a close look at the Lynx HD.

