

High as a Kite

Kite has upgraded its Ibis range of binoculars. *Mike Alibone* took two models out in the field and found much to like about them.

Review: Kite Optics Ibis ED 8x42 and 8.5x50 binoculars

IT WAS ONLY a year ago that I reviewed Belgian company Kite Optics' impressive new 80 mm HD telescope. Since then the company has completely reworked the five models that fall within its Ibis line of binoculars. The open-bridge design, which is gathering pace among optics manufacturers and becoming increasingly popular with birders, is employed to increase user comfort and Kite has also introduced a number of other changes. These include twist-out eyecups, which lock firmly in four positions, and new ED lenses.

Three of the five Ibis models feature 50 mm objective lenses, and I decided to focus most of my attention on the 8.5x50 as I thought this would yield the brightest image. I was not disappointed in this respect – but more of that later. I also tested the 'birder's choice' of 8x42, the smallest model in the range, to see how they compared.

Both are wrapped in grippy rubber armour and feel solidly built, while each offers something different. The larger

binocular weighs in at 868 g and feels heavy when compared to the smaller 42 mm model. This weighs 745 g, which is about average for this size, although there are lighter models on the market. The broad, padded neck-strap provided with the binocular helps lighten the load somewhat, but holding it for long periods of time resulted in tired arms.

Sound mechanics manifest themselves in the strong, solid body hinges and the focusing apparatus, in which the subocular-mounted single-eye adjustment ring provides optimum turning resistance to avoid being accidentally moved from its setting.

One and a half anti-clockwise turns of the single-finger-wide central focusing wheel takes the image from close focus to infinity. It rotates fairly smoothly, but on the smaller model I found it tended to run a little roughly at the lower end of the focusing range. Close focus on the 8.5x50 came in at 3 m during testing – a little more than the manufacturer's quoted figure of 2.4 m – and the close focus of the 8x42 was 1.7 m, again a little over the quoted 1.4 m.

There was a significant difference in field of view between the two models, with the 42-mm binocular's 126 m at 1,000 m offering a noticeable 24 per cent extra width of field over and above the 102 m delivered by the larger model.

However, what the 50 mm binocular may lack in field width it makes up for in image brightness. While both these binoculars produce an exceptionally sharp, bright image, to my eyes this model has the edge when it comes to brightness. And so it should – with all other things being equal, the 5.88

exit pupil of the larger binocular is evident compared with 5.25 for the smaller model.

In terms of image quality, the sharpness runs right to edges of the field, the colours are bright and 'field natural', with the end result a pleasing combination of crispness and illumination. The curvature of field is negligible and the overall colour rendition on the cold side of neutral, but I did detect a higher than average level of chromatic aberration in the centre of the image. This was not highly evident but, being critical, in some instances I was able to see a slight yellowish tinge on the underside of some flying birds when viewed against a grey sky. Arguably, however, all the positive aspects of the image outweigh this negative factor.

In addition to the padded neck-strap, there is a soft case, rainguard and optional tethered objective lens caps, and the manufacturer will replace worn eyecups free of charge throughout the warranty period.

The 50 mm weighs 868 g – more than 100 g heavier than the smaller binocular

Both models produced sharp, bright images



Tech spec

	Ibis ED 8x42	Ibis ED 8.5x50
Price:	£799	£899
Size:	148x126 mm	175x131 mm
Weight:	745 g	868 g
Field of view:	126 m at 1,000 m	102 m at 1,000 m
Close focus:	1.4 m	2.4 m
Gas-filled:	yes	yes
Waterproof:	yes	yes
Guarantee:	30 years	30 years

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