

Hawke Frontier ED 8x43

Reviewed by **Matt Merritt**

WITH these new binoculars, Hawke has brought ED glass below the £300 mark, something that's bound to be attractive to many birders. So, how do they compare with their ED competitors?

WHAT I LIKED

- The view feels very wide and 'walk-in'. It's very bright, too, even when put to the test in murky midwinter twilight, and the image is impressively sharp and natural, with no noticeable colour cast. There's a hint of a halo, but getting your eye position right soon gets rid of that.
- Try as I might, I could find very little in the way of colour fringing. Contrast was excellent, too.
- Focusing is smooth and precise, with just about enough resistance. The chunky focus wheel is close to two fingers wide, and even with gloves on, it offered good grip and moved smoothly. It takes about two and a half clockwise turns to get from close focus to infinity.
- Close focus was impressive, too – the manufacturer's quoted figure of 2m seemed spot-on to me.
- They look good, and feel good in the hands too, with the cutaway design, thumb indents and stippled rubber armour offering comfortable hand positions for extended use.
- The build quality, especially for a binocular costing less than £300, felt very good. There's a real solidity that is reassuring.
- The rubber-covered eyecups twist up and down to three positions, and stayed in place well during prolonged use. They offer a maximum of 16.6mm of eye relief.
- The dioptre adjustment, on the right barrel, is not click-stopped or calibrated, but worked well, and proved stiff enough not to get moved accidentally.
- The neoprene strap was fine – comfortable and easy to adjust.
- The hard protective carry case is excellent. It's capacious and contains a smaller, removable section which would attach to a belt.
- The accessories were good. There are removable tethered objective covers, and the rainguard fitted snugly enough to stay on, but not so tightly that it couldn't be removed easily.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE

- Perhaps there was a small amount of edge softness, and that halo I mentioned earlier. But that's nit-picking, because both problems were easily fixed by taking a few moments to find the right eye position.
- They felt a little heavier than some in the same class, but it wasn't a problem in the field at all, and I don't think you'd even notice unless you'd just used a lighter alternative.

OVERALL VERDICT

THESE are bound to cause a stir among birders, because optically, they are really not too far away from much more expensive ED binoculars, yet clock in at just £300, meaning that even some of their mid-priced competitors can end up looking pricey. One issue, of course, is that with more expensive bins, you're paying for the after-care and durability, too, but build quality on these feels excellent and proved fine in extended use. They're a pleasure to handle, too – comfortable and straightforward, so expect to see more and more of them out there in the field.



HOW DID IT SCORE? (OUT OF 10)

Design and ease of use 9 **Optical rating 9.5** **Value for money 9.5**



FACTS & FIGURES

RRP £299.95

CLOSE FOCUS 2m

DIMENSIONS (height x width x depth) 177x122x65mm

WEIGHT 743g

FIELD OF VIEW 142m @ 1,000m

WARRANTY Hawke worldwide warranty

ALSO SUPPLIED Hard carry case, neoprene strap, rainguard, tethered lens caps

DISTRIBUTED BY Deben Group Industries, Avocet House, Wilford Bridge Road, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1RB.

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