Birding Optics 101
Presented by Kyle Carlsen
Binocular Basics

Learning the Lingo
Power

- The amount of magnification provided by the binoculars
- The first number: 7x, 8x, 10x, etc.
- The number of times the image is magnified
Field of View

- The amount of area that can be seen when looking through your binoculars
- The second number: 32, 35, 42, etc.
- The size of the objective lens
- The larger this number, the larger the objective lens, which means more light
Higher power means more magnification, but also...

- More difficult to hold steady
- Reduced field of view
- Reduced brightness
Shopping for Optics

Questions to Consider
Ask yourself:

- What kind of birding do you plan to do?
- What does your budget look like?
- What size binocular do you want?
What Kind of Birding Do You Plan to Do?
Hawks, Shorebirds, Waterfowl

- Magnification more important
- Field of view less important
- Consider 10x42
In the Woods

- Field of view is very important
- Lower power means better low-light performance
- Lower power is easier to keep steady
- Consider 8x42
In the Backyard

- Close focus is key
- Waterproof not as important
- Weight not as important
- Consider going with heavier, full-sized binoculars to maximize low-light performance
Traveling with Optics

- Traveling birder or birding traveler?
- Traveling birder: exposed to the elements
- Waterproofing, durability is key
Traveling with Optics

- Birding traveler: emergency binoculars
- Compact size is key
- But remember that compact is a compromise
Young Birders

- Ease of use is key
- Wider field of view and lower power
- Avoid compact
- Don’t skimp
- Consider 7x32
Watching Insects

- Close focus is key
- For birds, 8 feet is typically fine
- For insects, 4 of 5 feet is ideal
Other Considerations

- Will you be wearing eyeglasses or sunglasses?
- Ask about the binoculars’ warranty
What Does Your Budget Look Like?
Price Range

- Below $300
- $300 – $600
- $1,000 – $1,200
- $2,000 and above
“When it comes to optics, you should always buy the best you can afford.”
Your binocular should . . .

- Feel good in your hand
- Be easy to use

Always try optics before you buy them!
“The best binoculars will disappear from your awareness while you are using them.”
Size

- Power (8x, 10x, etc.)
- Weight
Focusing Binoculars

- Start by closing your right eye or covering the right objective lens with your hand.
- Focus your left eye on an object approximately 20 yards away and adjust the center focus wheel until the image is in focus.
Focusing Binoculars

- Now close your left eye or cover the left objective lens with your hand.
- Look at the same object (from the same distance) through your right eye.
- Adjust the diopter until the object is in focus.
Additional Resources
Websites and Events
Online Resources

- *Bird Watcher’s Digest* Optics Annual
- www.allaboutoptics.com
- www.binoculars101.com
- www.birdwatchersdigest.com/optics
- Individual manufacturers’ websites and Facebook pages
Optics Retailers

- Eagle Optics
  - [www.eagleoptics.com](http://www.eagleoptics.com)
  - 1-800-289-1132

- Time & Optics
  - [www.gregmillerbirding.com/time-optics](http://www.gregmillerbirding.com/time-optics)
  - 1-866-308-0727
Birding Optics & Gear Expo

- April 4 - 6, 2014
- Columbus, Ohio
- Grange Insurance Audubon Center
- Eagle Optics, Time & Optics, Bird Watcher’s Digest
- www.birdwatchersdigest.com/expo