

**Meopta B1 MeoStar 8x32:
A Review
By
Lee Thickett**



*Lee Thickett
MeoRev001
April 2016*

Meopta B1 Meostar 8x32:

A Review

By Lee Thickett



At the 2015 British Birdfair I spent some time trying out spotting scopes from some of the big names and along the way came across the S2 scope from Meopta, a company that has been swimming around the periphery of my perceptions for some years. I will be conducting a review of the S2 and will report on it in the scopes section later this year, so I will not say any more about it here, except to remark that I was impressed enough to file away the name 'Meopta' as a target for testing at some point in the future. An opportunity duly arose and I was offered the MeoStar B1 8x32 and the S2 to test: perfect.

Meopta is based in the Czech Republic, with a subsidiary company in the USA, and has been producing a wide range of optical products since 1933. For more information about the full range of products and technologies visit: <http://www.meopta.com/en/>. They are strongly rumoured to produce high quality components and even full products for other brands and when you learn that they have a staggering 40+ vacuum chambers for coating lenses and prisms at their factory in Prerov, you can believe it. All of the MeoStar and Cabela's Instinct Euro HD models are manufactured in the Czech Republic and this means all processes from design to optical and mechanical production to assembly, QA testing and finally packaging. The MeoPro HD range are all assembled in the USA as this is the biggest market for this model line.

Let's take a look at the MeoStar. To be frank I am not a fan of the external appearance as shown on the photographs on the Meopta Sports Optics website, but in real life the instrument doesn't look as 'spotty' and comes across as perfectly proportioned in the same way as Leica's Ultravid 32. In fact the MeoStar treads a comfortable middle ground in relation to length and it weighs about the same as Swarovski's EL.

Swarovski EL SV	138mm	595g
Zeiss Conquest HD	132mm	630g
Meopta MeoStar B1	123mm	598g
Zeiss FL	117mm	550g
Leica Ultravid HD+	116mm	535g

I will get one moan over right now: the carrying case is poor being hardly more than a fabric bag with some stiffening material. This isn't a deal breaker by any means and will not bother those who, in any event, either never use the supplied case or always buy something like a Pelikan. Actually the case is not dissimilar to the one that came with my wife's Ultravid, so Meopta are not the only brand to take this route. By the way the case doesn't come with a strap either. You use the binocular lanyard as a shoulder strap by either, unclipping it from the short straps tethered to the bins and clipping it to the case, or pushing the bins into the case leaving the lanyard outside the magnetically closing flap. This isn't ideal because the strap length you need to go across your chest to carry a case is different from the length you need for binoculars around your neck.

Picking the binoculars up and screwing the eyecups up and down, you find 3 stops and a very agreeable action, certainly better in feel than some Zeiss models.

Meopta B1 Meostar 8x32:

A Review

By Lee Thickett



Eye relief is stated as 15.5mm which sounds a bit on the mean side but actually with the eyecups down and wearing my most recent (and sometimes troublesome) spectacles I found easy eye placement and the full field of view with no blackouts. These worked really well for Troubadoris too, who also wears spectacles. However this is not quite the case when not wearing spectacles. Pressing the eyecups into one's eye sockets results in blackouts but you can avoid this by resting the eyecups somewhat on your brows. Troubadoris does this anyway and I found this easy enough in normal viewing circumstances but less so when a quick placement of the bins was required to get on to a rapidly moving bird. I think this would become more natural and speedy with practice, but for those who do not wear spectacles it is something to check.

The rain-guard is very effective and protects the eyepieces admirably. I habitually thread both straps through my 'guards but this rain-guard grips the eyecups somewhat and with both straps utilised it made getting the 'guard on and off a bit of a fiddle. Using one strap only solved this and from what I see many folks use this method anyway.

In the hand the MeoStars feel beautifully balanced and really nice to handle. I expected Troubadoris to demur from this, as she has rather particular tastes in this direction that are usually only satisfied by her Leicas, but to my surprise she took to these like a duck to water. One slight concern is that the hinge is a little less tight than I would prefer. The bins did not actually change IPD during normal and quite vigorous usage but on a couple of occasions when I pulled on the lanyard to untangle the rain-guard / strap I did move the IPD and I wouldn't have expected to with the amount of force I used.

Setting the dioptré is straightforward. The adjuster is in-line with the focus wheel but tapered away from it (see the pic) so that you don't normally touch it as you focus, and isn't one of those 'pull out to engage' adjusters. The adjuster moves in a series of fine clicks and these 'click stops' seem very good at preventing unwanted movement of the adjuster while still allowing a fine adjustment.

The focus wheel itself needs a bit of explanation. It is stiff but with a smooth feel to it and there is absolutely no free play / back-lash. It really feels like a precision laboratory instrument, and I thoroughly enjoyed this, but could not rotate it at high speed. I asked for an explanation of this and received a response from the factory via the UK agent. The bins were designed with hunters in mind, so the focus wheel can be set to a distance and will not be inadvertently moved and the factory also advised that it can't be expected to ease with use either. If you were going out to chase fast-appearing and disappearing warblers (or dragonflies) this unit would not be your first choice, but correspondence with another reviewer has made it clear that there is some variation in focus stiffness from unit to unit, so it would be a good idea to audition more than one unit if this is of concern for you. For many other kinds of nature observation this would simply not be an issue, and if you are like me, you would be delighted with the feeling of precision.

I assessed the unit in a variety of locations but spent most time at the usual lake that I have visited for previous test-work. On arrival the first thing I did was to check for chromatic aberration. Twigs against the sky? Mute Swan swimming in front of dark water? Fine, just a tiny bit of CA if viewing off axis. In normal nature observation I just didn't notice CA at all. Checking

Meopta B1 Meostar 8x32:

A Review

By Lee Thickett



the specifications I can find no reference to extra-low dispersion glass let alone anything more exotic, but the control of CA is excellent.

Scanning around the lake and opposite shore the field of view was more than acceptable and a quick look at the specifications when I returned home showed that, as with size and weight, it is right up there with the alphas:

Field of View at 1,000m	
Swarovski EL SV	141m
Zeiss Conquest HD	140m
Zeiss FL	140m
Meopta MeoStar B1	139m
Leica Ultravid HD+	135m

Perceived sharpness was excellent with a sweet spot (to my eyes remember, you need to check with your own) about 85% of the FOV, which for me is just fine and dandy as I am one of those that centre on the subject and my gaze is not drawn to the edge of the FOV. Taking a close look at the many Tufted Ducks (very similar to Ring-necked Duck) and a fabulous male Goldeneye revealed a super contrast between the black and white, and the optics picked up the metallic sheen of the Tufteds' head colour as they pirouetted on the water. Looking for contrast in less obvious places than black and white ducks, I later checked out some female Mallards and the instrument really brought their superficially dull plumage to life, full of subtle detail and shades of colour. If one was to be really exacting one would say that the view was just, barely, on the warm side, and very attractive it was too. I would call the view relaxing, well balanced and detailed.

The MeoStar comes with a 30 year transferrable warranty in Europe and a lifetime warranty in the USA, but the instrument must be registered within 30 days to qualify for this. Backing this up is an inspection regime at the factory that includes a weatherproofing and collimation test of every unit before it goes for packing.

Summing up, the little MeoStar was simply a delight to use, and it deserves to be on the short list of anyone contemplating spending in the region of £900 / \$850.