

Choosing and Using Binoculars for Birding

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Binoculars are an essential tool for birding! If you don't have a pair, I hope you'll borrow or buy one as soon as possible so you can benefit from practicing with them in and between classes, and on our field trip.

If you can, bring binoculars with you to EVERY class session. We'll review setting up and using binoculars for birding during our first class session. If you'll be buying a pair of binoculars, save this email and use this more detailed information when you are ready to shop for a pair. This email also includes tips for how to adjust and use your binoculars.

Choosing binoculars

Be sure to choose binoculars suitable for birding, which are different from ones suitable for hunting.

1. Visit the Tucson Audubon Society nature shop. They can give you advice about binoculars for birding, and they also sell binoculars (you might save a little sales tax because they're a nonprofit). Shop hours are a little unusual, so check their website before you go.

<https://tucsonaudubon.org/shop/>

2. Watch either or both of these excellent short YouTube videos about choosing and using binoculars for birding.

Choosing binoculars: **Binocular Basics: What do the numbers mean?**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRMceoRQXQU&list=PLEJrOw4niU2ERs5wR93jmyip_iVtnV7BvF&index=6

Using binoculars (first half of video is setup; second half is spotting and scanning): **How to get crystal clear focus with your binoculars**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkPzl-VPmo4>

3. Laura's advice:

-I use 8 X 32 power. I like 8 better than 10 because the "soda straw" you are looking through is larger, so it's easier to get your binoculars on the

bird. I would strongly recommend 8 power magnification, with a range for the second number of 30 to 50 (different brands vary slightly).

-It's a really good idea to go to a shop in person so you can hold a few different pairs. They vary in weight, price, and just how the shape feels in your hands. The Tucson Audubon Nature Shop is a great resource because their patient, helpful staff know about using binoculars for birding, and you can see how different brands feel in your hands.

-You can pay anywhere from \$150 to \$2000. Be sure to pay at least \$100 and to get binoculars that are waterproof. I have heard good things about Celestron and Vortex brands. Beyond that, higher prices get you lighter weight and/or better optics.

-After you get yours, consider swapping out the strap that comes with them for this inexpensive (\$25) but very comfortable one, the Rick Young ultra-light. You can get it on Amazon, choose from a few colors.

https://www.amazon.com/Ultra-Light-Binocular-Harness-Safety-Whistle/dp/B01IFIUPCQ/ref=sr_1_8?crid=17RBS875MQ6YL&keywords=light%2Bbinocular%2Bstrap&qid=1681398582&srefix=light%2Bbinocular%2Bstrap%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-8&th=1

-Practice using binoculars when you're out for a walk, or even keep them in the kitchen or by any window so you can grab them to spot a bird you see outside.

-Watch the second video above for tips on how to adjust your binoculars to fit your face (this is important). We'll also do this together in our first class. If you need help, ask me or another experienced birder to show you.

Happy Birding!

Laura