

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. 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 unusual, so check their website before you go.

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

2. Watch either or both of the 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=pkPzi-VPmo4>

3. Laura's advice:

-I use 8 X 32 power. I like 8 better than higher powers like 10 because the diameter of 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 diameter of the larger lens (for field of view) from 30 to 50 mm (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. In addition to magnification power and field of view, you'll want to consider price, weight, price, and just how they feel and fit 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 hold and try out a few different brands.

-You can pay anywhere from \$50 (junk) to \$2000. Be sure to pay at least \$150 and to get binoculars that are waterproof. I suggest you read online reviews (search "best binoculars for birding"). I have heard good things about Celestron and Vortex brands. Beyond that, higher prices get you lighter weight and/or better optics. Swarovski and Zeiss are popular high-end brands, but if you're new to birding you can buy a good pair for a lot less and trade up later.

-Consider swapping out the strap that comes with your binoculars 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. Keep them out in your home by a window so you can grab them to spot a bird you see.

-Watch the second video above for tips on how to adjust your binoculars to fit your face (this is important). If you need help, ask me or any other binocular user to show you.

Happy Birding!

Laura