

Helios Fieldmaster ED82DS Triplet

Could you save yourself a few quid with this sub-£800 scope? Matt Merritt finds out



Focus wheels are set close together and take some getting used to in the field

Overall feel is of a solid, well-built piece of optical equipment, with fully functioning parts

ED glass provides a bright image which is sharp and the colours feel natural

THIS IS THE top of Helios's range of spotting scopes, boasting a triplet objective lens and ED lens elements, all making it an option for the more expert birder.

Like a number of 82mm scopes these days, its design recalls Kowa's old Prominar 823 a little, and that's really not a bad template to start from. It's not particularly bulky, but it's solidly and very unfussily built.

The 20x-60x zoom eyepiece uses a bayonet fitting, and stayed in place well in the field, while the rotating collar and sun visor are both well made, with the latter staying in place and the former giving you welcome flexibility if you're birding with a group.

There's a really wide and heavily textured twist-control for the zoom, too, perfect if you're wearing gloves or if you're just, like me, rather clumsy, and there's plenty of eye relief.

The rubber covered eyecup is wide and comfortable to use, and although there aren't any obvious intermediate positions for it, it stays in place pretty much wherever you set it.

Where I did struggle a little was with the twin focus wheels. They could do with being a bit more obviously separated, as it was sometimes difficult to find one or the other easily without looking up

from the eyepiece.

The main wheel turns rather stiffly, while the fine focus wheel runs much more freely, which I found took a lot of getting used to, but I should also say that in use out on the field, this

never posed a problem, and focusing was both quick and precise.

Close focus is quoted as 13m, although I thought it was probably a little less than that. The main wheel took just a little less than two anti-clockwise turns from close focus to infinity.

But what about the optics? Well, the image produced by that ED glass is bright, sharp and boasts a very natural colour.

As with all zooms, of course, there's a noticeable fall-off in both brightness and sharpness at the higher magnifications, but no more than you'd expect.

Colour-fringing is hard to find at all at the lower magnifications, even

against bright sun.

Field of view is perhaps a little more of a problem. Between 20x-30x, it's reasonable, and helped by the fact that the image is sharp to the edges, but above that, there's a tunnel effect that does become a little distracting. It depends on how much you use your zoom – if, like me, you rarely go above 30x except to try to confirm a really tricky ID, then I don't think you'd have any worries.

It comes supplied with a well-designed and functional stay-on case, and it never felt particularly heavy out in the field.

Verdict

It's not that easy to find ED scopes for less than £1,000, so the price tag straight away makes this worth looking at. Give it a try – if the design quirks I've noticed don't bother you (and they may well not), then you've got a really solid all-round performer that certainly won't break the bank.



FACTFILE

Field of view

39m-20mm
(@1,000m)

Close focus

13m

Eye relief

19.5mm

Weight

1885g

RRP

£799

Contact

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