

# EXPERT REVIEWS

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## Weight gains

**Birdwatch**  
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(276: 70-71)

Helios's top-of-the-range scope is a durable heavyweight that is not light on performance, as **Mike Alibone** discovered when he took it out in the field.

### REVIEW

## Helios Fieldmaster ED82DS Triplet 20-60x82 telescope

**CURRENTLY** well established in the optics market, the Fieldmaster ED82DS occupies pole position in the Helios telescope range. This substantially chunky instrument is perhaps slipping under the radar when the search is on for a new telescope which offers a high level of performance without associated high costs.

It's a robust piece of equipment, with a magnesium alloy body, which is less reliant on rubber armour for protection. The large 82 mm objective is adequately recessed and further protected by a strong, solid and smoothly sliding lens hood. The body incorporates an adjustable tripod mount which rotates through approximately

225 degrees of the body's circumference, click-stopping in six positions. Although the body is magnesium, the scope weighs just under 2 kg and feels a little heavy.

The dual focusing system is mounted centrally on the body above the prism housing, into which it is partly recessed. Both focusing wheels are finely milled

and of the same diameter, with the 20 mm length of the distal wheel controlling the fast focus and the shorter, 15 mm, one used for fine tuning.

This system works very well in delivering a sharp image, but I did have some problems in its initial use. These arose primarily from the compact size of the wheels combined with their

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June is the ideal month for photographing breeding seabirds, so Steve Young wants to see your best auk images.

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### THIS MONTH'S EXPERT PANEL



**DOMINIC MITCHELL** is *Birdwatch*'s founder and Managing Editor. He has been birding in Britain and abroad for more than 40 years.



**STEVE YOUNG** is Photographic Consultant for *Birdwatch* and an award-winning wildlife photographer.



**MIKE ALIBONE** is *Birdwatch*'s Optics Editor. He has been testing binoculars and telescopes for more than a decade.



**ALAN TILMOUTH** is a Northumberland-based birder who has had a passion for wildlife since childhood.



**DAVID CALLAHAN** Prior to joining *Birdwatch*, David trained as a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum.



**JAMES PACKER** is a principal ecology consultant for ADAS UK Ltd, and a keen Somerset birder and photographer.

### ? Did you know?

**DUAL**-focusing wheels are now commonly used in telescope design. Mounted in tandem on the body, each may vary in both depth and diameter, with one controlling fast 'distance' focusing, while the other allows precision adjustments to be made for final image sharpening.

partial embedding within the body. This minimises the surface area in contact with your fingers, making finding and differentiating between the two wheels tricky until you become familiar with their relative positions. I also found the main wheel a little stiff and 'lumpy' in its rotation, but the fine-tuning wheel turned very smoothly and produced a clean, sharp focus, even at the top of the magnification range.

The scope comes with a 20-60x zoom eyepiece which is securely bayonet fitted; this is locked and released using a small catch directly below the mounting. Its removal serves purely for transportation as there are no other compatible eyepieces. The deep, stippled, centrally positioned band provides plenty of grip and it turns very smoothly and evenly throughout the full range of magnification, while the rubber-covered eyecup extends out by approximately 13 mm. I was not able to see the full field of view when it was fully extended, but the 39-20 m at 1,000 m is a very respectable field range for this telescope's specification and compares favourably with more expensive models.

The image quality is also very high, a significant contribution to which comes from the triplet objective lens – effectively an apochromatic optical system which is designed for the purpose of significantly reducing chromatic aberration within the

image. It works – the image is very sharp practically across the entire field, with negligible 'hairline' softening only at the extreme edge, and it's also bright with rich, deep colours and a pleasing degree of contrast. Chromatic aberration is low but still detectable with some scrutiny. The quality of the image is no doubt buoyed by the inclusion of ED glass and fully multi-coated glass elements.

There is an awful lot of telescope on offer here, providing an attractive package for less than £800, and representing very good value against some more highly priced models. A simple but effective stay-on case is included in the package. Look out for further additions to the Helios range in the very near future. ■

### Further info

- Price: £799
- Size: 390x126 mm (including eyepiece)
- Weight: 1,885 g
- Magnification: 20-60x
- Field of view: 39-20 m at 1,000 m
- Light transmission: 82 per cent
- Close focus: 13 m
- Gas-filled: yes
- Waterproof: yes
- Guarantee: 1 year

### Verdict

- ✓ Image quality is high: sharp with good contrast and colours
- ✓ Chromatic aberration is low across the field
- ✗ Dual-focusing system somewhat difficult to use
- ✗ No choice of eyepieces

## Barrier method works

### REVIEW

## HayMax Organic Drug-free Allergen Barrier Balm

**IT** is the misfortune of birding hayfever sufferers that peak pollen season tends to coincide with some of the best birding times of the year, particularly late spring and early autumn migration periods.

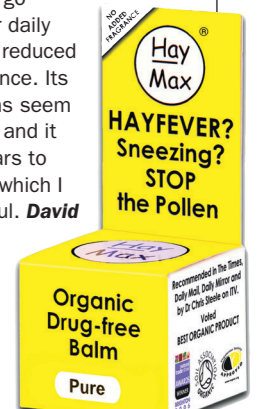
HayMax is a new allergen barrier balm which claims to reduce the amounts of pollen inhaled by a third and to help eight out of 10 users. It claims to be drug-free, with no drowsy side effects, is easy to use and asserts that it is proven to work. So does it?

I used the product this spring, and can report that it certainly does appear to work to a degree. It is applied by a small quantity being placed on the fingertip and smeared inside each nostril, and can last most of the day unless you blow your nose – in which case, reapplication is quick. The small amounts used mean that the fairly tiny pots last longer than might be expected, too. My symptoms didn't entirely disappear, but there was a marked decrease in sneezing.

Researchers at the University of Worcester agreed that the balm acted as an efficient pollen trap in trials, but there appear to have been no comparative studies with similar brands or Vaseline, so any

advantage over more familiar methods is reliant on anecdote. However, while the benefits of organic sourcing of raw materials are debatable, the company assures customers that it buys locally, uses Fair Trade beeswax, thus cutting its carbon footprint, and also recycles and trades ethically – advantages over some brands. Unfortunately, it also advises homeopathy, aromatherapy, acupuncture and acupressure to ease symptoms, which makes one doubt the efficacy of some of the claims.

Available in 5 ml plastic pots in four scents – lavender, frankincense, aloe vera and pure – at a basic level, this product appears to provide an efficient but partial pollen barrier, enabling a hay fever sufferer to go about their daily tasks with reduced inconvenience. Its main claims seem to be true, and it also appears to work – for which I was grateful. **David Callahan**



**MORE INFO** RRP: £6.99 • Size: 5 ml • From: HayMax • [www.haymax.biz](http://www.haymax.biz)

