

Steiner 8.5x26 Wildlife Pro

By Scott Beith

I would like to share a little bit about my background before the review. I started in astronomy as a young kid with a small refractor on a wobbly mount. I left the hobby for many years and returned to it in 1999. By 2002 I became serious about astronomy and have been helplessly addicted ever since. I have owned and used the following binoculars in the past: Bushnell Powerview 12X25 Compacts, Bushnell Powerview 12X50, Oberwerk 8X42 WP Roof Prism, Oberwerk 11X56, and the Coronado 12X60 Binomite II Solar Binoculars. I currently own the binoculars under review (Steiner 8.5X26 Wildlife Pro), and a pair of Bushnell 10X42 Legend Ultra HD.



I purchased the Steiner 8.5X26 Wildlife Pro binoculars through normal channels from B&H Photo in New York, NY. I have no financial or other interest in Steiner or B&H Photo other than being a satisfied customer.

The specifications listed in this review are provided by the manufacturer. I did not measure or test magnification, resolution or effective aperture (with the exception of checking for obvious light cutoff).

I recently purchased the Steiner 8.5X26 Wildlife Pro's because I wanted a high quality, roof prism, compact set of binoculars that would work well for travel, quick looks, and would always be available due to their small size and light weight.

Steiner 8.5x26 Wildlife Pro Manufacturer Specifications:

Magnification: 8.5X

Objective Diameter: 26mm

Weight: 9.7 oz.

Eye Relief: 13 mm

Field of View: 333 feet @ 1,000 yards

Dimensions: (inches) 5.2Lx1.8Hx4.4W

IP (Inter Pupil) Distance Range: 57-73mm

Close Focus: 6.5 feet

Average Price: \$299.00 to \$329.00

Purchase Price (After Rebate): \$239.00

The Steiner 8.5X26 Wildlife Pro is a compact, dual hinge, center focus, roof prism, water resistant, fog proof and shock proof set of binoculars. The Steiners are a handsome piece of observing gear and have "Steiner Germany" marked over the right eyepiece, and "Wildlife Pro 8.5X26" marked over the bridge in front of the focus wheel. The diopter adjustment ring is located on the left eyepiece, and is smooth without any play in the adjustment. The binoculars are phase corrected and the optics are fully multicoated, ensuring excellent light transmission. I checked the optics and I could not detect any light cutoff from the prisms. They are constructed of precision polycarbonate and alloy, and are fully nitrogen purged and sealed. The Steiner Wildlife Pro's are covered in smooth, but "grippy" earth tone rubber armor, and are ergonomically designed with nice touches such as formed thumb rest pads and winged rubber eyecups. The manufacturer states that they offer a close focus distance of only 6.5 feet, which matches what I have observed. The eye relief is listed by the manufacturer as 13mm and although I didn't measure this, it seems close to what I approximate when using the compacts.

It is a fact that pocket binoculars are generally less stable than mid or full sized binoculars. This is due to their small size and light weight. Even with that limitation, these little 8.5X binoculars have proven to be sharp and bright, and an absolute blast to use. The focuser is very smooth and precise and the hinges bend with just the right amount of tension. They seem sturdy and have not shifted at the hinges when viewing. The winged eyecups are nice and are very comfortable. They work well to block stray light from entering from the sides. I don't wear glasses, but for those who do the winged eyecups can fold down for use with glasses.

The included soft case and neck strap are high quality. The neck strap is very comfortable, and has a leather section on each end marked "Steiner Germany". The soft case includes a carry strap and has a divider inside with one section for the binoculars, and another for the neck strap, cleaning cloths, etc... The lens covers are excellent and stay on the binoculars until removed for use. The objective cover is soft rubber and presses into the armored lips protecting the objective lenses. The eyepiece cover is a plastic, tension fit, slipover design and is formed to allow for the Steiner's winged eyecups.



In daytime use these binoculars are fantastic. They will be my "always with me" binoculars. Wildlife, distant buildings, etc... are shown in fine detail. The optics on these are remarkably clear, sharp, and bright. While I have limited experience with compact binoculars, having previously owned only one other set of pocket binoculars, I can definitely tell you that the Steiners are a huge step up in optical performance over the Bushnell Powerview 12X25 compacts that I owned for years.

In night time use the "shakes" are evident. Even at only 8.5X, due to their tiny size and light weight, they are difficult to hold as steady as a larger set of binoculars. They are still quite useful at night and will do in a pinch. Nebulosity in M42 was obvious

(and that was while observing in a location with so many streetlights and porch lights that I could easily read a book with the available light). M45 (The Pleiades), the Hyades, and the Moon looked great. Stars were sharp points with no flaring evident. They remained sharp throughout approximately 85% of the FOV with a touch of softening at the edges. The Moon showed sharp craters and was nice and crisp. While the little 26mm objective lenses won't gather a bunch of light compared to larger binoculars, the quality of the Steiner's optics makes them a nice observing tool for the night sky when something larger isn't available.

For someone looking for an upgrade in optical and build quality over run of the mill compact binoculars, the Steiner 8.5X26 Wildlife Pro is a great option. It isn't prohibitively expensive, and it provides a remarkable performance boost. The build quality is excellent, and the optics are just about everything 26mm can deliver. The Steiners are comfortable, light weight, sharp, clear, and bright. I am very satisfied with my purchase.