

# Zen-Ray binoculars fogproof, waterproof

By JOHN JOHNSTON  
Special Contributor

About 20 years ago, I was hunting on my ranch and watching a feeder on the far side of the property. Using a pair of pocket-sized, low-power binoculars, I could make out a big buck. I mean a really big buck.

It was getting dark quickly when I put up my rifle to make a shot. But as luck would have it, I did not have enough light to take the shot.

When I got back home, I ordered the best pair of European-made binoculars I could afford in eight power. I have used these binoculars for all my hunting needs, till now.

As I got older I started looking for a pair of binoculars in the 10- to 12-power area. So when a Web site for hunters asked me to review a new brand of scopes, I signed up immediately to try the new product.

This spring the package arrived with a new pair of Zen-Ray Optics 10x42 binoculars. As I pulled them out of the case, I knew they had at least a few things I look for in hunting binoculars: rubber coating for protection, eye and objective caps to keep them clean and dust-free, plus a long padded neck strap.

I prefer to carry my binoculars on my off side, over my neck but across my chest. In this way, it puts the majority of the weight on my shoulder.

They weighed in at 27 ounces, which is comfortable but heavy enough to keep them steady during unsupported use.

That evening my wife and I sat on our porch to watch the wildlife. A covey of quail was under a bird feeder about 20

yards from our rockers. I handed her the Zen-Rays, and after she focused them she exclaimed, "I like these. I really like these. They are so clear and sharp."

After several minutes I had to pry them out of her hands. One thing for sure: They passed her test.

Over the next few months, I used these binoculars in the early morning and late evening. The 43mm objectives allowed a tremendous amount of light to be gathered. The factory claims 99.5 percent light transmission to the eyes. That is just about as good as you can get. This is achieved by first-quality glass, rated at the highest rating of BAK4, which is fully multi-coated.

Zen-Ray uses an ultra-high reflectivity silver prism coating. This is important because as light goes from the objective to the eye piece, the light is often reduced.

Last spring I took them on a turkey hunt in the river bottoms of the Leon River. We were in a pop-up blind under some magnificent pecan trees. The weather was cool, and we had a light fog that drifted in along the river.

Even though the hunt was not successful, it was a good test for binoculars. The Zen-Rays did very well staying fog-free. The light-gathering capability at dawn was excellent.

The diopter adjustment, used to fine focus the binoculars to the individual user, is conveniently located at the right eye piece, so other users can easily adjust them for the individual's eyes. The eye cups adjust with just a twist, for those of us who wear glasses.

The body is made of magnesium to keep the weight down and is filled with Argon gas. They are completely water-



PHOTO BY JOHN JOHNSTON

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proof with every binocular tested at the factory to stay submerged for three minutes in five feet of water. This means fog- and waterproof binoculars.

One year in this special edition of the newspaper I mentioned that hunters often took too long to take a shot once they had decided to shoot a particular deer, and the deer was in a good safe position for the shot.

Well, one reader took exception to that statement and said hunters should not rush a shot and spend more time evaluating the deer and the area. Actually, I agreed with what he said, but all evaluation, observation and visual scouting should be done with a pair of binoculars, not with the rifle scope. This is a safety issue that always should be practiced.

As I evaluate products, I make notes on what I do not like or things I wish the

company would change. The Zen-Rays were no exception. The objective covers were too loose and actually fell off during the turkey hunt, so I replaced them with rifle scope flip-down covers. I also wish the hinge span between the eye pieces was capable of being spread wider. Otherwise I really like these binoculars for my type of hunting and wildlife watching.

I know most of you want to know the bottom line: How much do these cost? The price on this model is \$649.99, but as I write this they are on sale for \$369. Considering European optics would cost two to four times this amount, you get a lot for your money with Zen-Ray Optics. They can be found on the Internet.

The only problem now is getting them from the wife to take hunting.



PHOTO BY HAROLD HARTON

## Asleep on the hunt

Many hunters might dream of having that perfect shot at a buck. Maybe Weldon Cloud was dreaming a little too much, as this deer sneaks a bite of his apple as Cloud snoozes. Actually, the late Lampasan staged this photo about 30 years ago with a deer he used to feed.

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