

brilliant value from ZEISS

Conquest HDX series

African Birdlife last conducted a comparative binocular review in the March/April 2013 issue of the magazine. One of the best models then was the Zeiss Conquest, which sits between Zeiss's top-end Victory and entry-level Terra series. Costing only half the price of the premium Swarovski, Leica and Zeiss Victory models, the Conquest combined excellent optics with a robust, no-nonsense build and functional design. The clear winner in terms of value for money, it tied for first place in terms of the judges' favourite binoculars overall.

In August 2024 Zeiss released the Conquest HDX series, using higher-quality glass and a new magnesium alloy body that shaves precious grams off the weight. I was offered the chance to test the 10x42 and 8x42 models, but they also come in the smaller 32mm objective format with 8x and 10x magnification, as well as the massive 56mm objective with 8x, 10x and 15x magnification. They all have the option to add a tripod adaptor – probably a good idea if you opt for a 56mm pair, which weighs more than 1.2 kilograms!

The new HDX binoculars look very similar to the original Conquest HDs, the only obvious difference being the addition of a lock on the individual eye-piece adjuster. It's great when a manufacturer listens to its customers – the lack of such a lock was the only minor quibble with the original model. The new model is made in Japan, but the build quality is excellent. I field tested the 10x42 for several weeks and it handled impeccably.

Close focus distance is an acceptable two metres in the 42mm objective

models and an excellent 1.5 metres in the smaller 32mm objective models. At 715 grams, the HDX 10x42 weighs 10 per cent less than the original Conquest 10x42, but the saving in mass is less in the smaller 32mm objective models. If mass is a major factor, however, then you should consider Zeiss's revolutionary 40mm and 30mm SFL models, which are substantially lighter and not much more expensive than the Conquest HDX.

The most striking feature of the HDX is the brightness and clarity of the image. The field of view is slightly narrower than that of my Zeiss Victory 10x32 (which has an exceptional 130 metres at 1000 metres), but the image quality is superior. Admittedly my binoculars are a few years old, but the difference was sufficient to keep me using the Conquest HDX as my binocular of choice for as long as I was allowed to keep it!

The recommended retail prices of the 42mm models are R23 200 for the 8x and R24 200 for the 10x, while the smaller 32mm models retail at R18 400 for the 8x and R19 400 for the 10x. Given that this is similar to the original Conquest

HDX, and only half the price of the comparative Victory model, I think Zeiss has another winner on its hands.

PETER RYAN



ZEISS Conquest HDX 8x42

Magnification 8x
Lens diameter 42mm
Field of view (1.000m) 128m
Close focusing distance 2m
Weight 715g
Length 150mm

ZEISS Conquest HDX 10x42

Magnification 10x
Lens diameter 42mm
Field of view (1.000m) 115m
Close focusing distance 2m
Weight 715g
Length 150mm

Both feature:

Light transmission 90%
Diopter adjustment range -4/+4dpt
Water resistance 400mbar
Nitrogen filled
LotuTec® coating for unhindered view in all weathers
Operating temperatures -20°C/+63°C