

By John Kiriakidis



## Steiner Compact Binoculars

**Steiner Optic was established by the optics pioneer Karl Steiner back in 1947.** Initially it was a one man operation but quickly grew to employ 50 staff within 6 years. Recently acquired by the Beretta group and now represented here by Beretta New Zealand Limited, Steiner has become one of the largest optic manufacturers on the global scene.

**T**he compact or pocket optics look a little toy-like and I would hazard a guess that some people might wonder why you would bother to buy them.

When you consider that they are in fact a true mini-version of their larger cousins and with the same quality you would expect from a German made binocular, the wondering stops

These little Steiner's are great as a secondary pair of binoculars. Being as small as they are, you can leave them in places where an unplanned situation requires that extra magnification. It could be your glove box, in your blind bag or your shirt pocket when hunting light and you don't want to carry your standard heavy pair of binoculars. For big game hunting they are perfect in the bush to check out that shape or movement which is just that little bit more awkward to do through your scope.



I find them particularly useful when hunting gamebirds. I hunt on Lake Wairarapa where it only shoots well in a big wind. When birds lift up a long way off you can check them out as they wing towards your decoys. The same applies when lying in a goose blind and scanning that thin line of honkers on the horizon that are coming your way. I like to carry a pair in the glove box for scanning a crop or stubble paddock, that far off pond with birds on it and for big game when driving in the back country.

Where they really stand out is when pheasant hunting. On more than one occasion I have spotted a rooster in the distance which makes for an exciting walk up with the gun ready.

Jump shooting and prospecting drains

*Top: Pete looking for tucked-up ducks using the Steiner Ranger Pro 8x32's.  
Centre, Left: Brilliant fold-up side flaps to stop irritating side light.*

**THE STEINER WILDLIFE PRO SERIES ARE PURPOSE BUILT FOR THIS TYPE OF HUNTING: COMPACT AND AT AROUND 300G NOTHING TO CARRY AROUND**



Above: Not a bad pair of compacts for the money.  
Below Right: Cracker binos these, the Ranger Pro 8x32's.

and creeks with my mate Pete is great fun. The last trip we did we walked an area just above Lake Onoke in the Wairarapa. The Steiner Wildlife Pro series are purpose built for this type of hunting, compact and at around 300g nothing to carry around.

We got to a bit of high ground that allowed us to scan a reasonable distance up and down a small creek. You could easily spot pairs and groups of birds just lurking in the fringes and edges of the creek. They were hard to spot with the naked eye but a breeze with the Steiners. The plan of attack was to try to get into range before the birds saw us and took off. We crept in at 90° to the creek using as much cover as possible before jumping them. The anticipation and adrenalin rush you get when stalking in is just brilliant and it doesn't matter if it's ducks, deer or fish. As soon as you run the last few meters all hell breaks loose and birds explode in all directions offering fast and furious shooting. On this little morning shoot we ended up with 9 mallards, 1 spoonie and 5 paradise ducks. Not bad considering the benign weather conditions.

I tested four Steiner compacts from 3 different model groups, the Ranger Pro, Safari Pro and Wildlife Pro. They all have different configurations allowing the buyer to pick what suits them.

**Ranger Pro 8x32**

The Ranger Pro is just a small version of a traditional hunting binocular. They feel good to hold and are well designed with a rubberized textured surface and thumb grips. The new NBR rubber armouring is resistant to oil, acid or any weather conditions so you won't lose your grip. The Ranger Pros are

also made from an extremely tough fibre-glass reinforced high-performance plastic material that was originally designed for space travel, making them relatively light but very strong.

They have twist-up eyecups fitted which adjust to three positions. Adjusting these felt and sounded somewhat agricultural but worked. A feature I really liked was that the eyecups have triangular flaps made out of silicon rubber on the side that can be folded down or raised up, offering protection from incidental light from the side. The Ranger Pro also comes standard with flip-down ocular lens covers that can be removed if desired.

The Diopter adjustment was positive and easy to use and the focus wheel is large enough to be used with gloves.

Optically the Ranger Pro 8x32's are good. They have very slight pin cushioning but it isn't that noticeable. For the clarity test on the USAF chart they scored a respectable Group 0, element 1. The colour reproduction was excellent and true to life, which is great given some of the earlier Steiner's I've played with that had poorly coloured lenses. The field of view for a small set of binoculars is excellent at 130m @1000m.

**Value for Money Rating:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Optic Rating:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Performance Rating:** 1 2 3 4 5



**Wildlife Pro 10.5x28 & 10x26**

These are the top models from the Wildlife Pro series and here we start getting into the true mini or compact versions. The Wildlife Pro series are double hinged and can be folded into a very small envelope when not in use as well as easily adjusted to suit your face.

They have a similar construction to the Ranger Pros but the rubberised exterior isn't textured. Although small they are easy to hold and have thumb grips on the bottom and raised bars on the top bridge to provide a solid grip. The eye cups

aren't adjustable but they do have the same excellent feature of soft silicon triangular flaps to offer side protection from incidental light.

Like the Ranger Pro, the Diopter adjustment was positive and easy to use and the focus wheel is also large enough to be used with gloves.

Optically they also performed well given their size and I didn't perceive any distortion but as you get into these smaller lenses you do get a bit of rolling ball effect when panning the horizon. Not really a major but noticeable.

The performed well on the USAF chart scoring Group 0, element 2 and 1 respectively. The colour reproduction was good and lifelike but you do lose light gathering ability with the smaller objective lens and hence the image isn't as bright as it could be.

**Wildlife Pro 10.5x28**

Value for Money Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Optic Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Performance Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

**Wildlife Pro 10x26**

Value for Money Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Optic Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Performance Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

**Safari Pro 8x22**

The real baby of the group the Safari Pro when not in use can fold down into an envelope size of 100mm x 80mm. This means you could just slip them into your shirt pocket. Like the Wildlife Pro they are double hinged and even though they are tiny they still have all the functionality of the others with their



The Steiner compact family.

diopter adjustment and fast focus systems.

As with the Wildlife Pros, having a small objective lens means that you get rolling ball effect and dull image. The clarity also suffered when tested on the USAF chart at with a score of Group -2, element 1

Value for Money Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Optic Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Performance Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

**Conclusion**

Steiner compact binoculars are a worthy accessory to a hunter's kit, particularly as a secondary or backup pair of binoculars. But in saying that no hunter would be disadvantaged or embarrassed by having the Ranger Pro 8x32's as their only hunting binoculars, I was very impressed with their clarity and colour reproduction and for the price they are a good buy. For me the Ranger Pro 8x32's and the Wildlife Pro 10.5x28's stood out but if you wanted something even smaller then the other two worked almost as well.



Specifications Ranger Pro 8x32	
Retail price 10/5/10	\$873.00
Focus system	Centre
Lens Coating	Fully multi coated
Field of View	130m@1000m
Close focus	1.9m
Water/Fog Proof	Yes (nitrogen filled, airtight-dustproof-waterproof to 3m)
Length	130mm (eye cups retracted)
Weight	601g
Warranty	10 years

Specifications Wildlife Pro 10x26	
Retail price 10/5/10	\$531.00
Focus system	Centre
Lens Coating	Fully multi coated
Field of View	95@1000m
Close focus	2.6m
Length	120mm (eye cups retracted)
Weight	325g
Warranty	30 years

Specifications Wildlife Pro 10.5x28	
Retail price 10/5/10	\$766.00
Focus system	Centre
Lens Coating	Fully multi coated
Field of View	90@1000m
Close focus	2.6m
Length	110mm (eye cups retracted)
Weight	353g
Warranty	30 years

Specifications 8x22 Safari Pro 8x22	
Retail price 10/5/10	\$299.00
Focus system	Centre
Lens Coating	Fully multi coated
Field of View	125@1000m
Close focus	3m
Length	90mm (eye cups retracted)
Weight	248g
Warranty	10 years