

OPTICS THAT COMPLEMENT LONG-RANGE SHOOTING

A necessary part of the big-game hunter's equipment are good binoculars. Good glasses help hunters find animals swaddled in brush, and they also allow the smart deer or elk hunter to verify that the big-game animal he's about to shoot is wearing the right rack. Those operations take clear, bright glass with plenty of magnification. Usually, 10X glasses are the top end of the useful magnification scale, mainly because as power increases, image quality falls because the shooter can't hold the glasses still.

However, the Zeiss 20-power 60-mm objective stabilized binocular (model Porro 20x60S B/GA T* C.F.) seeks to correct that trade-off. Except for its price—\$4,867—and weight, the unit was wonderful. The fabulously expensive German 20x60S binocular is bright, clear, durable, and easy to use, we found in field testing last year.

Carl Zeiss Optical of Petersburg, Virginia, imports the Aalen, Germany-based parent company's products. The Zeiss 20x60S (catalog number 52 60 00) is one of several rubber-armored binocular products sold in the United States. It is the stabilization feature that sets the Zeiss 20x60S apart from other optics, as the S designation in its name suggests. Made necessary because high-magnification glasses are hard to hold still enough to use, stabilization accounts for a big chunk of the item's cost. Introduced in 1990, the mechanically stabilized porro-prism system compensates for shaking in the user's hands. To activate the stabilization feature, the user presses a button on top of the glasses. Instantly, the image in the binocular changes from a I've-had-way-too-much-coffee-this-morning picture to one that seems to float slowly.

The Zeiss binocs use a suspension system that allows all the relevant optical components to sway in line with the movements of the hands. The result of the floating optics system is that light rays always fall on the same image plane. This projects a steady image onto the user's retina.

The 20x60S weighs 58.6 ounces (1,660 grams) and measures 10.8 inches (275 mm) in overall length. It is 6.3 inches (161 mm) wide. It can be focused to within 46 feet (14 meters). Dividing the lenses' objective diameter (60 mm) by their magnification (20X) yields an exit pupil of 3 mm. Its field of view at 1,000 yards is 150 feet. The binocular has diopter adjustment, a porro reversal prism system, tripod threads (3/8 and 1/4 inches), rubber armor, multicoated lenses, an eyepiece cover, and fold-back eyecups. It comes packaged in a padded aluminum case.

As we noted above, the Zeiss glass was brilliantly bright and clear. During extended periods of use, we also noted that the product produced less eyestrain than spotting scopes we have tested.

In low-light situations, the 20x60S was among the brightest products we've seen. In the field, it is possible to carry the 20x60S around your neck, but we don't advise it. Its 3.5-pound mass will feel like a boat anchor at the end of a long day of hunting. For hunting it is better used, we think, in spot-and-stalk situations or in a blind or stand. Carrying the glass 100 or 200 yards from a jeep and then taking it back to the jeep is smarter, in our opinion. The stabilization feature allows the hunter to leave the tripod or monopod at the house—a situation not possible with many other products.

The product's focusing and diopter adjustments worked smoothly and easily, as did engaging the stabilization system. The supplied nylon strap kept the glass securely around the neck, even if it did bite into the viewer's skin. Rubber cups for the eyepieces kept dust off the unit's lenses. The supplied, lockable aluminum case prevented the binocular from being dinged during transport.



Above: Zeiss's 20-60S stabilized binoculars are bright, sharp, and image-steady, thanks to an expensive internal mechanism. It allows the hunter to hand-hold the 20X optics.

GGG Recommends

✓ We were impressed with Zeiss's Porro 20x60S B/GA T* C.F., 20-power 60-mm objective stabilized binocular. As a complement to long-range guns like the 7mm STW and Weatherby .30-378, the 20x60S delivers usable handheld 20X power and clarity.

Still, the unit's \$4,867 cost is out of our price range, as it is most other hunters' budgets. We can only say that if you can afford the Zeiss 20x60S, you won't be disappointed.

For more information, contact Carl Zeiss Optical, Inc., 1015 Commerce St., Petersburg, VA 23803, telephone (800) 338-2984, fax (804) 862-3734.