

Alpen Optics —

AS SEEN IN
NZG&H MAGAZINE
NEW ZEALAND

Optics Editor Donald MacDonald checks out a new brand on the market...



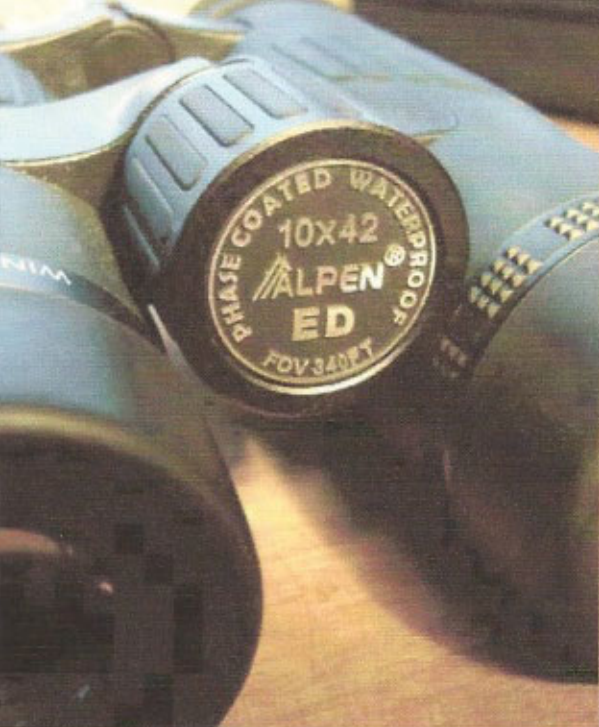
The Wings models have tough rubber-
armoured polycarbonate barrels, and pivots
fore and aft to provide complete rigidity.

MODEL #585—8X42

MODEL #588—10X42

MODEL #592—8X42ED

MODEL #595—10X42ED



Don found that all the moving parts; focus wheel, diopter setting, pivots etc., operated smoothly and precisely.

The Alpens come in a hard protective case that includes a softer open pouch. There's also a good-sized neck strap.

The Alpen Company was established in 1997 with the objective of developing and producing superior quality products at an affordable price. This is a claim made by many an optics company, old and new, and I hold a certain amount of skepticism whenever I hear this particular statement. This was the case until I took my first look through the Alpen "Wings" 10x42 ED's. They may well have pulled it off.

BACKGROUND

The Alpen Company was founded by Tim Gardner and Tony Proper. Both gentlemen held senior positions with the former internationally recognized optical company, Bausch & Lomb. With a considerable amount of experience between them, they started to formulate a

plan using their own ideas to create a new range of optics. In a short space of time compared to some manufacturers, they have developed over 70 optical products from monoculars to spotting scopes. Alpen optical products are manufactured to a very high standard, so much so that six of their items have won the prestigious Outdoor Life "great buy" award in nearly as many years.

It is worth noting that Alpen even offers a pink pair of binoculars and is the first optics company to partner with a National Breast Cancer Foundation with profit portions going towards finding a cure. To avoid being beaten up by my hunting buddies I may not purchase a pink pair for myself, but for such a good cause there are always my wife or sister's birthdays coming up!

FEATURES

The Alpen Wings 10x42 ED's are compact twin-pivot roof prism binoculars with a weight of just 23oz (652g) thanks to the composite polycarbonate body that leaves aluminum for dead when it comes to strength and durability. The Wings feature BAK4 (barium crown glass) optics complete with fully multicoated lenses, phase coatings to enhance brightness, image clarity, and contrast. The benefit of barium crown glass is that it suffers from less chromatic dispersion and other optical problems; this is mainly due to its density compared to a lighter, cheaper glass. To give you an idea of its density, powdered Barium sulphate is also used as a contrast agent for imaging the human gastric system as it is so dense that it can be seen very well on X-ray.



\$125 to \$628

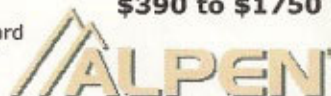


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AS SEEN IN
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NEW ZEALAND
MAY/JUNE 2010

The bright, fog proof Alpens allowed Don to locate this fallow spiker in thick mist at a distance of around 120 meters. Don dropped it with his .270 and returned the following morning to haul the deer out.

The Wings ED's have a good exit pupil size and field of view of 340 feet at 1000 yards. In addition they also have an eye relief of 15mm and a close focus distance of 8.5 feet. On the ocular end of the pivot, the focusing wheel is situated in a central position and the right barrel encompasses the diopter setting wheel. As with most of the Alpen binocular range, they are waterproof, fog proof, and well protected with rubber armouring. The Wings ED model, as with most mid-range brands are made in China which helps keep manufacturing costs down. However they are well finished, come complete with a comfortable neoprene neck strap, rubber lens caps and two durable cases. One of which is an open design.

TEST TIME

At time of writing I also had in my possession a pair of Swarovski EL 10x42's, so I decided to compare the brightness and clarity of the Wings ED against some of the best optics in the world today. I was taken

aback to find that the Alpens were almost 10% brighter. After this seemingly unfair comparison with top range binoculars I can confidently say that the Wings ED's have an image quality that exceeds the mid-range label.

The Alpens have a smooth-turning focus wheel with 1-3/4 revolutions through the range and a diopter setting that was similarly smooth. Although readily mobile, the diopter was easy to reset with raised grips that aided in making precision adjustments. The twin pivots were also smooth and precise with no play within the mechanism and gave the barrels of the binoculars complete rigidity. The cam operated eye-piece adjusters rotate out to just the right distance, suiting both eyeglass wearers and those who don't need glasses. As with a lot of binoculars I've handled recently though, the glue holding the rubber covers in place was a bit thin, and if this fails it allows the covers to rotate and slip off, especially when you're pulling the lens caps off them.

Optically, the Alpens gave a true to life image with a slightly higher saturation of color which I believe is due to the excellent level of brightness these binoculars provide. Colors really jump out at you. As with all binoculars, I tested the resolution against a linear discrimination chart and the Alpens were able to discriminate or resolve vertical and horizontal lines spaced 0.011 inches apart. This is similar to the spacing between the 9 and the 4 on the barcode on this magazine's cover, at a distance of 30 feet.

FIELD TEST

There is no such thing as bad weather when it comes to hunting, only inappropriate clothing. Despite low cloud and the type of wet mist that seems to saturate everything down to the core, I headed out for a deer and started questioning my previous statement. Nonetheless the Alpen Wings ED's proved to be just the ticket in such poor light and conditions. The outstanding brightness the



Ben is just 2-1/2 years old, but already familiar with the world of hunting.

binoculars provided was probably the only reason that I got onto an animal. It is never easy looking through wet mist, especially at dusk with water running down your glasses. But a deer was seen and at around 120 metres I managed to drop it cleanly with my .270. After doing

the necessary field dressing business I left the carcass for an early morning pick up with our 2-1/2 year old son Ben. He's always in hot pursuit when dad leaves the house with a rifle, and finding the deer that dad had shot provided a little more adventure for him.

CONCLUSION

There are over 80 optics manufacturers in the world today. Some steadfast firms have been around since binoculars were first invented and still have a good hold on the market. Some are relatively new to the game, and either have products that take a long time to develop, or seem to disappear, never to be heard of again. The Alpen Company is one to watch as they have the potential to succeed in their objective – putting out superior quality products at very good prices, going by the product tested here.

The Wings ED's are a great buy and few if any midrange purchasers would be disappointed with their performance. Now the bit you've been waiting for; quality over value for money. The Alpen Wings retail around the early \$900 mark and you would probably have to pay quite a bit more to beat them. ■

The Alpen range can be seen on the web site: www.alpineoptics.co.nz – or for the current price list and catalogue contact Grant Bisset in Wanaka: 0274 323 121. Email: info@alpineoptics.co.nz

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