05 Binoculars

1. **Steiner Wildlife Pro** $279
The Pro's aircraft-grade aluminum housing was unfazed by snow and a stream dunk. And the slick "fast, close" focusing system makes it easier to find—and follow—your subject. 8.5x26; steiner-binoculars.com

2. **Minox Minoscope** $199
If you're more likely to be looking at distant couloirs than shorebirds, this featherweight (5.3-ounce) monocular does the trick. It comes with a tripod mount and, like its two-tubed cousins, has a twist-up, twist-down eyecup and an ergonomic grip. 8x25; minox.com

KILLER VALUE

3. **Carson XM-HD** $350
All you need to know: Thanks to a proprietary lens coating, the XM-HD delivers images as sharp and crisp as binocs twice the price. 8x42; carson-optical.com

4. **Bushnell Legend** $440
This updated classic has multi-position eyecups that fit well with glasses or without, ergonomic thumb grooves, and excellent clarity in all light. 10x42; bushnell.com

5. **Minox HG 8x33 BR** $839
The HG stands for "high grade," and testers agreed it's worthy of the acronym (and price). Not only are they the most comfortable binocs to hold; the HG consistently dished up brighter and crisper images than all the others. 8x33; minox.com

6. **Vortex Fury** $300
These pocket-size compacts deliver impressive optical performance for such a small package. Serious birders might want more power and clarity, but amateurs won't be disappointed—or burdened (they weigh just 11.8 ounces). 8x28; vortexoptics.com
—TOM TIBERIO

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