I'm not a robot



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As an avid backpack hunter and now guide/outfitter, I am always looking for creative ways to shed weight from my pack. However, sometimes the juice isn't worth the squeeze and some of the lightest gear just won't hack it when it comes to durability or functionality. This has led me at times to fall back on a slightly heavier piece of gear that just
works better. Swarovski in my opinion has never been a company to sacrifice any level of quality for weight savings so when they released the new ATC/STC 17-40x56mm Spotting ScopeMy Experience With Small Spotters I have owned some of these "baby" spotters in the past, such
as the Vortex razor 50mm and the Kowa 55mm spotter. Both of those small scopes left me wanting. The razor lacked clarity compared to alpha glass. And the Kowa 55mm was the best small spotting scope to date and I packed it around for a couple
of years. It had great clarity, however, I just could never fall in love with the overall viewing experience. I reverted back to the tried and true 65mm spotting scope, with a Leica APO Televid 25-50x 65mm. Swarovski announced the release of the ATC/STC line and I immediately
purchased one on backorder. I knew that I would have to personally test this in the field against some of the top 65mm spotting scopes if I was going to consider packing it over my Leica. When I received the ATC, I was shocked at its compact size. It might actually be at risk of getting lost inside my pack! It weighed just a shade over two pounds
naked. So far, so good, but I would need field time to see if it holds its own. Read more here on the Swarovski website. Swaro ATC out to glass some open country, comparing it against my Leica. I was immediately impressed with the clarity of the little spotter; it was sharp
from edge to edge and even at distances beyond a mile, it seemed to deliver very crisp images of deer. The viewing experience through the wide integrated eyepiece was nothing short of fantastic. It was exactly the same as looking through the wide integrated eyepiece was nothing short of fantastic. It was exactly the same as looking through the wide integrated eyepiece was nothing short of fantastic. It was exactly the same as looking through the wide integrated eyepiece was nothing short of fantastic.
ATC gathered light very well at dusk, however (and obviously,) the 65mm won out in this field but not by much. As we know, the smaller the objective size in a scope of equal quality, the less light it will gather—there's is no way around this so if weight is not a factor then carrying the largest objective possible only makes sense. For me personally, the
weight savings was worth the marginal loss in light. The Leica was getting the boot. Glassing up deer with the new ATC. Swarovski ATS HD 20-60x 65mm spotting scope! Another great opportunity to give the little
ATC a head-to-head against a top competitor. To set the stage, we were glassing deer at about 1.5 miles away on an overcast afternoon. The scopes were side by side on tripods with both zoom set to 30x. Going back and forth I immediately noticed the larger field of view in the ATC and how buttery smooth the zoom and barrel focus adjustment were
on this new scope. To my eyes, the clarity of the image seemed to favor the ATC as well, although just slightly. I'm not sure if there are updated glass coatings in the small spotter, or if it is because it is all one integrated piece without a removable eyepiece, or the fact that this particular scope is brand new. But it seemed to be just a touch sharper
than the ATS. The viewing experience also was a little better in the ATC, but this may be due to the 20-60x eyepiece on the ATC being more "tunnel" like. It may have been a better comparison against the favored 25-50x wide-angle eyepiece from Swaro'. Do note that the ATC only reaches out to 40x, so if maximum zoom is a factor then, the higher
zoom range of the ATS would trump the smaller scope and it will also inherently gather a little more light being that it has a larger objective diameter. The ATC 17-40x56mm HD spotting scope. Conclusion I think Swarovski nailed it with this new spotting scope, it will be in my pack for years to come. There is no
such thing as the perfect piece of glass; to gain in one aspect will be to sacrifice in another. However the small amount of light gathering and zoom given up in this small spotter is marginal compared to the weight and size savings that it offers. This scope punches far above its weight class and you can feel confident in packing it along. Order yours
here. Feel free to reach out with any questions you might have here. Click here to learn more about Live Wild Outfitters. Read the rest of our optics reviews here. Released in 2017, the Swarovski BTX stormed the high-power binocular scene. In my opinion, the BTX is a revolutionary optic that changes how hunters glass for game. The BTX is really an
eyepiece that attaches to Swarovski's modular ATX spotting scope system. Power depends on the chosen objectives (See an in-depth review of the ATX system here by Rokslide optics writer, Matt Cashell.) The BTX was born out of demand for a high powered binocular that
Swarovski Optik first created nearly 30 years ago. Back then, they made a product called the Twin Telescope. But it was expensive, big, heavy, and not easy to transport, so a substantial number of these were
never sold. Consequently, production stopped, but the demand in the USA still remained. With the creation of the MTX system in 2012, Swarovski was able to answer that demand with the BTX. The AdvantageSo what does more than doubling the power of the 15X really do for a hunter besides keep him driving old
trucks?I first discovered the value of the ultra high-mag bino on a high country scout back in 2019. My BTX (permanently lent to me by Ryan Avery) landed on my doorstep-signature required- just two days before I was leaving. It was big, heavy, a little cumbersome, but balanced well on a tripod.I stood in my driveway and pointed it at a mountain
located 13 miles (as verified by my onX Hunt App) south of town. Even at that distance, if an elk or deer would have been on an open slope or skyline, I knew I could have identified it. I quickly made space for it in my horse panniers then once on the mountain, my Stone Glacier Krux EVO 3300Two days later, sitting on a ridge at 9500 feet, I was
finding and classifying bucks better than I could with a high quality spotter. With both eyes open, (the way God intended us to see) the BTX more. I've glassed bucks at nine miles (couldn't see the antlers but by body size, behavior, and
location, I knew what it was.) I've found bedded and obscured bucks I'm sure I'd have never have seen with any other optic. The BTX picked up this nice buck bedded at 2.4 miles as verified by onX Hunt appEven though its power is 15X less than the upper end of my Swarovski ATS 25-50X80mm, with both eyes open, I just see more. Glassing
effectively isn't just about power, but a comfortable viewing experience, keeping you on the glass longer and faster. The amazing edge-to-edge clarity makes you think you're watching an HD movie on the big screen. The BTX does have a
learning curve and some disadvantages that you need to consider before trading in the wife's new car. DistanceWhile I've used the BTX successfully at under a mile, I find it's real sweet spot begins there. Because the FOV is only 96' at 1,000 yards, (59% smaller than the 234' of my 15X SLCs) it's harder to effectively glass at under a mile. I'll use my
8x ELs or those 15x if I'm restricted to that distance. However, if I'm in a place where I've got a one to a five mile section of country to glass, this is where the BTX is in its grooveAs I've said for years in my articles, when you start glassing
that much country, you're odds skyrocket of finding game (Top 10 Glassing Mistakes) If I add the Magnification Extender (ME) 1.7X, I can go farther, but that accessory is better suited to classifying antlers or unknown objects (more on that below). FOV Advantages and LimitationsI'm not contradicting myself here, but the advantage of the BTX is the
seemingly wide FOV. I say seemingly because it's actually smaller compared to the 15X as noted above, but with the design, the image seems larger than the area your eyes typically focus on. The incredible 21mm of eye relief on the BTX lends itself to maximizing FOV (for comparison, the 15X SLC has "only" 16mm of eye relief). This makes it easier
to settle in and scan across, or up and down the view than with my 15x. It could very well be that the smaller FOV of the BTX just forces me to concentrate more (the more I glass, the more I believe there is some lower brain stem-that is involuntary-input going on that makes completely understanding glassing difficult.) This helps me look at more
detail in the image compared to other optics where my brain keeps telling me to move the optic. The incredible edge-to-edge clarity only adds to the usable FOV. To note, even with the generous 21mm of eye relief, I still couldn't see the max FOV when wearing my eyeglasses. That could be my particular eyeglasses, but do make sure you try the BTX
before buying if you're a four-eye-kind-of-guy. Mirage Not unique to the BTX, mirage is noticeable in all high power optics. I mention it because even if you find that great vantage with the one to five miles of country to view, if conditions aren't right, you might be limited by mirage. Not a lot you can do about it, but you'll thank the good Lord for days
with high clouds and when you can be out at first and last light as those are often the BTX. I've found that if I can change my viewing angle, that can sometimes alleviate mirage until conditions improve. Edge of Daylight Performance I've only used the 95mm objective and can say with it's 2.7mm exit pupil, you won't be the last
man standing 40 minutes after sundown; however, low light performance is still pretty good. With Swarovski's newly released mammoth 115mm objective lens, the exit pupil bumps up to 3.1, but still below the 15x SLC's 3.7. The BTX is very specialized and won't be a do-everything-for-everyone optic. Tripods/Heads Considerations The BTX is best
suited for the Swarovski CT tripod with the DH 101 Head (my video review here). That's a big carbon footprint to pack around, but you'll find that the Outdoorsmans Standard (reviewed here) will do the job well, saving you ounces and bulk. The Outdoorsmans Standard (reviewed here) will do the job well, saving you ounces and bulk.
great balance, you can get by. I've also used the BTX on my SLIK 624 tripod (review here) on backcountry hunts successfully when paired with the Pan Head. In fact, that's what I prefer if I'm packing the set-up on my back. As the BTX is an angled optic, you'll save a few inches of tripod height compared to a straight optic. Swarovski BTX on the
Outdoorsman's Standard TripodFinally, I've used my BTX a ton on the Outdoorsmans Window Mount (review here), probably totaling over half my use-hours. Paired with the Pan Head and setting myself on a pillow so I can get above the angled ocular lenses, it's a pleasure to break down a unit from various roads and even highways. The very first big-
buck spot I did with the BTX was from a major highway pullout. I found two good bucks at 4.5 miles as the big rigs sped by just a few feet away. If you want to see that video, hit my Instagram Page here. Even with mirage conditions, I was able to classify both those bucks to the "big" category (to note, I found the bucks with the BTX, but shot the
video through my 25-50x80mm ATS spotter, as I didn't yet own the Phone Skope adapter mentioned below.) Magnification Extender The ME 1.7x to the optic. In the case of the 95mm, the ME takes the 35x to 60x, putting it on par with a high-mag spotter. But, does
the ME replace a spotter? As this BTX is going to put you over 6lbs, the ability to leave the spotting scope home offsets the weight (and bulk) penalty significantly. The ME 1.7x. Image courtesy of Swarovski OptikI've spent a year and multiple glassing sessions trying to answer this question. I put together a short video in real field conditions (and a
30" buck!) below that I think answers it. If you don't have six minutes to watch, I'll say this: If you get over the learning curve of using the ME, and are patient, you can leave the spotter home. One downside is the ME does darken the image considerably, so it's not for twilight use in most cases, but high mag spotters have the same
limitations.DigiscopingSwarovski offers a digiscoping system called the VPA. It'll set you back about $250. I didn't test one, as Phone Skope offers a very affordable, functional, and as always, lightweight digiscoping adapter. I used the adapter with my iPhone 11 Phone Skope case with flawless ease. This is the same case that fits on my Swarovski
25-50x80mm, and only takes seconds to switch adapters over to the BTX.BTX AdapterProtection also ran the Phone Skope BTX neoprene skin. It's a little work getting it on, but once installed, it offers a lot of protection and does not interfere with the ME installation, nor tripod mounting. At less than $140 bucks, it's going to save you hundreds of
dollars over the Swarovski case!!!Phone Skope Armor Protective Cover and Digiscoping AdapterSummaryThe BTX is a highly specialized optic that fills a niche for the western hunter. It's superior image will let you glass like you never have before. It may even change the way you hunt. On the downside, it's heavy and bulky and will tend to get left
home more than your other glass. It also costs more than a family vacation and will leave you with the feeling of buyers remorse if you don't easily have the cash for it. If you're not able to swing the BTX, no worries. The 15x platform won't leave you dancing with the ugly step sister. In fact, I'm still using my 15x SLCs (and other brands of the same)
about as much as I ever have. They're more versatile and easier to carry. Depending on where you live and how you hunt, you may not use the BTX an extravagant over-the-top-lifestyles-of-the-rich-and-famous optic, and I won't argue.
But if you're budget has plenty of room, and glassing big BIG country is your technique, I've never used another optic that can perform at the level of the BTX. It's simply Big Time Xtreme glassing at its finest!You can ask Robby questions or comment on this review hereRead more about all-things-mule-deer-hunting in my book. Signed copies are
available in the Rokslide store, or you can go Amazon for faster delivery. Swarovski ups the power of the NL Pure line with the new 14X52. Like so many hunters across the West, I'm a 10×42 binocular guy. The configuration is so versatile. It isn't too hard to get a steady view hand-held, and it has enough magnification to make good use of a tripod
The 4.2mm exit pupil is bright enough for just about any hunting scenario. It's just a good all-rounder. High Magnification binoculars where I have really appreciated them. All-day glassing sessions over expansive snowy burns for migrating elk come
immediately to mind. Pronghorn hunts from the truck are another. When mounted on a tripod, there is no better tool for grid-glassing those huge vistas than a high-magnification binocular. The additional 15x or 18x magnification really pulls out the long-distance details. The issue is, they don't have the 10×42's versatility. They are tall, heavy, and
bulky. So most don't fit in normal sized binocular on the hunts that benefit from them, I generally have taken a lower binocular along as well, for those handheld glassing tasks. The narrower field of view of the big binos makes quick
scanning ... less quick.I can see why they are so popular with certain hunters, however. Coues deer hunts are a perfect match. Picking out those tiny deer at long distances in the desert just begs for a tripod-mounted high-magnification binocular. Really, any hunt that entails glassing long distances from one location is a good scenario for a high-magnification binocular.
magnification binocular.15x Binocular OptionsThere are quite a few good options for hunters that are looking at these high magnification binoculars. There are high performing options from brands like Maven, Vortex, Zeiss, and others. Two of my personal favorites are the Meopta Meostar HD 15X56 and the popular Swarovski SLC
15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL. I was able to borrow a 15 \times 56 SLC is widely regarded as a top performer and made a good comparison with the new 14 \times 52 NL.
deficiencies, although the center hinge tension was a bit too loose for my liking. The NL came directly from Swarovski with nice, tight hinge tension. Specifications Note: I measured the binoculars on my kitchen scale without their respective lens covers for the weights. Swarovski NL Pure 14×52
                                                                                                 2 lb. 10 oz.FOV (@ 1000 yds.) 279 ft.
                                                                                                                                                                       234 ft.Exit pupil
                                                                                                                                                                                                       3.6mm
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        $2399Immediately, we see some big differences, with the NL coming in
shorter, lighter, and with a significantly wider FOV ... but at an additional $1100.Optical PerformanceI did the usual close-range resolution testing with both binoculars tripod mounted. I followed this up with longer-range testing at over 500 yards with my trusty 8X11 eye chart, again tripod
mounted. This testing was eye-opening. Resolution In close-range testing, the NL resolved one smaller element on the resolved one smaller element. In the long-range testing, the NL resolved one line better on the eye chart, and the
difference was pretty clear. Additionally, the NL resisted mirage better. I consistently felt like I could cut through the atmospheric disturbance better with the NL wins here again. The NL 14X52 has rich colors with great differentiation among shades. This is
especially notable in the deeper shadow areas. Field of View (FOV) The 15X56 SLC has a pretty good FOV spec of 234 feet at 1000 yards. The NL Pure, though, is significantly wider at 279 feet at 1000 yards. The NL Pure, though, is significantly wider at 279 feet at 1000 yards. The NL Pure, though, is significantly wider at 279 feet at 1000 yards.
useful to compare the FOV area at 1000 yards. So if the hunter was viewing a perpendicular surface like a vertical cliff face. With the NL, the hunter would be able to see 43,005 square feet of the same cliff face. That is a whopping 42% more area of the cliff face
visible to the hunter with the NL 14X52! Chromatic Aberration Control is typical Swarovski. I was unable to see any color fringing in the center of the Field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of purple fringing in the center of the field of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the NL while the SLC showed a tiny hint of the NL while the NL wh
from chromatic aberration in the center of the field, while the 15X56 SLC (bottom) showed just a small amount.NOTE: These digiscoped photos show color fringing at the edge of the field, with the NL showing notably less. This is very impressive
considering how much wider the NL's FOV is. The 14×52 NL (top) showed some color fringing at the edge of the field, but it was less than the 15X56 SLC. NOTE: These digiscoped photos show color fringing only. Do not draw conclusions about sharpness from them. Distortion at the 15X56 SLC show almost zero distortion.
Impressively, the NL does this over its much wider FOV. Also, the NL has an extremely flat field curvature. The image is sharp right to the edge, even at closer viewing distortion only. Do
NOT make conclusions about sharpness from these photos. Low Light Performance In low light conditions, the two binoculars had similar general illumination performance. That is, when I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one, I could see an image of a distant object with one and image of a distant object with object with object with object with one and image of a distant object with object wi
quality binoculars. However, the increased resolution benefit of the 14×52 NL Pure was maintained, or even more apparent, as the light faded. While examining a broken tree at well over a mile on a cliff face as twilight approached, I could see the form and branches of the tree better at all times, until finally it was longer visible in either
binocular. Build and ErgonomicsWhile NL 14X52 optics are class-leading, the build and ergonomics are at least as big of an improvement over the SLC. Like the originally released NL Pure binoculars cradles the hunter's hands
allowing for a confident and secure hold. Swarovski has my favorite eyecups of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar, sturdy, removable advantages of the NL 14X52 have the familiar advan
bridge and the scale visible on the underside. It was easy enough to set, and never moved on me, but I always prefer a locking diopter. Rubber Armor that provides great grip, whether dry or wet. I much prefer the feel of the NL armor to the coarser but
slicker feeling SLC armor. The author preferred the grippy micro-textured rubber armor of the 14×52 NL (top) to the coarser SLC armor (bottom). NL Pure ErgonomicsIt is hard to overstate the ergonomic benefits of the NL Pure.
the detail benefits of the increased magnification...but the NL is just different. Once focused, I was almost shocking. Certainly, I wouldn't replace my 10x42s
for general handheld use, but for hunts where I would spend most of the day with a binocular on a tripod, I wouldn't feel a need to bring a separate binocular for the trip to and from the glassing spot. Note that I found the headrest is also compatible with
is actually a "14-plus" type binocular, and I'm not sure about the 15X56 SLC's true magnification either, but when comparing them side-by-side, I pretty much always felt like the NL Pure was getting me closer. It could just be an optical illusion, or the NL Pure's additional resolution, or just in my head, but it sure seemed that way to
me.AccessoriesBesides the headrest mentioned earlier, Swarovski also has an Arca-Swiss compatible tripod adapter available: the TAs ($199). I received a sample TAs for review and used it a lot. The 14X52 NL does not have a 1/4-20 tripod exit, but rather a proprietary grooved female connection that accepts the TAs' grooved male portion, and is
connected via a cam lever. I found the connection absolutely solid and immune to loosening. It is a great companion to the 14X52 NL. I have also learned that Outdoorsmans has a "new style" two-piece stud that works with the new NL proprietary connection for those that would prefer the Outdoorsmans system. Swarovski CCT and CTHSwarovski
also sent their high-end CCT Compact Carbon Tripod ($949) and CTH Compact Tripod Head ($529). The CTH is a sturdy metal fluid head with pan and tilt as inner and outer portions of the same knob. This is a smooth and stable Arca-Swiss compatible head with pan and tilt as inner and outer portions of the same knob. This is a smooth and stable Arca-Swiss compatible head with pan and tilt as inner and outer portions of the same knob.
heavier than comparable hunting-specific heads. The CCT is a traditional twist lock carbon fiber leg set with similarly high end fit, finish, and performance but is again heavier than much of the combo is available at Black Ovis. ConclusionSwarovski raises
available. No doubt some hunters will find the 15X56 SLC or some of the other competitors a better value, but for hunters that can afford it the 14×52 NL Pure is an easy choice to make. Order here. Comment or ask Matt questions here or click here to hear Matt and Travis Hobbs discuss these new binoculars on the Rokcast.*Swarovski is a Rokslide
sponsor. Bombing down a dusty two track in the middle of nowhere Nevada made for a rough ride. That normally wouldn't even cross my mind but today was different. Today my cargo was worth of Kowa and Swarovski optics. Every noise coming from the
back seat had me casting a nervous glance across the ensemble to ensure none of them had shifted positions. The event was simple- beg, borrow or steal (not really but I did rent some) the best Spotting scopes in the world and bring them along with a bunch of buddies to a location for real world testing. Having drawn a deer tag in the same unit was
just a happy coincidence or at least that is how I explained it to those assembled guests here. For all of us this would possibly be the only time we would see the Swarovski 115mm and 95mm along with both ATX and BTX eye pieces, Kowa TSN-99mm angled on tripods side by side. The testing would be as follows-*View standard eye chart at 500 yards
distance to compare clarity.*Compare the 1951 USAF resolution chart at 35 yards to minimize mirage during close range resolution evaluation.*Find the shade.*Use the spotting scope for actual scouting swapping scopes multiple times during the 4-day
event. Standard eye chart at 500 yards. It should come as no surprise that all three scopes were phenomenal. I found the dual focus wheels on the Kowa to be extremely helpful while a few of the group found Swarovski single focus ring to be simpler and more effective. Looking back, I concluded that it is simply personal bias and what style one is most
familiar with that they prefer. As expected, the 115mm and the 99mm out preformed the 95mm by a wide margin during fading light, although most were surprised at the minimal difference between the Swarovski 115mm. Comparisons using the 1951 USAF
resolution chart. As stated above the USAF chart was placed at 35 yards to limit mirage and each of the three scopes setup and focused to see which resolved the smallest chart. The Swarovski 95mm resolved the least amount losing to its big brother the 115mm by two chart sizes and to the Kowa 99mm by three chart sizes. I think it surprised most to
see the Kowa come out on top, but I think the dual focus wheels gave a slight edge and brought out the Kowa's sharpest focused image. Viewing the shed antler. I think everyone found the color contrast between the Kowa and Swarovski lens coatings to be notable but slight. I tried to capture the difference while digiscoping (using my Samsungs
camera) but couldn't discern a difference when viewing the photos. To me the Kowa produces a more natural view while the Swarovski SLC binoculars and enjoyed that color contrast but found that I picked out the antler quicker with Kowa's more natural coloring during testing. Reviewers were split
failed to account for was varying tripods among the testers. I think with everyone using their personal tripods and heads with each scope performed its best when set on the heaviest carbon tripod. A few of the major differences are Swarovski's single focus
ring vs dual focus wheels on the Kowa. Swarovski's' armored body is a stark contrast to Kowa's painted finish. I found the Kowa lighter yet still durable after a season of hard use. The Swarovski scopes have a machined arca-swiss mounting foot while Kowa has a standard foot that now includes twin screws to securely fasten to any adaptor plate.
Kowa and Swarovski both offer 30-70 zoom eye pieces with similar fields of view. The TE-80xw Kowa eyepiece (BTX is extremely comfortable to use during long glassing sessions that nearly doubles the weight and
price point). I'll summarize the results here- at roughly the same price as the Swarovski 95mm every single reviewer agreed the Kowa 99 was a better preforming scope. The Kowa 99 punches above its price point and when compared with the Swarovski 115mm it simply comes down to personal preferences of features. For me the Swarovski ATX
eyepiece was slightly easier to get behind while the Kowa 99 has a slightly crisper view. If you haven't checked out the new Kowa Fluorite series scopes you are truly missing out.*Note* One easy way to get expensive optics side by side is to rent them for a day or two. I personally have used Rent Outdoor Gear a Rokslide sponsor multiple times with
each time being a no hassle experience. The rental process is incredibly easy, pick your dates and just add shipping and credit card information. Rent Outdoor Gear will have your optics package setting at your door by the date requested. Don't worry returning them is just as easy, simply attach the supplied return label back on the box, tape it up and
drop off at the shipper. One other feature of Rent Outdoor Gear is their keeper program. Basically, they allow you to put up to 7 days of your rental fees towards purchasing and keeping that item. Give them a call to learn more about the program. You can add your comments in this thread- to some of the testers in this episode of the Rokcast-Tipsy
Tuesday: Kowa 99 Review with Sal Soriano and Randon Timothy Swarovski threw the book of features at their new binocular, the NL PureThat September afternoon was cool and overcast. My teenage son, James, and I had climbed to a glassing point above treeline in Western Montana. I had often seen mature mule deer bucks in this area this time
of the year, so I sat down and glassed the rocky cliffs layered to the North. The elk had been silent since the early morning, so I transitioned to deer hunting, but James was more interested in chasing dusky grouse from tree to tree on the hilltop. I told him to keep it down. Glassing picked apart every cliff edge, shelf, boulder, and avalanche chute I
could see for over an hour before I finally scanned the cascading cliff terraces directly below me. As I panned from left to right slowly looking at a mini-basin about 250 yards below me, obstructed by the terrace above! I gently scooted back up
to the crest of the ridge and frantically searched for James, who I found harassing squirrels a few hundred yards away. We skirted the cliffs, got the wind, and tip-toed back towards where I last saw the buck. I finally peered around a cliff and pulled up the Swarovski NL Pure 12X42 binoculars with my right hand. I could see him feeding on the
ledge, and he was a good buck, about two feet wide, with deep forks and perfect, untouched velvet. The StalkJames told me he wanted to watch while I made a stalk, so I de-booted and crawled through the cliff shelves, finally reaching around 55 yards undetected. I could see him feeding head down, so I went for the next rock closer, and knew I would
be looking at a chip shot from there. As I crossed a drain before the rock though, I looked down to see a two-point feeding 20 yards below me. As I tucked back out of sight I considered my options. I was likely to be discovered if I moved either way. I could just wait and let the buck move into a shooting lane, and that seemed more reasonable. My
heart sank, though, as I suddenly felt the cool breeze switch from my chin to my neck. Out of sight, I heard the buck snort and hop, suddenly coming into view. I got a range of 62 yards and drew my bow, finding the peep just in time to see him bounce down the cliffs to the safety of the basin below. Swarovski's new 12×42 NL Pure binocular shrinks
down bulk from the 12X50 EL SV. Another close call, and great experience in the mountains with my son. I was really surprised that I saw that tine to begin with. This, of course, leads to the stark realization that we hunters miss a lot out
there. However, good optics sure do help, as evidenced by the new NL Pure binocular from Swarovski Optik. Available here. Swarovski Optik have long been known to serious hunters as the makers of some of the world's best hunting optics. Many knowledgeable optics aficionados considered the
premium "Swarovision" EL binocular line to be about perfect for Western hunting. With its open-bridge ergonomics, field-flattened wide view, and razor-sharp-to-the-edge image, the EL deservedly earned this lauding. So how could Swarovski improve on the industry-leading instrument? Well, they found a way. Thanks to Swarovski, I was able to use
both the NL Pure 12X42 and the EL SV 12X50 side-by-side this season to see just what hunters are getting for the NL's hefty $3400 price tag. Both binoculars had the Outdoorsman's tripod adapter stud installed for the Outdoorsman's tripod
adapter and pan head. Optics For a baseline, I compared both of the binoculars on a USAF resolution chart at 50 yards in good light and failing light. As one would expect from this class of binoculars on a USAF resolution chart at 50 yards in good light and failing light. As one would expect from this class of binoculars on a USAF resolution chart at 50 yards in good light and failing light. As one would expect from this class of binoculars on a USAF resolution chart at 50 yards in good light and failing light.
however. While I couldn't resolve any smaller elements on the chart as the light faded, I could definitely see the target for longer into the darkness. I was a little surprised by the NL Pure's ergonomics the best he ever used. I would describe
the NL view as more "contrasty" than the EL's, which is saying a lot since the EL is famous for its color and punchy contrast. This provided a great viewing experience with the NL Pure. The 12X50 EL has a pretty wide FOV spec of 300 and punchy contrast.
feet at 1000 yards. The NL Pure, though, is like taking another step closer to a picture window at 339 feet at 1000 yards. It sounds like a lot because it is ... a lot. That is wider than many "wide field" 10x premium binoculars. The extraordinary field of view goes for the whole 42mm NL Pure line, too with the 10x coming in at 399 feet at 1000 yards
and the 8x at an insane 477 feet at 1000 yards. It makes me wonder if you can see behind you with the 8x. Still, Swarovski gets these huge fields while maintaining a glasses-friendly 18mm of eye relief. The wide view suffers very little distortion, although straight lines curve a little, showing mild pincushion distortion right at the edge of the massive
FOV. The benefit here is that those sensitive to rolling ball will get along well with the NL Pure. Chromatic aberration control is typical Swarovski. Color fringing is well controlled in the center of the field of view, while it grows towards the edge. It can be seen readily at the edge on high-contrast targets but isn't obtrusive or especially
bothersome. Overall, the new NL Pure pushes the limits of field-worthy hunting binoculars and succeeds the EL SV as the class leader. The viewing experience is second to none. NL Pure DesignWhile the prisms to give the binocular a slim and curvy look
that will make some blush if they look right at it. Swarovski wraps the NL Pure in their excellent lightly textured armor and gives the extra-large removable eyecups seven detent positions to find the viewer's perfect eye relief. Two, solid hinges are on each side of the buttery center focus wheel giving the appearance of a single hinge design. The
diopter is hidden next to the wheel with the markings on the inside of the hinges. While it doesn't technically lock, it is so tucked away and unobtrusive that it never, ever moved on me. Swarovski tucked away and unobtrusive that it never, ever moved on me. Swarovski tucked away the unobtrusive diopter in keeping with the sleek and functional design theme. Ergonomics of the NL are amazing. In first
seeing the design, I was skeptical, and it looked a bit gimmicky. However, in actual use, I learned soon those curves weren't only for sex appeal. This is the best feeling roof prism binocular I have experienced with a binocular. It is hard to
explain just how good the ergonomics are. It has to be experienced first hand. This sleek design leads to weight savings with the 12X42 NL Pure weighing on my scale at 1 pounds 3.2 ounces. Swarovski EL 12×50The improved design and smaller objectives
of the NL Pure lead to substantial weight savings over the 12X50 EL SV.Optional Headrest pressure-fits into the bridge on the user-side of the focus wheel. It has an adjusting wheel that changes the distance between the rest and the eyecups. I had a love/hate relationship
with the headrest in that it would slowly collapse sometimes when I was pressing my head into it, and I would have to re-adjust. Still, I ended up using it more often than not, given that I needed to steady the 12X binoculars the best I could, and the headrest definitely helped with the chore. Which leads us to ... The author found the forehead rest
accessory useful for steadying the 12x view, but a little finicky. Field UseI really loved using the NL Pure binoculars. The ergonomics and optical performance are like none other. I did, however, have an issue with the 12x magnification. When affixed to the Outdoorsman's tripod adapter on the Outdoorsman's pan head, I felt like a superhero glasser
A giant, steady, ultra-sharp, mega-wide FOV massaged my eyeballs for hours at a time. When seated, elbows propped, headrest pressured, and further supported by my hat bill, I could get almost as good of an image. However, while the NL Pure with headrest was useable handheld (even one-handed) for me, I still couldn't get near as steady as 10x
binoculars. I think the 10x NL Pure might be a better match for me, given how frequently I use binoculars for the last five years. I didn't think you could make a better 12 power binoculars for the last five years. I didn't think you could make a better 12 power binoculars for the last five years. I didn't think you could make a better match for me, given how frequently I use binoculars for the last five years. I didn't think you could make a better 12 power binoculars for the last five years.
 -Ryan AveryThe author found Swarovski put more than good looks into the NL Pure binocular. Swarovski bested themselves in ergonomics and performance. Conclusion The Swarovski put more than good looks into the NL Pure binocular. Swarovski bested themselves in ergonomics and performance.
difference between success and failure. The ergonomics are the best available, and everything about the build is top-notch. Hunters looking for the price tag. Order here. The only caveat is that significant expense could go to a rangefinding
and ballistic computing binocular that could be a better fit for many hunters. A Swarovski ballistic range finding binocular with ergonomics and optics from the NL Pure line would be interesting indeed. Your move, Swarovski ballistic range finding binocular with ergonomics and optics from the NL Pure line would be interesting indeed. Your move, Swarovski ballistic range finding binocular with ergonomics and optics from the NL Pure line would be interesting indeed.
always a trade-off with optics. Backpack hunters want it all in a spotting scope: Big-scope optical performance at ultralight weights, with dimensions that leave plenty of room in the pack for the many other necessities for living out of a backpack on a hunt. The compromises of performance, size, and cost really come into play when it comes to
backpacking spotting scopes. The brightest scopes with the highest magnifications and sharpest images are also big, heavy, and expensive. Many backpack hunters have gladly traded some of that performance for lighter, smaller scopes that provide good enough images in tiny packages. When it comes to premium spotters that are also small and
light, two options have been the go-to choices for backpack hunters: The Kowa TSN-553/4 15-45X55mm spotting scopes are downright tiny but still provide great optical performance. Hunters needing a little more magnification often choose Swarovski's venerable ATS 65mm objective spotting scope with either the 25-50 wide angle eyepiece or the
20-60 high magnification eyepiece, but at a weight and size penalty. Swarovski recently added a new contender in this category with their ultracompact ATC/STC 17-40X56mm spotting scope. With this comparison, I was able to put these three popular backcountry scopes up against each other. I will refer to the Kowa 553 as "553", the Swaro ATC as
 "ATC," and the Swaro ATS as "ATS." Specifications: Note: I measured all three scopes on my kitchen scale with their respective lens covers for the weights and the Swarovski ATC here. I decided to do a more technical, direct comparison evaluation with these scopes to supplement that excellent
field report.Build, Ergonomics, and Field UseThe first thing that jumps out about the Kowa and ATC is just how remarkably compact they are. The ATS looks huge next to them. Tiny spotters like these have some great advantages:Lower weightLess bulkIncreased resistance to wind-induced shake.Stable on smaller/lighter tripods.Both Swarovski
scopes are covered by their excellent, lightly textured rubber armor. The Kowa 553 has a nice painted texture finish, but no rubber armor. In cold conditions, it is much colder to the touch. Many hunters will add a case of some sort to the touch. Many hunters will add a case of some sort to the touch.
in at 4.33 ounces, bringing the weight of the 553 to within 2.5 ounces of the ATC. The two smaller scopes don't include a rotating collar. Users looking for a 3rd party solution. The ATS is a full-size scope with an integrated rotating collar. I was surprised by how much I used this
feature during this comparison. A rotating collar is especially convenient when using an angled scope like the ATS on a window mount. The ATC does not. However, the objective lens is deeply seated from the front end of the housing,
providing both shade and protection. Both Swarovski spotters include helical focus rings that focus quickly and are reasonably precise with practice. The 553 has more traditional dual-focusing knobs for coarse and fine focus. The fine focus knob made getting the sharpest image a breeze. Swarovski deserves a tip-of-the-cap for designing the ATC
 objective cap to nest securely inside the eyepiece cover. I found it very convenient to always know where that cap was. Resolution First, I did a close-range resolution comparison of the three scopes at 35 yards in stable air, good light, and overcast conditions. The test target was an Edmund Optics Resolution Card. The results were as expected with
these premium scopes: I first compared them at 40x, which was the highest common magnification of 45x and could not resolve a smaller element, but I could resolve the chart a little cleaner. Then I increased the magnification on the
ATS to the maximum 60x. I could clearly resolve one element smaller at this magnification. Next, I headed to the woods to make a long-range comparison. For this exercise, I put an 8X11 eye chart at 535 yards. The conditions were alternating sunny and overcast. Once again with all three scopes on 40x, they resolved the same line on the chart.
Bumping the 553 to 45x made no difference. And again, the ATS at 60x resolved the most detail, leading to a clear resolution of one more line on the target, the mirage became an issue with all of the scopes, but the 60x magnification of the
ATS was degraded the most, as the highly magnified mirage wiped away detail in the unstable air. Chromatic aberration color fringing can be seen just off center, with it increasing slightly towards the edge. The ATS was similar to the 553, the tiniest bit of fringing can be seen just off center, with it increasing slightly towards the edge. The ATS was similar to the 553
Interestingly, the ATC was the best of the bunch in this area, where fringing was invisible in the center, and increased to a mild visible level at the very edge. Other Optical Performance a little bit in color bias, with the 553 providing a tiny bit warmer image to the Swarovskis. The contrast in these three scopes was spectacular,
with rich, saturated images, losing only mild amounts of contrast at the highest powers. Distortion was an interesting comparison. I tested distortion, with straight lines staying straight right to the edge of the field at the highest magnification and
the slightest pincushion distortion at minimum magnification. The ATC had more visible pincushion distortion at low powers, but it was also still mild. At
high magnification, however, it was much more visible. Still, this level of distortion is relatively low compared to most optics, and would not affect viewing performance in most situations. Field of ViewHere we get to see some real differences between these scopes. The specifications above put the differences in the field of view in black and white, but
were taken solely to show differences in FOV:Swarovski ATS at 40xSwarovski ATS at 40xS
that the viewer can see only 30 feet less of the hillside available to the ATC at 17x is immense. Hunters that grid-glass large areas will find this tremendously helpful. Low Light PerformanceThere is no free lunch in optics. At the same power,
the larger objective of the ATS gave a notable advantage in low light, as expected. The Kowa and ATC were comparable in apparent illumination, and neither had a significant advantage over the other, even to the last hints of daylight. Eye reliefWhen viewing without glasses, the 20mm of eye relief with the ATC was definitely the easiest to use,
providing enough space at all powers to get the full FOV without touching the eyepiece at all, if preferred. The ATS (17mm eye relief) and 553 (16mm eye relief) and 553 (16mm eye relief) were similar to each other in how easy to get behind, although the shorter eye relief) and 553 (16mm eye relief) and 
longer eye relief specs lead to better usability for eyeglass wearers. This rule held true for these spotters, but not as much as I expected. All three scopes were easy to get a full field of view with glasses at the lowest powers by just lightly touching the surface of the eyeglasses to the eyepiece. At each scope's highest powers, it became more
difficult. With its long eye relief, the ATC was the best, with only mild pressure applied from the eyeglass to the eyepiece for the full FOV. The ATS was next best, with a little more pressure required. The Kowa 553 required the most pressure to get the full FOV while wearing glasses, although I was still able to get the full FOV even at
45x.DigiscopingGetting useable digiscoping images from these scopes was relatively easy, but as I hinted earlier, the ATC is just in a league of its own. The ATC shares its eyepiece design and construction with its ATX/STX premium big brothers. The eyepiece both has the widest FOV and the physically widest eyecup. Both of these attributes benefit
the digiscoper. The ATC eveniece design also allows the camera lens to get very close to the eveniece lens. The result is very limited vignetting, and consistent, repeatable mounting of the digiscoping adapter. Conclusion These scopes are all winners. Budget and use case will determine the winner for each hunter. The Kowa is the least expensive and
lightest scope in this comparison and still has great optical performance. The image is sharp and well-corrected with low distortion. The Kowa has the most precise focus system. Hunters choosing the 553 save nearly a Grand over the Swarovski scopes, but they must deal with the narrower FOV, lack of rubber armor, and shorter eye relief. The ATS
is a great "do everything" scope that flirts with the "compact spotter" classification. It is full-featured, well-corrected, and provides the most resolution under good viewing conditions with the "compact spotter" classification. It is full-featured, well-corrected, and provides the most resolution under good viewing conditions with its ample 60x maximum magnification. The ATS has multiple eyepieces available, with the 25-50 being a wide-angle option. The cost between the ATS and ATC is
negligible, so hunters willing to pack the extra pound will benefit from the extra brightness and resolution potential of the ATS. Hunters that want a scope that works well for backpacking, the range, and from the extra brightness and resolution potential of the ATS. Hunters that want a scope that works well for backpacking, the range, and from the extra brightness and resolution potential of the ATS.
nearly a pound on the ATS. The optical performance is remarkable. In this comparison, the ATC is at least as good as the two others in good light and at equal magnifications. It has a stunningly wide field of view that is easy to get behind and glass for extended periods. The eyepiece is the best of the bunch for both viewing and digiscoping. This is
the best ultracompact spotting scope currently available for hunters that spend most of their time hunting out of a backpack. Unfortunately, it comes at a slight weight penalty and a not-so-slight price premium. Comment or ask Matt questions here. Optics reviews.
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