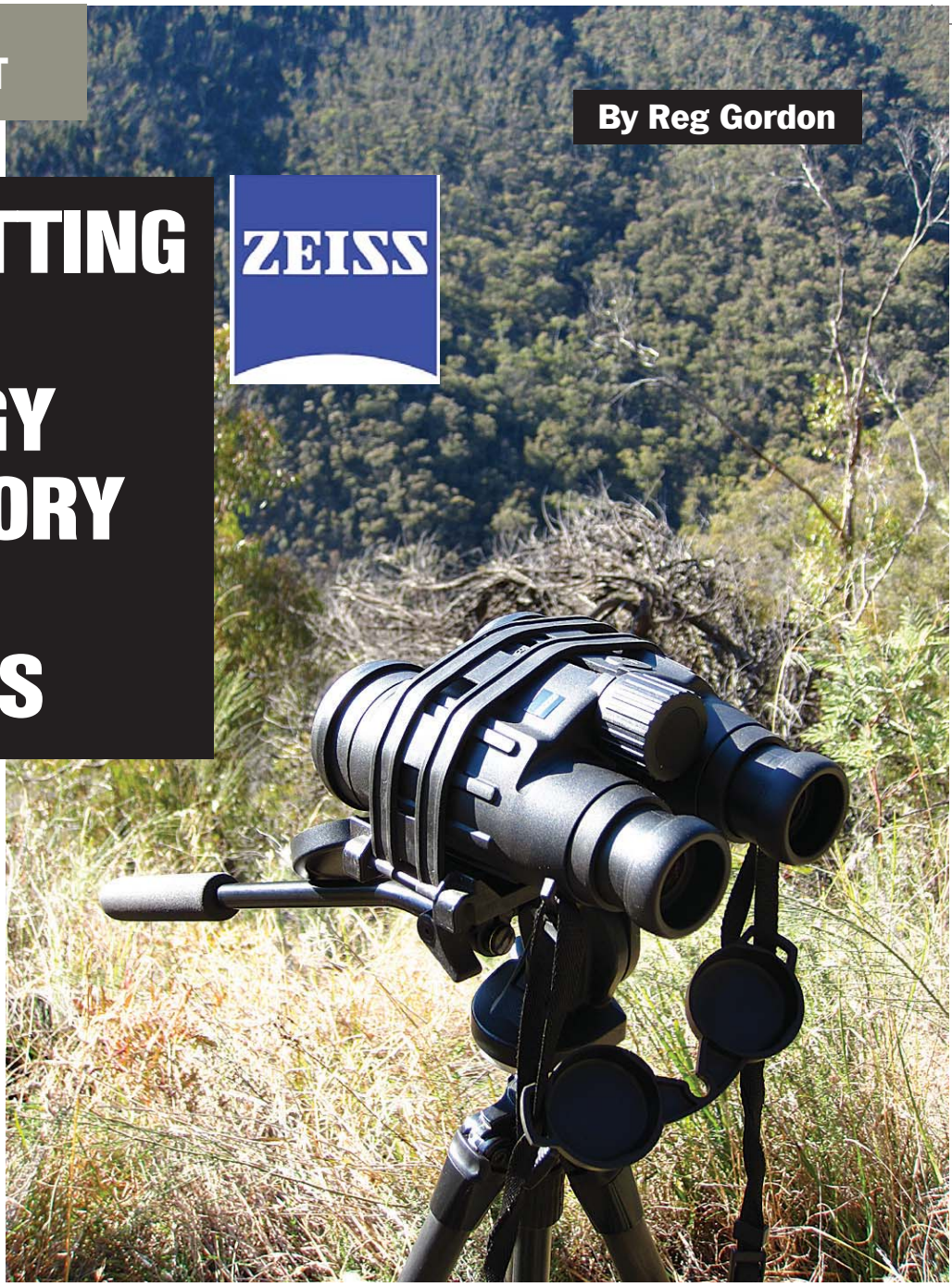
By Reg Gordon

# AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY ZEISS VICTORY RF 10X45 BINOCULARS



**Deer hunting today has come a long way with advanced optic technology. Those earlier experiences we had during the 1980s whilst using inferior binoculars to glass Sambar actually handicapped us immensely in comparison of today. Using optics back then was to be the forefront of better things to come, a cornerstone to our hunting success for the next three decades. It was a pivotal change to traditional hunting methods of that era. We must have tried at least 10 different pairs of binoculars back then to find the best for our new found glassing technique. Today the hunter has a better selection and appreciation for quality optics. There's a lot of excellent middle priced binoculars out there today.**

My eyes aren't as good as they were back in those youthful hunting days and overtime your eyes slowly deteriorate with age, so you can appreciate the quality glass available today in binoculars. Advances in technology have prolonged my ability to see and still hunt successfully. Back then the mediocre optics still allowed us to study Sambar and allowed us to observe deer relatively undisturbed. It would have been even better hunting then if we had the good optics of today, but we made do with what we had and still enabled us to see the deer beyond visual range. I vaguely remember purchasing a pair of compact Gerber 8X21's and I think Ray Rollandin was using a pair of green Tasco 8X21 binoculars. They were very light and compact for hunting.

We had never heard or knew of Leica or Swarvoski, although we did know about Zeiss because they had the reputation and were the most talked about optics, even back then. Our budgets, however, didn't always extend that far to allow us to purchase quality glass. The Zeiss binoculars and German riflescopes were then arguably the best that money could buy all those years ago. Having young families meant money was tight, so most of our money was spent on everyday things to live to support them. That meant Ray and I couldn't meet the required costs to purchase those top end optics. Basically, because of our lack of knowledge about quality optics and the high price resulted in us purchasing the lesser inferior optics that was affordable! Back then there weren't the resources to helpful information through magazines, so you virtually purchased something that looked good on the shop shelf.

Just remember, any form of magnifying optics will aid you to see deer concealed in those places that the human eye cannot. Quality optics makes you more thoughtful and a safe hunter in the bush. Knowing where to look and what to look for is the key to successful hunting of such a solitary animal as the Sambar. For the past six years I have been in a very fortunate position to be able to acquire and test some of the best optics that money can buy for hunting purposes and pass on the objective information to hunters. There is an old saying 'You only get what you are paying for'. So why would you want to skimp on something that will greatly improve your chances on Sambar?

Five years ago my preference lent towards the Leica, Swarvoski and Zeiss binoculars in that order as the top three in superior optics for hunting. I've always cherished Leica as my first choice in optics but in recent times I'm inclined to lean towards the Zeiss optics because of the vast improvements in the lens technology. Zeiss have always been world leaders in optical engineering. Zeiss manufacturing is at the forefront to cater for the hunters' needs with practical ergonomically design in their binoculars, spotting scopes and riflescopes. Having the rubber caps on the objective and ocular lenses meant added protection. When I first purchased my first pair of Leica binoculars they didn't come with the front lens caps and that was detrimental to the protection of the front lens. Yes you could purchase the rubber lens caps as an additional extra but they were very expensive. To me, that was poor marketing strategy by Leica Sports Optics towards hunters because at the time Leica wasn't really that concerned about the interests of hunters' needs and looked after birders. Leica Sports optics has now realised this and now the newer optics come with rubber front lens caps for hunting purposes. Zeiss have always been a predominant low light hunting optic.

Back in September 2008 on a hunting trip with Dennis Wells, Herb Lonsing and Doctor Greg Ivanoff, I was loaned a demo pair of the first Zeiss Victory 10x42 FL (fluorite) binoculars to try out and compare them to the better-known quality


optics such as Leica and Swarovski binoculars. Even back then Zeiss were making big advances with their optics by including fluorite coatings to the glass in the new Victory FL binoculars. The lenses contain fluorine ions that contribute a considerable improvement in image quality. At that end of the hunting trip we all came up with the same conclusion that Zeiss optics were exceptionally good and that Zeiss binoculars was making a clear statement to Leica and Swarovski and they had better lift their game. Zeiss now demand the attention of the Aussie deer hunter that's looking for the best optics. Competition is fierce now and hunters demand the best in optic quality. Twenty years ago Leica probably considered that the bird watchers were more marketable and hunters less marketable and allowed Zeiss and Swarovski to dominate the hunting market.

This year I was able to get my mitts onto a pair of updated new Zeiss RF 10x45 (range finding) binoculars to see how they would perform in our harsh Australian conditions. I knew that Zeiss were using a new LotuTec coating on their objective and ocular lenses of the Victory series but how and what did they have to offer the Sambar hunter? Zeiss were saying 'The LotuTec coating repels water droplets and makes cleaning of the lens surface easier'. I was very sceptical at first but very keen to see if the RFs were that good and the only way to prove this was to initiate them to our harsh hunting conditions.

I have experienced using the Leica Geovid 10x56 binoculars on prior hunting trips and found them exceptionally good to use whilst hunting the Sambar. It would be very interesting to see how the Zeiss Victory RF would match up with the Leica Geovids in the real expediency of Sambar hunting! I must make mention that Leica have released their new range of HD optics with aqua type water repelling coating now. Can we possibly say that Zeiss are the world leaders in optical engineering and technology? We didn't have to wait too long and on a recent trip we were glassing a dry face when we spotted a nice stag from 921 yards lying up under a spindly gum through the Zeiss Victory 10x45 RFs.

How is that for precision measuring? My first impression was how comfortable and balanced, not too heavy the RFs were. They only weigh 35oz or 1088 grams in the hand incorporating a state of the art laser range finder. Once I had fully focused onto the stag it was easy by just pressing the button down to range and obtain the reading display on the distance of this stag that was displayed upon release. This is different to the Geovids and offered an easier method of precision button release alignment with the red aiming circle. The Zeiss Victory RF offers a more sophisticated software package (with the BIS). Once a matching trajectory is selected to your caliber/rifle, corrections for hold over can be displayed. A beam divergence comparison between the Swarovski rangefinder numbers is 2.5x2.5 and on the Leica Geovid they are 2.5x0.5. At 1.6x0.5, the Zeiss Victory RF 10x45 Rangefinder Binocular beam divergence numbers are the lowest I know of for a consumer level rangefinder and I managed to range a hind at 1438 yards easily. They are rated to 1300 metres but in ideal conditions the experienced hunter may be able to reach out further.

For precision use with software ranging can be contacted in the normal manner such is the versatility of this ranging system. At this point in time I couldn't see much difference with the clarity and the eye relief between the Victory RF and the Leica Geovids. However, the range finding laser is fully integrated into the binocular prism unlike the Leica Geovid which is an attachment to the bridge, arguably a weaker design. The bridge design can be knocked out of alignment if not careful and the laser divergence isn't as fine as the Zeiss specification which can mean a wider beam and less accuracy.

The Abbe Koenig prism in the Zeiss Victories is a real design feat and they reportedly reject up to 40 percent of manufactured prisms to maintain quality. Zeiss are world leaders in electronics and have their own in house design studio and are fully manufactured in Germany. This is unique amongst optical manufacturers as they build their own electronics in house. The focusing mechanism has also recently been reportedly upgraded for even more precise adjustment utilising one of their old patents. Its frightening that Zeiss take out up to 8 patents a day! Sporting Optics is only a small percentage of their business in real terms.

I must admit I did find the Zeiss Victory RFs a little more comfortable to use in the hand to locate an animal. You would think the 56mm objective lens size of the Leica Geovid would be better than the 45mm objective lens size being slightly smaller? This wasn't the case and technology is moving forward all the time. Zeiss openly admit they made the objective 45mm instead of 42mm to compensate for the loss of performance due to the laser inclusion. Optically the 10x42 FL's are similar.

It was on the second day into our hunt when the Zeiss Victory RF showed us why hunters should consider purchasing this superb binocular/rangefinder. It was late in the


afternoon when we relocated that same stag at 549 yards down in some thick scrub at the base of a gully trying to hassle a hind. It started to rain heavily making it difficult to glass under those conditions. What was remarkable with the Zeiss Victory RFs is that you could still see the stag clearly while it was raining heavily! Using my older Leica Duovids was a different story. They had fogged up and I couldn't see a thing.

The irony of this situation meant we couldn't take the stag because all the optics, binoculars, riflescope, except for the Zeiss Victory RF binoculars, were rendered inoperable. This is true and I take my hat off to the LotuTec coatings. If we had the lotuTec coated lenses on the riflescope, things may have gone down differently. Just add that to the wish list!

The Victory RF series being state of the art feature multi-coated lenses for exceptional light transmission, focus sharpness on targeted objects. Nitrogen-filled barrels make them 100% waterproof and the lenses have water repellent coatings to minimise moisture sheeting. The eyecups are individually adjustable and removable, accommodating all users, even eyeglass wearers. Victory RF binoculars are covered by the Zeiss limited lifetime transferable warranty.

Individual dioptre adjustments can be made for each eye, which isn't the case with all binoculars. Most binoculars in the Zeiss range feature multi-coated optics, phase-coated prisms, twist-up eyecups, individual diopter control and ergonomic focus. The high-end Zeiss binoculars are nitrogen-purged as well as having a range finder that displays the distance to the object in metres or yards and complemented with multi and water-repelling coatings makes them arguably one of the best optics in the world for hunting.

Whether you're out in the field in heavy rain or entrenched in a bug-infested swamp waiting for the perfect opportunity to arise, the last thing that should interfere with the moment is water and dirt on your lenses. Like a lotus leaf, LotuTec coating on the objective and ocular lenses repels water so efficiently that raindrops literally roll right off the glass.

The super smooth lens surface can be easily wiped clean without smearing or damaging the optics.

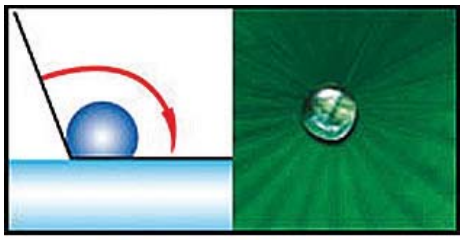
As a testament to its superiority over other lens coatings, ZEISS LotuTec was honoured with the prestigious Gray's Best award, recognised as the only optical process that allows lenses to shed water completely, so that even in the heaviest downpours your lenses will remain free from water and dirt and the view will be as impeccable as ever.

There are two main ranges produced by Zeiss binoculars. The Victory range is their top of the range binoculars and offer what they call 'state of the art' performance with superior views and handling. The Zeiss Conquest series, their 'superior value' range that still maintains the highest Zeiss standards, but at a cheaper price level than the Victory series.

Retail price is just over $3300 which makes them extremely well priced considering you don't need to purchase a separate rangefinder anymore.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies are now the importer for all Zeiss products and consequently have priced all optics including scopes to be extremely competitive.

***In fact we liked these demo binoculars that much, Herb purchased a pair the next day.**



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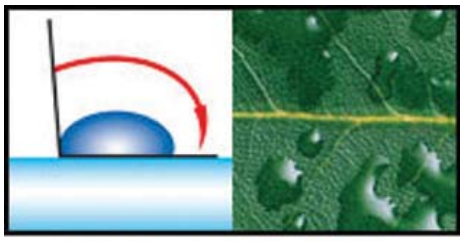

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