

3. Do the binocular barrels fold in close enough for the child's eyes?

A dealer experienced in optics such as Eagle Optics or a local Wild Birds Unlimited can help you determine what will work best for a child. Among the compact models available for you to consider are the Eagle Optics Voyager (8x25; \$68.00) that comes with a limited lifetime warranty, and the Nikon Travelite V (8x25; \$88.00) or Nikon Sprint III (7x21; \$58.00) that come with a 25-year limited warranty. These binoc-

ulars fold down close enough to fit a child's narrow interpupillary distance (measurement between a person's eyes). They are also small enough to allow for easy manipulation of the focus wheel. For more detailed information on compact binoculars, you may want to refer to the recent article, "The Big Deal about Pocket Optics" in the March/April 2002 issue of "Bird Watcher's Digest".

Older children can use full size models as appropriate, ideally an

8x40 or 8x42. Some models to consider are the Eagle Optics Voyager (8x40; \$58.00), Nikon Action (7x35; \$88.00), and the Bushnell Natureview Plus (8x42; \$92.00).

Keep in mind that in either case, if the child wears glasses the binoculars should have collapsible/retractable eyecups, and the binoculars should have at least a minimum of 15 mm of eye relief (distance images are projected from the ocular lens to their focal point), preferably more (e.g., 18 mm).

Field Guides and other Learning Tools

Some of the items listed below are specifically intended for a child to use, while others are intended as a reference that you can use to teach the child about birds and birding. As space is limited, this list is not all-inclusive.

✔ "Bird Watcher's Digest" guides. These include: "Teaching Kids About Birds" by Eirik A. T. Blom (32 pages, \$3.99), and "An Identification Guide to Common Backyard Birds" (32 pages, \$3.99 each).

✔ Peterson First Guides, "Birds" by Roger Tory Peterson. Focused on beginning birders, a condensed version of the full Peterson field guide and similarly uses illustrations for identification (128 pages, \$5.95).

✔ Peterson Field Guides for Young Naturalists, "Backyard Birds"; for ages 8 to 12 (48 pages, \$5.95).

✔ "Birds of Illinois" by Stan Tekiela. A basic field guide that is small in size (perfect for little hands) and uses photographs for identification (270 pages, \$12.95).

✔ "Stokes Beginner's Guide to Birds - Eastern Region". A bit more detailed, uses photographs for identification (211 pages; \$7.95).

✔ Golden Field Guide, "Eastern Birds: A Guide to Field Identification of North American Species" by James Coe. Similar in layout to Peterson Guides, uses illustrations for identification (160 pages, \$16.99).

✔ National Audubon Society Pocket Guides, "Songbirds and Familiar Backyard Birds - East." A condensed version of the full Audubon field guide, uses photographs for identification (192 pages, \$9.00).

✔ "Common Birds and Their Songs" by Lang Elliott and Marie Read. A beginner's guide to 50 common and widespread North American birds; includes a CD with 65 minutes of bird songs/calls (127 pages; \$20.00).

✔ "Fandex Family Field Guide to Birds" by Michael W. Robbins. A colorful identification guide for 47 common birds that opens like a fan (\$9.95).

✔ "Backyard Bird Watching for Kids" by George H. Harrison. Good overall book that teaches young readers how to attract a variety of birds to their yard; for ages 8 to 14 (64 pages, \$13.95).

✔ "Birdwatching for Dummies" by Bill Thompson III (editor of "Bird Watcher's Digest"). Excellent overall reference to help you educate young minds (390 pages, \$19.99).

✔ "Internet Guide to Birds and Birding" by Jack Sanders. A section is devoted to web sites for children of various ages (330 pages, \$22.95).

✔ "Enjoying Chicago Wilderness with Your Family: An Activity Guide." A publication of Chicago Wilderness Magazine, it is illustrated with collages and drawings, and covers a variety of outdoor activities that the whole family can get involved in (60 pages, \$4.95).

✔ "FeederWatcher's Guide to Backyard Birds" CD-ROM by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Version 3.0 covering 135 common species (Thayer Birding Software, www.thayerbirding.com). Upgrade-able to the more extensive "Guide to Birds of North America" (see below). This guide focuses on birds found at feeders and in residential areas (\$29.95).

✔ "Guide to Birds of North America" CD-ROM by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Version 3.0 (Thayer Birding Software). Much more extensive information—e.g., covers 930 species, vs. 135 in the "FeederWatcher's Guide" (\$69.95).

✔ Birdsong Identifier by For the Birds, LLC (www.identifier.com). It comes with two song cards