



A sight for sore eyes

Jan Kaptein weighs up the slick Kahles Helia 2-10x50i riflescope

When hunters discuss optics, there are two general categories. The first includes the various European premium scopes and the second is basically a catch-all for others. As little as a few decades ago, this was arguably accurate as many aspiring manufacturers produced what were essentially clones of the offerings by the market leaders.

However, prior to the advent of the internet, there were always manufacturers of premium optics that, even though known in certain circles, never received the acclaim they arguably deserved. Having used various Kahles optics over the years and looking into the company history, I would argue that Kahles has been underestimated by many hunters. Or perhaps they were simply not aware of Kahles as an alternative to some of the other premium brands.

I have put the Kahles Helia 2-10x50i (Helia 2-10) through its paces extensively in the field under various conditions, ranging from hot and dry weather to nocturnal outings in the pouring rain. I use the scope on a bolt-action driven hunt rifle as well as on two single-shot stalking rigs. As such, my findings are based on real world use for hunting purposes.

The Kahles 2-10x50i on one of Jan's stalking rigs.



Kahles 2-10x50i on a Haenel J9 single-shot rifle.

Kahles has a long history as a manufacturer of premium optics, including riflescopes. They started operations in 1898, which arguably makes them the world's oldest manufacturer of riflescopes. They sport an impressive list of innovations that includes the use of adjustable ballistic drop compensation (1904), O-rings to waterproof scopes (1960) and the use of multi-coated optics in riflescopes in serial production. Kahles was family owned and run for decades until it was sold to Swarovski in 1974. Between 1977 and 1989 Kahles operated as a branch of Swarovski Optik. Subsequently, it was incorporated as a stand-alone company, Kahles Limited, in May of 1989. To ensure they maintain optical excellence and premium quality, Kahles continues to manufacture all critical components of their products in-house. From personal experience, I can say that their customer service is great too.

The 2-10 sits in the middle of the Helia line-up in terms of magnification. Other options include the 1-5x24i driven hunt model, 2.4-12x56i high magnification option and light 1.6-8x42i. The Helia 2-10 has a generous eye relief of 95mm and offers a field of view of 21.0 to 4.1m at 100m. It has diopter compensation from +2 to -3.5. The lenses are coated (Oleophobic). The twilight factor of the scope is listed at 6,2-22,4.

The scope comes with a second focal plane 4-dot reticle with a fine illuminated

red dot in the centre. This dot is powered by a single CR2032 battery that is easily available. To ensure longevity, the scope is equipped with an 'automatic light' function, which switches off the illuminated reticle when the scope is not in a shooting position.

Impact adjustments are done with marked turrets that click firmly into place. Each click corrects impact by 10mm at 100m. Maximum reticle adjustments are specified at 1.6m at 100m and ballistic drop compensation turrets are optional. All this comes in a fairly sleek aluminium housing with a 30mm main tube. The scope is fully waterproof, dry nitrogen purged and with O-ring seals in the turrets and battery compartment. The Helia 2-10 has an overall length of 341mm and the external diameter is 56 at the objective and 46 at the eyepiece. The total weight, excluding scope rings is 585 grams. No flip-up caps

are provided, but it comes with a neoprene cover in the box.

Now those were a lot of numbers! Shooters may argue that there are 'better' scopes around. And on paper, may even seem right. There are scopes with higher magnification ranges, wider fields of view or perhaps more eye relief. However, the true test is how a scope performs in the field.

The sleek profile of the scope means it mounts on low rings, close to the barrels of my rifles, just the way I like it. The zoom ring is made out of aluminium and adequately knurled to easily grab hold of it. Zooming through the range is smooth, both in hot and cold weather. The illuminated dot in the reticle is sufficiently small and acute and the fact that it is easily adjusted adds to the utility of the scope.

I have used the scope in the near dark with a low intensity setting and



Shipped with a fine neoprene cover.

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experienced no glare or internal reflections. When sighting-in the scope at the range on a bright and sunny day, I switched on the illumination on a static target in bright light, just to see what would happen. To be fair, I had to crank the illumination to near maximum intensity, but the result of this test was that even in bright sunlight, the dot is clearly visible, even on the light-coloured parts of the target.

Neither warm muggy weather, nor freezing cold lead to any fogging or other issues, which speaks in favour of the Oleophobic coating used on the lenses. While I try to avoid getting soaked, I have been caught in a few rainstorms while out and about. On one occasion this left my gear well and truly dripping, but the Helia 2-10 was none the worse for it. After a wipe down when I was back to camp, it was as if it had never been wet.

The Helia 2-10 is marketed as an all-rounder, which, based on experience, it almost is. Let me explain. With a minimum magnification of 2, the scope is theoretically just about suitable for driven hunts. I have mounted the scope on my CZ 557 in .308 and used it on a few pig hunts. I had anticipated that the additional weight of a full scope would bother me as I almost always use red dots or low magnification scopes on driven hunts.

However, due to its sleek profile and relatively low weight, it has worked better for me than expected. That said, I am used



to optics without any magnification for driven hunts. While 2x may not seem like much, there is a real difference when compared to unmagnified optics. What works really well for me on driven hunts is the illuminated dot. Set to a fairly bright setting and combined with the quality glass, it makes for easy target acquisition.

I have put the Helia 2-10 on my Bergara BA13 TD and Haenel J9 stalking rifles in .308 and .243 respectively. Both of these rifles are single-shot firearms. I use the Bergara in bad weather or when I expect to possibly run into something that needs the additional punch of .308. The gun itself is fairly heavy for its size and the Helia 2-10

works well on it because it does not add a lot of weight and maintains a compact overall set-up. The Haenel is a different beast altogether. It is my go-to rifle for long hikes over difficult terrain and when every additional ounce counts going after meat for the freezer. Well, that and when I feel like hunting with a neatly made rifle.

Anyway, the Haenel is a sleek little gun and I also use it with iron sights. That means I have to mount the scope slightly higher, but the overall package works really well and is a joy to use. I have hunted pigs, deer, foxes and various other pest animals with the Helia 2-10 on both rifles and can heartily recommend it for a similar set-up.

The zoom range means that you can shoot at low magnifications when you have the opportunity to stalk in close, while you always have the higher magnifications at your disposal in case you need to take a longer shot. No matter whether this is required due to an animal being particularly skittish or the terrain limiting your ability to move closer.

Kahles does not list light transmission percentages in the specifications of the Helia 2-10, but I find that the scope is a lot brighter than many others I have used and I would venture to say close to some of the much more expensive 'alpha' alternatives. For all intents and purposes, it is bright enough to keep hunting until the light grows so dim that you ought to stop shooting. This is because it becomes impossible



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to track whatever animal you just shot if needed or even locate it if the shot was at a longer distance and it went a few paces before dropping in tall grass.

On a few occasions, out in the mountains on bright days, the harsh light caused some internal reflections on one of my binoculars but I noticed none with the Helia 2-10 when glassing the slopes and taking aim at targets. Please note that I would not recommend using a riflescope to scan terrain. On these occasions, I did so purely to test the scope for internal reflections, after I had made sure the rifle was not loaded.

During all my use, aim has remained true, regardless of the number of shots fired. It is a well-made scope and it works in almost any situation. It is one of those products that benefits from being used to make up your mind, rather than reading a spec sheet. On paper, there are alternatives that seem 'better', albeit often at a steep price. However, in the field, I have used few scopes that I liked better overall. The Helia 2-10 just works and in the unlikely event of troubles, the scope comes with a 10-year warranty (two years on the illuminated reticle and optional BDC). It is bright and built at least as well as scopes twice its price. I particularly like the knurled aluminium zoom ring and have never understood why some premium scopes opt for rubber rings or coatings. The reticle is pleasing and the illuminated dot easily visible in all conditions. I do recommend setting it once you go close to the light conditions you will be shooting in as it does not automatically



A single CR2032 button cell powers the illuminated dot.



One click means 1cm at 100m adjustments.



Knurled turrets with rubber O-rings to keep moisture and dust out.

adjust intensity. That said, it switches off automatically when you carry your gun or put it in the safe, which is handy.

If there is one thing I wish for, it would be a rail-mounted version like the SR-rail that comes with other Kahles options, which would make switching rifles easier. That said, if you mount it once and use it, this may not matter to you. The neoprene cover that ships with the scope works well for transport and storage. Still, I would recommend fitting flip-up caps for field use. They are quicker to open and close and do not keep in humidity and dirt like a full cover does.

To conclude, the Helia 2-10 is a reliable go-to optic, even in harsh climates or in remote areas. Depending on your magnification preferences, it functions well for driven hunts and it makes a fantastic stalking scope because of its sleek profile, relatively low weight and ample magnification range. ■

Specifications

Style:	All-round hunting scope
Dimensions L x W (Objective-eyepiece):	341 mm x 56 mm x 46 mm, 30 mm main tube
Weight:	585 grams
Eye relief/Objective/Zoom/Diopter:	95 mm/50 mm/2-10x/+2 to -3.5 diopter
Field of view/Twilight factor:	21.0-4.1 at 100 m/6.2-22.4
Reticle:	4-dot, second focal plane, illuminated
Reticle adjustment:	1.6 m, 10 mm/click
Power:	1 CR2032 battery
Power saving/Enhancement:	Auto-off when not in shooting position
Weatherproof:	Yes, Oleophobic coated lenses, dry nitrogen purged
Warranty:	10 years (two years on the illuminated reticle and optional BDC)
Price:	\$2290
Optional:	Ballistic drop compensation, throw lever, flip-up covers for eyepiece and objective, sunshield and killflash
Distributor:	Swarovski Australia