



Flying Fisherman



PASSPORT

Fly Rod

Our annual pilgrimage to the ICAST Show in Orlando, Florida is a three day endurance trek to see what is new in the world of kayak and fly fishing. Over the years we have gotten to know a number of manufacturers quite well. We always anticipate seeing the latest products. At ICAST one of our favorite sunglasses stops is the Flying Fisherman booth where Linda Sheldon is always pleased to show us her company's newest shades for anglers.

Flying Fisherman is well known for its popularly priced, yet high quality sunglasses. Loosing or breaking a pair of \$20-\$40 sunglasses is far less traumatic than dealing with the loss of a \$200-\$300 pair of sunglasses. This summer, Linda was pleased as punch to show us Fly Fisherman's first entry into the top tier sunglasses market for anglers. Their new Bahia 7394 RX Master Angler polarized polycarbonate "Rhinolens" and AcuTint stack up with any top tier sunglasses on the market. However, this is not a sunglasses review. It is a fly rod review which gets us to something Linda showed us that was totally unanticipated.

Flying Fisherman is now a manufacturer of high quality fly rods. Their new Passport series of fly rods is the Islamorada, Florida-based company's first toe in the water of the fly rod making world. If the Passport is the harbinger of what will come from Fly Fisherman in the future, odds are that in a short time you will see lots of these flashy fly rods on Ozark waters.

There's a great misconception in fly fishing culture that great fly rods begin at around \$700 and from there rise in price. The fly rod companies with names of status offer their rods through dealers who are insured that "rod w" or "rod s" will never be sold to the great unwashed who frequent big box stores, or worse, still do business with some sales motivated entrepreneur with a newly created account on Amazon. This is not said to speak against or diminish the importance of fly shops or the even protected dealer system. If your heart is set on a \$700 4wt you saw on the local fly shop, by all means buy it. Local fly shops are the backbone of fly fishing in the Ozark and deserve patronage from us all.

On the other hand, perhaps you have a son, daughter, girl friend or grandchild you'd like to properly outfit with a great rod. The recipient of your generosity may not be as conscious and careful with an

expensive fly rod as one might hope. A \$220-\$250 ceiling on your investment is certainly an option. What really impressed us about Fly Fisherman's Passport series of fly rods was that there is no sacrifice in quality or performance. In a nutshell, you get a lot of bang for your bucks.

"To find the difference between a good rod and a great rod, you need look no further than the engineer sitting right beside the rod designer and both working within the manufacturing process," explains Linda. "This is what we did to create the Passport rods. Our design, prototype testing, sampling and final production process is held under high quality standards to assure the best quality with minimum costs."

"We know that rod performance is only as good as the design behind it and before sending these rods into production, we made sure that the time in the design department and on the water met the highest standards," she continued. "From the onset, the goal was to engineer

fly rods that outperformed all others. The Passport utilizes extremely efficient materials that add power to the blank with minimal weight, and allows the minimization of the diameter of these rods. The result is the lightest, most sensitive and strongest multiple piece rods on the planet."

When it comes to fly rods, the proof is in the pudding, which is why STOE does fly rod reviews in the first place. From a purely mechanical, aesthetic perspective, here's the skinny. The Passport fly rod features that impressed us include the use of high-quality Portuguese cork for the grip with a FUJI reel seat and TX SIC guides. Okay, so we acknowledge there is not much you can do to top that other than perhaps adding a few diamonds and rubies.

Unless you're an engineer, Flying Fisherman's description of the physics and chemistry of the Passport's blanks "extraordinary high modulus/high strain,

Japanese graphite with nano resin" and "connections reinforced with exotic carbon fibers" could easily go in one ear and then out the other. STOE's layman translation of this technical jargon (which by the way also applies to any fly rod maker) is as follows: "We build these fly rods from the best damned

carbon graphite money can buy—period. To tell you more technical terms would a lot of smoke and mirrors that would confuse you more than you already are." 'Nuff said on that, eh?

Much the same could be said on tapers to us laymen. If you truly understand tapers (and they are all different and have specific applications), odds are you are already building your own fly rods and are reading this to see if we are going blow smoke up your rump.

Nope, it's not going to happen here, other than to say we like the taper of Passport, noting that it has exceptional sensitivity, high loading strength and delivers a level of performance that is a notch or two better than your typical production fly rod. The Passport certainly qualifies as pretty fast. (It is listed as Xfast.)



Casting scored an 8.5 out of 10, and accuracy was pleasant, scoring 9 out of 10. We admit this is an unstructured, not overly objective evaluation, but it is calling it like we see it. The Passport is not the world's greatest fly rod, but it's the best for this asking price. If there is a shortcoming in the Passport series of fly rods, it is that the workhorses are only available in three models: Light 9-ft, 6wt; Medium 9-ft, 8wt; and Heavy 9-ft, 10wt. We'd love to see a 4wt Passport. We were impressed with the Flying Fisherman's Passport warranty that replaces any broken piece for \$50.00. Flying Fisherman's target market is anglers seeking an affordable great fly rod that is easily taken along on trips. This 4-piece rod can be purchased with a travel bag, which is pretty handy for on the go Ozark fly rodders.

Flying Fisherman's Passport series of fly rods, get a two thumbs up from STOE. For more visit www.flyingfisherman.com



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