

# WHAT NEXT IN THE EYEWEAR SECTOR

The eyewear sector has seen a number of advances in recent years. Here, its key players explain how they are taking their products to the next level.

Consumers are more aware of the need for polarised eyewear while fishing and this has resulted in a growing number of products coming onto the market.

Hand-in-hand with increasing product choice has been the technological advances in fishing sunglasses which has helped improve the health of eyes and the overall quality of the fishing experience.

**Flying Fisherman**, of Florida Keys, has been making fishing sunglasses for over 25 years and its Vice President, Linda Sheldon, told *Angling International*: “More products are being designed with fishing specific-features – floatable, anti-corrosion, ultra-light, flexible, and stress point padding.

“More high-tech lenses are also being introduced with advanced coatings and innovative application techniques to keep pace with the needs of the market.

“Anglers want penetration through the glare reflected off the water, maximum UV protection and protection from flying objects. All these requirements are continually being assessed by manufacturers.”

Peter Crow, General Manager at **Smith Optics**, agrees. He said: “Eyewear is already so advanced that further improvements present an increasing challenge for manufacturers. However, the industry will continue to respond and produce benefits for the customer.

“Lens performance is about technology, while frame advancement is more to do with style. The aim at Smith Optics is to integrate performance and style.”

Armed with knowledge of the many products in the marketplace, consumers are now starting to demand evidence to evaluate price against performance, says Mark Fisher, Director of Sales at **Wiley X Eyewear**. The Californian-based company started life by supplying America’s law enforcement agencies and its military special forces with protective eyewear.

Added Fisher: “This approach is a welcome shift from the following-the-herd mentality of ‘everyone else seems to wear them so they must be the best’ attitude.

“In this economy consumers are also putting more scrutiny on what they are paying and why.”

However, he does not believe that technological advances have typically characterised the sunglasses category when it comes to fishing. He said: “If they looked good and were polarised that combination was often good enough. If you throw in an ad with a fish

and a pro angler endorsement or two you become an accepted premium fishing sunglasses brand.

“Certain technologies and features can improve fishing performance and physical comfort on the water and anglers are starting to be more discerning in that respect.

“Certified protection is now starting to be a factor in the buying decision as eye injuries can occur while fishing.”

Chas MacDonald, President of **Costa Sunglasses**, says his company spends a lot of time talking to its customers. He said: “We hear them telling us that they want more aggressive styling, more lens material options and more of what they like about our products.”

**Live Eyewear**, the Californian-based manufacturer of products to be worn over prescription glasses, has continued to add cutting edge products to its range. The latest is Cocoons – an addition to its OverRx series – which are available with grey Polare polarised lenses that feature a flash blue mirror coat.



Looking good: Cocoons from Live Eyewear are typical of the advances in eyewear technology.