

2021 BOAT BUYERS GUIDE

ANGLERS' SURVEY RESULTS // BEST-BUILT BOATS FOR SALTWATER FISHING

FROM THE EDITORS OF

Salt Water  
SPORTSMAN

SPORT  
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Marlin

# BOAT BUYERS GUIDE 2021



PRESENTED BY



EXCLUSIVE ON HELM MASTER EX:  
**MAXIMUM CONTROLS  
WITH MINIMAL  
EFFORT, INTEGRATED,  
AUTOMATED, NEARLY  
ROBOTIC**

## GREAT STUFF GALORE!

50 FISH-HOOKING, FISH-BOX-FILLING, SMILE-MAKING THINGS

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CRITICAL EYE  
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SEA-TRIAL  
YOUR  
NEW BOAT**

INSHORE OR OFFSHORE:

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Caymas 341 CC: The hottest new performance CC  
from the legacy team hand-selected by Earl Benz



# *Just Nosin' Around with Family*

Owning a Yellowfin not only gives you the best opportunity to get to the fishing grounds where others can not, it introduces you to a whole new family and lifestyle. Quality, performance and resale value are great attributes, as is meeting new people with similar interests who often become family, **The Yellowfin family.**



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 **PURSUIT**



**YAMAHA HELM MASTER EX** rethinks everything about piloting outboard fishing boats using electric steering with no hydraulics, plus joystick and autopilot integration never before accomplished.



## Helm Master® EX

IS YAMAHA'S HELM MASTER EX WITH JOYSTICK VALUABLE ON A SINGLE-ENGINE BOAT?

That's the question our team asked when in November, masked men from Yamaha met us at the Fort Myers Yacht Basin downtown. Two unmasked vessels: a dual-engine Jupiter 27 center-console and a single-engine Robalo Cayman 246 Bay were dockside. With plenty of multi-engine joystick time under our belt, we opted for a new experience with the Robalo's single engine.

### The EX Factor

The joystick is the top tier of the new Yamaha Helm Master EX operating system. The EX iteration is compatible with all F-series DEC controlled Yamaha outboards 150 hp and up. The tiered system begins with the Digital Electronic Control (electronic throttle and shift), to which optional Digital Electronic Steering can be added. That allows you to customize the steering resistance and adjust the lock-to-lock steering from four to nine

revolutions, depending on your rpm. DES works without hydraulics, as does the Yamaha autopilot—the third tier—and that saves a considerable amount of weight in pumps, hoses and fluids.

There are no black boxes for the autopilot, just a small ECM, heading sensor and antenna plugged into the system. From the DEC to the joystick, all components can be easily retrofit. With 100 percent digital controls, the wheel is just bolted to the dash, and the cable links it and





Everglades' 2021 235 CC is one of the first boats optionally equipped with the full suite of Helm Master EX series controls that fully integrate navigation, engine information, joystick controls and autopilot.

the joystick to the Helm Master display and the electronic steering. Without hydraulics, the autopilot is plug-and-play.

## Showing Off

Garmin builds Yamaha's full-featured MFD, the CL7 display, and it is essentially a multifunction display with chart-plotting and sonar-scanning capabilities. The EX system is also compatible with Raymarine's Axiom series displays. A new 5-inch touchscreen display, the CL5, is available for Helm Master EX, as well.

But how 'bout that single-engine joystick. Did it work? Yes it did.

With it we could dock easily without having to spin the helm and simultaneously work the throttle and shift. The single-lever control handles vector and thrust, shifting from forward to reverse for fast, easy and finely tuned adjustments in direction and speed.

But can you pivot with a joystick on a single powerplant?

We did.

To pivot counterclockwise, twist the stick to full port, and begin moving it fore and aft to shift from forward to reverse and feed in throttle. The first thing you will notice in this maneuver—besides the fact that it works pretty neatly—is that it's smooth as well. No matter how fast you shift from forward to reverse, the motor is throttled down to idle speed before the shift begins, and then throttles up when it's complete. It happens so quickly, the rpm change on the instruments is barely

visible and barely discernible to the skipper. Officially, we could not crab the boat with the stick and single outboard, but Yamaha's Capt. Sean Gill discovered a hack that would "walk" it sideways. And it is easy.

Just pull back the stick a bit, then turn forward, twist, and quickly repeat. With a moment's practice, the rhythm is easy to repeat, and with five or six repetitions, we had a foot between us and the dock—enough room to clear the stern as we turned away.

The electronic steering has to be selected to get the Yamaha autopilot, which also has to be present to add the full-maneuverability joystick. The logic is that the autopilot powers the joystick, but the joystick adds additional controls to the autopilot.

## Control Freak

Tap "Fish Point" on the joystick to hold your boat over a given waypoint without concern for the boat's heading; the bow or stern (depending on what the operator selects) will swing downwind or down-current. Tap "Stay Point" on multi-engine installations to keep the vessel on station and maintain a heading—a nice feature when waiting for a slip at the gas dock. "Drift Point" is beautiful for drift-fishing,

especially with a kite; it lets the vessel drift while maintaining heading so lines and kites aren't entangled. All of these features can be controlled with and are contingent on having the autopilot function.

The joystick also lets you change a course in autopilot mode just by turning the stick. Or set a parallel course by pressing the stick to starboard or port. That lets you give an approaching vessel a wider berth without having to deactivate the autopilot.

If you are thinking all these features seem dronelike in quality—bingo!

And that becomes even more apparent on multi-engine vessels. With the dual-engine Jupiter, we could pivot exactly on position. A twist of the stick issues the command "pivot in place," and the Helm

Master EX system executes it flawlessly. Crabbing works the same way, ensuring that your sidestep is perfectly aligned to your intentions.

While many of these controls and maneuvers are possible in other integrated control systems, the Helm Master EX offers a smoother, more intuitive global control system than we have experienced with other systems.

Control is power.

**ELECTRONIC THROTTLE AND SHIFT** is the first level of super-smooth, ultimate control in Yamaha outboards from 150 hp upward.





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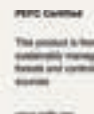
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# Has anyone seen a boat called *Social Distancing*?



**L**ike you all, I'm sick of hearing the term "social distancing," sick of having to do it, but happy as hell, so far, it has kept me safe. And I'm grateful.

Boaters boated and fishermen fished. And they did it a lot more. Some because they had more time on their hands, some because they needed the escape from a political tempest and others as a bully pulpit for the political tempest. Whatever the motivator, if their old boat wasn't up to their new commitment —71 percent said they would fish or boat more during the pandemic—they shopped up a new one with about 15 minutes of web surfing. We've heard of fishermen, spurred on by the COVID-19 outbreak, who selected, equipped and closed on their new boat without ever stepping into a showroom. It just showed up on a dock or a dealer lot, ready to hitch to a ball mount.

This is the seventh time we have conducted this survey of all things saltwater fishing. And you all have been consistent. Consistently keeping your boat, making your allotted days on the

water, taking the largest crews your boat could accommodate and going for fish.

Though our survey indicates that you fished more, we didn't need a survey to tell us that. Boatbuilders told us when they sold out their entire inventory by May. Dealers had empty lots and sought out unused used boats to put on the block. If you sold your boat without replacing it, we are sorry. But your timing was good. You got more money for it than you ever will in the future.

Bay boats and center-consoles still dominate the fishing market. The former have one engine; the latter, on average, have two. Cost is no object. Only safety, and fun.

With an average crew size of three, you're well within the social-distancing rules, and boatbuilders are making sure your boat will accommodate them.

Our guide exists because as boatbuilders compete for your money, they offer more seating, more fishability, better-looking color schemes, and far more powerful and efficient engines to drive the vessel. Your choices are getting harder to make; the purpose of this guide is to help you navigate the seas to your perfect boat. Don't let anybody tell you it doesn't exist.



*Randy Vance*

**RANDY VANCE**

Editor-at-Large, Marine and Fishing  
randy.vance@bonniercorp.com

## Our Readers' Fishy Facts and Stats

**20%** OWN A BAY BOAT

**29%** HAVE SALTWATER-FISHED 20-39 DAYS IN THE PAST YEAR

**37%** OWN AN OFFSHORE CENTER-CONSOLE BOAT

**49%** HAVE SALTWATER-FISHED FOR 40 OR MORE YEARS

**50%** SALTWATER-FISH ALONE

**54%** HAVE SALTWATER-FISHED FOR OFFSHORE SPECIES

**54%** HAVE YAMAHA OUTBOARDS

**77%** HAVE SALTWATER-FISHED FOR INSHORE SPECIES

**78%** SALTWATER-FISH WITH FRIENDS

**86%** OWN OUTBOARD-POWERED BOATS

ALL ABOUT

# THE RIDE

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# FISHING BOAT BUYERS GUIDE—GEAR

WHEN YOU BUY A NEW BOAT, SOME KEY GEAR NEEDS INSTANTLY COME TO MIND, SUCH AS BATTERIES AND AN ANCHOR. BUT NOT EVERY NECESSITY IS AS OBVIOUS, AND QUITE A FEW NONESSENTIALS MAKE SENSE FOR BOATING ANGLERS. HERE ARE 27 GEAR ITEMS THAT MAKE BOATING AND FISHING EASIER, MORE ENJOYABLE, AND SAFER.

By Chris Woodward

## FISHING ACCESSORIES



3



2



### 1. BATTLE BELT

AFTCO designed its lightweight Alijos fighting belt for use with 20- to 50-pound lines. Stamped from marine-grade gold-anodized aluminum with an overmolded, closed-cell polyurethane pad, the Alijos accommodates the same quick-clip nylon straps as the larger AFTCO fighting belts. The stainless-steel gimbal cross pin can be removed. The thermal-formed nylon liner inside the aluminum gimbal pocket helps resist scarring. **\$89; [aftco.com](http://aftco.com)**

### 2. FIERCE PROTECTION

Columbia's Force XII ODX foul-weather-gear jacket and bib feature Outdry Extreme waterproof, breathable construction, and they're fully seam-sealed. The jacket comes with watertight comfort cuffs and cargo pockets, and is available in sizes S through XXL and in azul (blue) and carbon fiber (black/dark gray). Bibs come in S through XXL and in carbon fiber, and offer partial elastic at the waist, reinforced knees and bottom leg zips. **\$300 (bib), \$350 (jacket); [columbia.com](http://columbia.com)**

### 3. TAKE IT WITH YOU

Made from TPU, Calcutta's Keeper dry waterproof duffel is abrasion-resistant and fully waterproof at the seams and zipper. It features a removable and padded shoulder strap, large exterior web pocket, and second sealed exterior pocket. It measures 12 inches wide by 12 inches high by 23 inches long, and offers 35 liters of internal volume. The bag is gray and black, and comes with four webbed loops on the sides for attaching to a boat or vehicle. **\$50; [calcuttaoutdoors.com](http://calcuttaoutdoors.com)**



#### 4. SOFT LANDING

Frabill's ultralight conservation net features a 48-inch carbon-fiber handle with a molded rubber grip, the company's patented Pow'R Lok yoke, and a unique hoop shape. To best protect fish for release, the ultralight comes with a completely knotless mesh netting, and a flat linear bottom to reduce fish rolling. The mesh-guard hoop resists wear and reduces lure catch points. The hoop measures 18-by-21 inches and is 18 inches deep. **\$129.99; frabill.com**



#### 5. CRUCIAL TOOLS

When anglers tie a knot with braid or heavy mono, they take a few wraps on their hands to cinch it, and that can cut the skin. The Accurate knot puller is covered with rubber for a nonslip surface and comes with two holes atop the tool to secure hooks. The puller comes packaged with APXL-7 pliers; both are made from 6061 T-6 lightweight aluminum. **\$125; accuratefishing.com**

#### 6. DOWN WITH IT

Descending devices help fish recover from barotrauma by lowering them to a depth that recompresses their air bladders. SeaQualizer makes three versions: shallow (set release depths include 30, 50 and 70 feet), standard (50, 100 and 150 feet) and deep (100, 200 and 300 feet). As a rule of thumb, fish should be sent back to at least half the depth at which they were caught, SeaQualizer says. **\$59.99; seaqualizer.com**

#### 7. SIGHTING IN

A recent addition to the sports-performance collection, Costa's Tailwalker was inspired by the way a sailfish greyhounds along the surface. Featuring a regular frame fit and the new adjustable locking-lever temple tips, Tailwalkers have an edgy appeal. Available in matte black, matte fog gray and matte wetlands frame colors, Tailwalkers can be fitted with a variety of glass or plastic 580 lenses. **\$189 to \$269; costadelmar.com**

#### 8. KICKIN' IT

Xtratuf's 6-inch ankle deck boots were crafted specifically for recreational anglers. Goring around the ankle, and back/front finger tabs make these easy to slip on. The interior boasts a durable fabric that lets the foot breathe. This lightweight waterproof boot (3.16 pounds) features the same nonmarking, slip-resistant Chevron outsole as the company's iconic Legacy boot, worn by Alaskan commercial fishermen. New colors include the green/camo for men (pictured) and black/scales for women. Men's boots come in sizes 7 through 14; women's boots are available in sizes 5 through 11. **\$95; xtratuf.com**

#### 9. SHARP PACKAGE

A first-of-its-kind product, Bubba's Multi-flex interchangeable blade system is designed to deliver the strength and durability of a full-tang traditional fillet knife while providing the ability to swap different styles of blades to tackle small, medium or large fish in any environment. The kit includes a 7-inch tapered flex, an 8-inch ultra flex, a 9-inch serrated flex and a 9-inch stiff blade. The nonslip handle features a squeeze-and-slide mechanism that allows you to switch blades quickly. A locking mechanism keeps the blade secure. The kit comes with an EVA carrying case. **\$126; bubba.com**



1



## BOATING ACCESSORIES

### 1. HEAVY-DUTY HAULER

The LoadOut 5-gallon bucket from Yeti, made from high-density polyethylene, stands up to the tough demands of offshore fishing. The bucket features Anchor Point tie-down slots, a Hefty Hauler handle for comfort and reliability, and a nonmarring Bearfoot nonslip ring on the bottom to prevent sliding. Accessories include a gear belt, and a lid or caddy for expanded functionality. The LoadOut comes in white, sea foam, desert tan and charcoal. **\$39.99; yeti.com**

### 2. BIG BOOM

With the Tigress Poseidon dredge boom, center-console boats can pull double and triple dredges down deep to raise boat-shy fish that would otherwise not come up to the spread. Designed to work with 80-pound-class bent-butt rods and Lindgren-Pitman or Hooker electric reels, this accessory features a 7-foot black fiberglass boom, heavy-duty block pulley, and stainless-steel hardware, and it comes with a safety tether and stainless carabiner. **\$649; tigressoutriggers.com**

### 3. EASY CLEAN

To create the Magic Sponge Xtend, Star brite took its popular Ultimate Magic Sponge—a melamine foam scuff and streak eraser with a reinforced core—and gave it a swivel head that attaches to any handle with both a quick connector and screw-thread adapter. The attachment pad can also be used with all Star brite scrubber handles. Clean without straining your back or knees. **\$34.99; starbrite.com**

### 4. COMFORT STEERING

Edson took the features of its proven Stainless PowerKnob and added ComfortGrip to cushion the fingers for greater ease and control. Strap the ComfortGrip PowerKnob to any wheel rim measuring  $\frac{5}{8}$  to  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inches in diameter, or bolt it onto any solid rim. With its Delrin ball bearings, the knob makes maneuvering any size boat easier. **\$137; edsonmarine.com**

### 5. TROLL POLES

Gemlux says its deluxe outrigger bases allow center-console boat owners to deploy outriggers like sport-fish-boat captains at a lower cost. The bases still feature the same under-the-T-top operation as the company's Bluewater Bases, as well as many of the same internal components. The one-handle design allows for adjustments up, down, in or out. The bases support 16- to 18-foot poles, including the 16-foot internally rigged hybrid outriggers (pictured) and the 18-foot collapsible hybrid outriggers, both made from a proprietary blend of carbon-fiber composite materials. The collapsible riggers can be easily stored in compact places. **\$1,680 (pair of bases), \$1,600 (pair of 16-foot hybrid poles); gemlux.com**

### 6. FLOTATION WEAR

A Type III recreational life jacket for inshore and coastal use, the Mustang Survival MIT-100 Automatic features a minimum of 25.1 pounds of buoyancy when inflated—1.5 times more buoyancy than regular foam devices. The high-tenacity nylon used in the face fabric allows this jacket to be softer, suppler and lighter weight than previous versions. The adjustable belt creates a customized fit for most adults. Large arm cutouts provide comfort and mobility. A manual inflation handle is easily accessible when needed. **\$159.99; mustangsurvival.com**

2



3



4



5



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<sup>1</sup>TZT9F is a Single-Channel 1kW TruECHO CHIRP™

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<sup>3</sup>Requires external sensor

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7



9



8



### 7. PROPER TREATMENT

Chevron Products Company's Techron Marine fuel-system treatment—an alcohol- and emulsifier-free formula—does not contribute to water uptake, and provides boaters with enhanced fuel stabilization, corrosion protection and cleaning power. Techron Marine can be used in any vessel with a gasoline engine. The treatment stabilizes fuel up to 24 months. One ounce treats 10 gallons. \$5 (4 ounces), \$12.99 (10 ounces), \$99.99 (128 ounces); [chevronlubricants.com](http://chevronlubricants.com)

### 8. POWER TEST

Boating anglers often deal with electrical problems. And while this tool is no replacement for a digital multimeter, it can help a boater narrow down the cause of battery or battery-charging problems on board. Determine at a glance whether a weak battery is caused by a faulty alternator or a failing battery. The device offers three alternator readings and three battery readings. It has 28-inch leads with an alligator clip and test probe. \$3.99; [harborfreight.com](http://harborfreight.com)

### 9. STEADY VIEW

Offshore fishermen in particular need powerful binoculars; the more powerful, the better—to a point. When binoculars get too powerful, the motion of the boat and the hands make it difficult to clearly view targets. Fujinon eliminates that in these 14x40 highly magnified optics with electronically stabilized imaging. The subject—whether a bird flock or floating log—remains steady in the eyepieces. \$1,300; [westmarine.com](http://westmarine.com)

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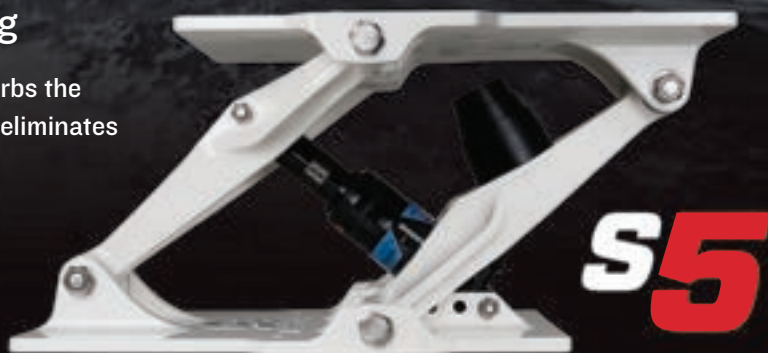
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## ELECTRONICS



### 1. THE PLUS SIDE

Available in 7-, 9- and 12-inch models, the Raymarine Axiom+ displays feature a quad-core processor and ultra-bright IPS screen. Raymarine has also introduced a HydroTough coating to the new units to repel water and oils. Axiom+ comes with four built-in sonar channels, including RealVision 3D, and an ultra-sensitive 10 Hz GPS/GNSS receiver, as well as Raymarine's new LightHouse charts. Prices start at **\$749** (7-inch), **\$1,099** (9-inch), **\$2,499** (12-inch); [raymarine.com](http://raymarine.com)

### 2. WATCHDOG

Garmin's OnDeck system offers boaters a remote monitoring and management solution. When paired with the ActiveCaptain app, OnDeck monitors battery status, door/hatch sensors, GPS location and more. The system includes a door, temperature and shore-power sensors, and a relay switch. OnDeck can be used with a multifunction display and has a 48-hour internal backup battery. **\$849.99** (subscriptions: **\$19.99** per month flexible or **\$12.99** per month for a year); [garmin.com](http://garmin.com)

### 3. NEXT GEN

TZT, Time Zero Technology, is lightning fast when you change from fish finder to chart to radar, and redraw is seamless. There's no waiting on the TZT16F. It's more iPhone-like than anybody, with up, down, left and right swipes to bring up pages and menus. It features true, full CHIRP, not the modified chirp of lesser systems so bottom targets are painted in exquisite detail. MapMedia, CMAP, Navionics or CMOR mapping compatible, plus pin-code security. **\$5,595**; [furunousa.com](http://furunousa.com).

### 4. SONAR STAR

The most powerful Elite series fish finder/chart plotter Lowrance has ever offered, the Elite Fishing System (FS) combines ActiveTarget Live Sonar and extreme high-res Active Imaging with chirp, SideScan and DownScan to offer anglers multiple views. C-Map Contour+ Fishing Maps come pre-loaded. Available with either a 7- or 9-inch screen, FS comes in a variety of models—some with all of the sonar bells and whistles, and others with a smaller selection of features. **\$649** to **\$2,499**; [lowrance.com](http://lowrance.com)

### 5. FAR-RANGING

Humminbird's third-generation Solix multifunction displays feature a new dual-core processor and an expanded range of Mega Imaging+, seeing to deeper depths and farther distances (up to 250 feet deep and 250 feet to each side). Available with 10.1-, 12.1- or 15.4-inch sunlight-viewable screens. Solix G3 comes with dual-spectrum chirp sonar. Available charts include CoastMaster and Navionics. **\$2,199.99** to **\$3,499.99**; [hummingbird.com](http://hummingbird.com)

### 6. SAVING GRACE

ACR's ResQKit and ResQKit Pro provide ultimate ditch-bag essentials, including a GlobalFix V4 EPIRB (Cat. 2), electronic distress flare and flag, strobe, and more. The Pro also comes with a ResQLink 400 PLB (see photo above) and a Firefly Pro Waterbug light. The RapidDitch express bag can float up to 15 pounds of gear. The ResQKit weighs 6.7 pounds, and the Pro weighs 7.03 pounds. **\$599.95** (ResQKit) and **\$849.95** (ResQKit Pro); [acrartex.com](http://acrartex.com)



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7



9



8



## 7. ACCURATE LISTENING

Icom's M93D 5-watt handheld VHF comes with an internal GNSS GPS receiver that ensures an 8- to 12-second fix on your location, critical for DSC distress calling or navigation to specific waypoints. The M93D can save 50 waypoints and gives steering information on the LED screen, including speed and course. The radio floats for added safety and security, and comes with a battery pack, an AC adapter/charger, and a 12-volt outlet cable. **\$249.99;** [icomamerica.com](http://icomamerica.com)

## 8. HIDDEN TUNES

Fusion's Apollo WB670 hideaway system and ERX400 wired remote eliminate the need for a stereo head unit on the dash. Controlled through the remote or a compatible MFD, the WB670 inherited its key audio features from the Apollo RA670, including digital signal processing. Available sources include AM/FM, Bluetooth, Apple AirPlay2, USB and more. It mounts behind inside a center console. **\$449.99 (WB670), \$229.99 (ERX400);** [fusionentertainment.com](http://fusionentertainment.com)

## 9. LIGHT THE WAY

The USCG-approved Sirius Signal C-1002 two-color, electronic visual-distress-signal device (classified by the Coast Guard as an eVDS) is five times brighter than any approved device on the market, according to the manufacturer. Its 13 LEDs shine an SOS in visible light and infrared. It includes an app for creating float plans, one-touch check-in, and SOS notifications to first responders and contacts. **\$299.95 (kit with light, flag, whistle, batteries);** [siriusignal.com](http://siriusignal.com)



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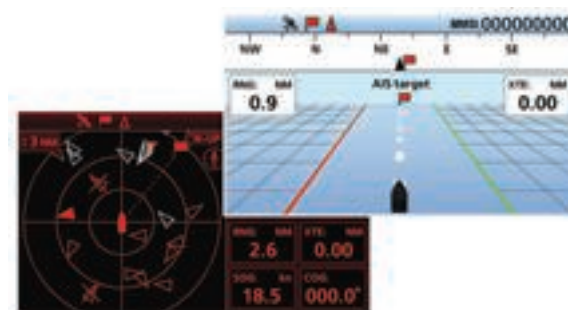


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## WHAT READERS WANT

FIFTY-NINE PERCENT OF BOATERS SAID THEY PREFER TO BUY A VESSEL THAT'S ALREADY EQUIPPED WITH ELECTRONICS.



## Combo or Multifunction Display?

SMALLER, LESS-EXPENSIVE PLOTTER/FISH-FINDER COMBO UNITS FIT THE NEEDS OF MANY ANGLERS WHO DON'T REQUIRE MULTIFUNCTION DISPLAYS CAPABLE OF NETWORKING WITH RADAR, AUTOPILOT, BLACK-BOX SONAR UNITS, AND OTHER PERIPHERALS.

By Chris Woodward and Jim Hendricks

In an age when big-screen multifunction displays dominate every wish list, relatively basic “combo” units remain unloved. However, these utilitarian machines rank among the bestselling models from major marine electronics brands such as Garmin, Furuno, Humminbird, Raymarine, Lowrance and Simrad.

Combos are generally affordable, easy to install, a cinch to use, and effective for inshore and some offshore applications.

### PACKAGE DEAL

The main functional difference between combo units and MFDs: networkability. Combos generally come with built-in GPS

as well as plotter and sonar functions, and only occasionally do they offer connectivity for additional electronics such as radar and autopilots.

MFDs often link up with external modules or black boxes that provide multiple features and options. They network—using NMEA 2000—with all peripheral electronic devices and with a variety of systems on the boat such as underwater lights, stereos, digital switching systems and more.

“In our lineup, we consider the Element series to be a combo unit rather than an MFD,” says Jim McGowan, marketing manager for Raymarine. “In our book,

combo units have two primary features in them: a GPS/chart plotter and a sonar. Typically, the combo units don’t have quite as much networking or expansion capability compared with a traditional MFD like Raymarine’s Axiom.”

Furuno’s Jeff Kazlauric offers a slightly different take. “A combo unit would contain two or three main features (GPS/chart plotter, fish finder and radar) built in,” Kazlauric says. “For example, our GP1871F and GP1971F are considered

Garmin’s EchoMap units don’t network with radar or OneHelm, which differentiates them from the company’s MFDs.

COURTESY GARMIN

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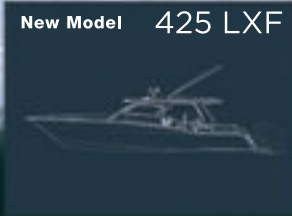


LXF LINE

530 LXF



New Model 425 LXF



380 LXF



355 LXF



330 LXF



305 LXF



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## WHAT READERS WANT

THIRTY PERCENT OF INBOARD SPORT-FISH OWNERS USE AT LEAST 75 PERCENT OF THEIR ELECTRONICS' CAPABILITIES.



combo units because they are GPS chart plotters/fish finders.”

## SMALLER OPTIONS

Combo units often land on smaller center-consoles and skiffs, where the owner's budget, and helm space, might be tight. Some manufacturers traditionally have limited the screen size of their combo units for that reason.

“Due to the screen size and sonar/GPS offerings of [Humminbird's combo-unit] Helix 5- and 7-inch G2 and G3 models, we find that inshore anglers prefer these models,” says Matt Cook, Humminbird brand manager. “For those with larger boats, the Helix G4N and Solix G3 MFD series offer robust sonar, GPS and networking options.”

But these days, combos also can be found in larger sizes. In the Garmin

Humminbird's Helix 7 MEGA SI GPS G3 combo unit (above right) can pair with an all-in-one transom-mount (center) or through-hull (left) transducer that combines multiple sonar capabilities.

don't,” McGowan explains. For example, a Raymarine Element 12HV starts at \$1,799.99, while a Raymarine Axiom 12 MFD starts at \$2,449.99. The new-generation Axiom+ 12-inch MFD starts at \$2,499.

While a combo unit reflects less tech compared with MFDs, the same cannot be said about quality, McGowan points out. “There are certain features we won't skimp on, like a high-resolution, bright, daylight-viewable display,” he says. The Element series also features the performance of a quad-core processor.

## INSTALLATION EASE

Another advantage of combo units lies in their comparatively simple installation. “There are fewer things to connect and configure with a combo unit,” says Andrew Golden, whose company represents the Lowrance and Simrad brands.

Most combo units feature a built-in GPS receiver, which means no separate antenna to mount and no extra cable to route. Many units can be installed as less-expensive do-it-yourself projects. Yet, even if a marine-electronics installer does the job, combo installation takes less time than configuring a fully networked MFD, and that translates to lower cost.

Many combo units also come with multifunctional transducers for greater fish-finder capability. Garmin's EchoMap Ultra 106sv and 126sv models, for instance, include a GT54UHD-TM transom-mount all-in-one transducer with high-wide chirp, and ultra-high-definition ClearVü (down) and SideVü (side) scanning sonars.

## TRANSDUCER TYPES

The other half of a great fish finder is its transducer. To choose the right style, Airmar Technology offers these suggestions.



## TRANSON

Best for boats under 25 feet with outboard propulsion. Not good for inboards or larger vessels, where turbulence at the transom is significant.



## IN-HULL

For boats of any size with fiberglass hulls. Must be located in front of the propellers on an inboard boat and ahead of the first step on stepped hulls.



## THROUGH-HULL

For boats over 25 feet made from any hull material. Best choice for larger hulls because the faring block keeps the transducer face below the bubbles that travel on the hull. Nonfaring block models can also be installed on boats up to 36 feet.

**“COMBO UNITS CAN GENERALLY HIT A MORE AFFORDABLE PRICE POINT FOR MANY SHOPPERS.”**

lineup, for instance, combos range from the Striker 4, with a 3½-inch color display screen and a push-button operating system, to the EchoMap Ultra 126sv, with a 12-inch color touchscreen and a key-assist function.

On the upper end, 9 to 12 inches seems to be the largest display available in a combo model. In the Simrad Cruise line, the biggest screen measures 9 inches. However, a Lowrance Elite Ti2 combo model and a Raymarine Element combo feature screens as large as 12 inches.

“Combo units generally hit a more affordable price point for many shoppers because these models are built to have everything you need and nothing that you

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# ELECTRONICS

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1



2



3

**FUSION's RA670 (1)** head unit has all the bells and whistles of the Apollo Series, including digital signal processing, in a compact form. MSRP: \$449.99 **KICKER's KMCD PREMIUM MARINE MEDIA CENTER (2)** is a 240-watt marine source unit with a color LCD screen, USB charging and thumb-drive playback. MSRP: \$549 **JL AUDIO's MEDIAMASTER 50 (3)** offers NMEA 2000 networking and comes with a built-in 100-watt amplifier. MSRP: \$399.99

COURTESY FROM LEFT: FUSION ENTERTAINMENT; KICKER MARINE; JL AUDIO; RAYMARINE (OPPOSITE)

CENTER CONSOLES 180 | 190 | 210 | 230 | 260 | 280

CABIN CRUISERS 215 | 235 | 255 | 285 | 315



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Similarly, each Lowrance Elite Ti2 combo unit comes with an ActiveImaging 3-in-1 transom-mount transducer that features chirp, SideScan and DownScan. A single transducer that gives you more ways to find structure and fish saves the cost of buying multiple transducers to do the same things, and further simplifies the installation.

## RULE EXCEPTIONS

Although by nature and cost, combos are traditionally self-contained, standing alone in terms of their features, newer models challenge that definition. “The lines [between combos and MFDs] have been blurred more and more over the years,” explains Carly Hysell, media relations manager for Garmin. “In the past, multifunction displays were considered any unit that could do networking, but now some of our combo units have at least some networking

functionality as well, so that theory doesn’t really apply anymore.”

As an example, the Garmin EchoMap

Ultra series offers built-in support for networking with Garmin’s Panoptix sonars and Panoptix LiveScope scanning sonar, which offers real-time, video-like views of structure and fish. The units also feature NMEA 2000 connectivity for networking, with peripherals such as heading sensors, autopilots, digital switching and the Fusion-Link audio system.

In another example of expanding functionality, Simrad’s GO9 XSE and GO12

While most combos come in only 7- and 9-inch sizes, Raymarine includes a 12-inch display in its Element Series, which also features a quad-core processor.

XSE combo units can be networked to serve as displays for Simrad’s Broadband 3G/4G and Halo pulse-compression radar systems for safer navigation.

The evolving nature of combo units makes them even more versatile for navigation and finding structure and fish. Yet ultimately, as many anglers have learned about their small skiffs and boats: You don’t always need a big, expensive MFD with lots of extra features for angling success. Sometimes a compact combo unit is the just right machine for the job.

**WHAT READERS WANT  
AMONG OPINIONS  
SHARED,  
MANY BOATERS  
WANTED TO  
UPDATE THEIR  
ELECTRONICS.**



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COURTESY PATHFINDER

**B**ay boats are among the abundant choices in coastal and nearshore fishing boats. They are offered by a range of manufacturers that maintain a special appeal to anglers with a broad spectrum of angling interests. Legendary bay-boat builders, as well as those just venturing into this popular style, find continuing enthusiasm for the design and unflagging demand.

Among the respondents to our survey, 61 percent expressed enthusiasm for owning a fishing-specific bay boat.

The value of a bay boat comes from its elevated fore and aft casting decks, low freeboards for access to the water, and abundant storage. Their shallow draft, from 12 to 17 inches, allows access to shallow waters for collecting bait or hunting predators, leading that pack in inshore-fishing machines.

Not that it's the only choice. In the same size class, dual- and center-consoles might better fit the needs of families with varying interests, with often only a small sacrifice in total fishability.

46 Hewes / 48 Pathfinder / 50 Skeeter / 52 Yamaha Boats

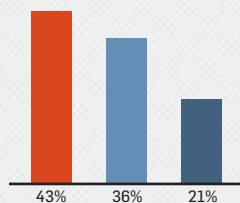


### VERSATILITY

Bay boats and inshore center-consoles are often called on to meet a spectrum of owner demands on the water, from fishing to exploring with family.

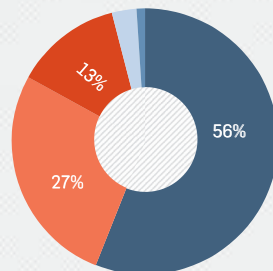
Bay boats were originally built for protected waters inshore, but it's now common to find them big enough—up to 27 feet—and seaworthy enough for offshore duty and inshore shallows.

Sophisticated features and systems, once associated with larger offshore boats, have steadily migrated down into this versatile category, and buyers should expect the same robust execution with top-of-the-line components, quality materials and top-shelf attention to detail they'd look for in a larger boat. Many construction details are the same and, reasonably, you as a buyer should accept nothing less.



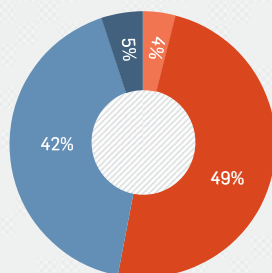
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU FISH WITH LIVE BAIT?

- Less than 50% of the time
- More than 50% of the time
- Nearly 100% of the time



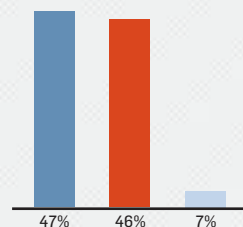
### HOW MANY GUNWALE ROD HOLDERS DO YOU NEED WHEN YOU FISH OFFSHORE?

- 4
- 6
- 8
- 10 - (3%)
- More than 10 (1%)



### HOW MUCH ROD STORAGE DO YOU NEED ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT?

- Space for 1 to 3 rods
- Space for 4 to 6 rods
- Space for 7 to 12 rods
- Space for more than 12 rods—I lose count of rods in my boat



### HOW MANY LIVEWELLS DO YOU NEED?

- One is enough
- Two, one forward and one aft
- Three, to keep different baits separated

**“BAY-BOAT BUILDERS FIND CONTINUING BUYER ENTHUSIASM FOR THE DESIGN.”**





# Clues to Quality

By Glenn Law

**W**hen shopping for an inshore-fishing boat, there's nothing to match time on the water to help solidify a decision. And certainly the particular qualities of any boat become fully realized only after spending time using it.

But prior to the first fishing trip or sea trial, inspection of construction, components and systems—in the showroom or on the boat-show floor—provides valuable insight that foretells a long and satisfying ownership experience.

Look for the signs of quality and care in design. You'll pay for quality now—or later in maintenance and repairs, inconvenience, or worse: downtime when you could be on the water on a hot bite.

## HULL AND DECK

The hullsides should be the first thing you look at. Sighting along the sides, look for a glass-smooth surface, without ripples or print-through from the fiberglass matting. Structural components inside should not give themselves away on the outside.

A well-built boat will have structural elements installed in the mold rather than fastened in later. A flawless expanse of gelcoat speaks to the mold maintenance, and offers a clue to the general care taken in manufacturing.

Check out the rub rail. It should be stainless steel, screwed, with screws flush or countersunk over a semirigid bumper rail, mounted on a reinforced line between the hull and the cap.

Stepping aboard, the first instinct is to imagine yourself fishing in this boat, and that's the right instinct.

Determine right off the bat if the layout and arrangement of the interior are where



you'd like to spend fishing time.

"Make sure you have the storage to hold the gear and equipment you will need for your style of fishing," says Jeff Martin, advertising, social media and co-op coordinator for Skeeter Boats.

Is there proper and adequate seating for expected companions? Of survey respondents, 78 percent fish with friends, 69 percent with family, 50 percent fish alone, and 8 percent fish with a dog.

That determined, look for uniform nonskid on the cockpit sole. Retractable

or recessed cleats create a snag-free space. Rails should sit in recessed channels or be canted inward to make moving around the boat effortless. Grab bars should be inconspicuous but intuitive in their placement. "On the water, things happen fast," says David Clubbs, director of engineering for Regulator Boats. "Grab bars have to be in the right place for split-second decisions, and they should be laid out with that mindset. If the interior is set up with only leisure in mind, you are going to miss something."

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

The American Boat and Yacht Council and the National Marine Manufacturers Association both establish and maintain standards in boat construction and materials. Boat certification by either of these organizations offers the buyer assurance that a particular manufacturer adheres to the industry's best practices.

COURTESY YAMAHA



## HELM

Command central—the helm—is where you’ll spend a lot of time. Convenience, safety and efficiency are paramount. Steering wheels and throttles should be easy to reach whether you’re seated or standing.

Armrests, if present, should fold up, and be sturdy enough to withstand the stress of rough conditions or high-speed maneuvering.

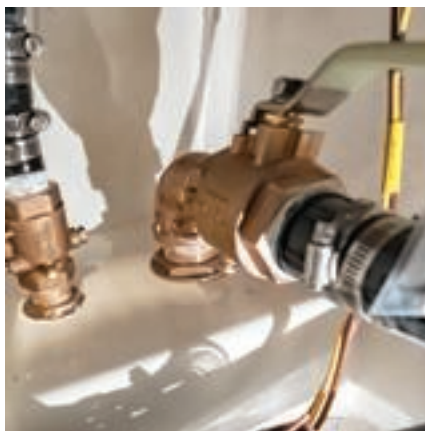
Anything around the helm is likely as some point to see duty as a grab bar. Seating modules should be rock-solid, as should framing around a windshield, whether it’s acrylic or the increasingly popular tempered glass.

The view forward should be unobstructed, allowing the skipper to see the forepeak, with sightlines all around, relatively unobstructed.

Primary in helm ergonomics is access to electronics. Of survey respondents, 88 percent preferred a single combo display no larger than 12 inches, so space is scarcely a consideration. Placement is, however.

“In the past, electronics were installed in overhead boxes,” says Lanie Martin, director of sales and marketing, Stamas Yachts. “It’s nicer to install them all on the dash so you just glance down, without having to interrupt your line of sight.”

If electronics that require special accommodation are part of the final plan—radar, spotlight or night-vision

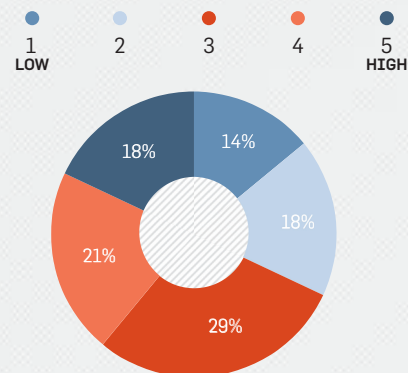


A well-organized, accessible electrical system (top). Robust fittings, double-clamped bespoke quality (above).

cameras—you’ll need a top hamper, either a T-top or hard sunshade. Check construction and mounting: Is it installed solidly through the deck, or on the console sides? On powder-coated aluminum, look for nylon washers around screws, which will reduce chipping.

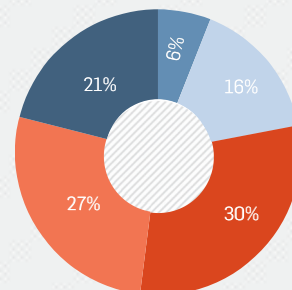
The underside of overheads should be a dark color to reduced glare over the electronics. Rounding out a well-appointed helm, a traditional

**ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 5, WITH 1 BEING “LOW IMPORTANCE” AND 5 BEING “HIGH IMPORTANCE,” HOW IMPORTANT IS FORWARD SEATING?**



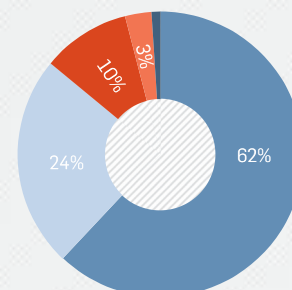
**THINKING ABOUT YOUR ONBOARD ELECTRONICS ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THEIR CAPABILITY DO YOU USE?**

● Less than 10% ● 10 - 30% ● 31 - 50% ● 51 - 75% ● More than 75%



**APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY BUILT-IN UTILITY TACKLE BOXES DO YOU NEED IN HANDY STORAGE FOR WHEN YOU FISH OFFSHORE ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT?**

● Up to 4 ● Up to 6 ● Up to 8 ● Up to 10 ● More than 10 (1%)





# BAY BOATS

compass sits centered over the wheel, atop the console.

## HATCHES AND STORAGE

More than two-thirds of survey respondents prefer to on- and off-load tackle for each trip, rather than store it permanently aboard, so convenience and ease of access to storage becomes paramount.

If you are one of the 30 percent who keeps tackle aboard, locking storage—and locking rod storage in particular—is a detail you'll want to look for.

All locking hatches throughout the boat

## LIVEWELL LIDS SHOULD FOLD BACK FLAT OUT OF THE WAY, OR OPEN WIDE ON FRICTION HINGES.

should be keyed alike.

Watertight hatches need to be generously guttered around the perimeter, to drain overboard or to the scuppers, rather than into the bilge. Robust gaskets and pressure latches ensure that what's inside remains dry.

Hinges should lie flush with the top of the lid to avoid snagging your toes, and be through-bolted, not screwed, in most cases.

"In places where hinges fasten near a seam or in a radius, and you can't back-nut it, we have to use screws," says Charlie Johnson, vice president, Maverick Boat Company and Pathfinder Boats. "But we cast a phenolic layer into the hatch lid to support the hinge fasteners."

Hatch lids should allow access to the full hatch opening, but lid support is essential.

Hatch lids should not open to lean against anything, which can wear on the lid or the boat. Increasingly builders are using friction hinges, which hold the open lid in place. Bigger hatch lids demand other solutions.

"Large hatch lids should be strut-supported," explains Lanie Martin at Stamas Yachts. "If it's too heavy for a friction hinge, it needs gas-ram struts to hold it open."



In such cases, struts should be mounted so that they don't interfere with loading and unloading the hatch.

## LIVEWELLS

If live-baiting is your game, then the livewell is the life-support system for a successful day of fishing.

Among respondents to our survey, 21 percent fish live bait all the time; 43 percent use live bait half the time. Two thirds of respondents carry a few dozen baits at a time, while a third need accommodation for six to 12 dozen baits.

Livewells should be able to accommodate both scale baits and crus-

**WHAT READERS WANT**  
*BUYING THE BOAT YOU WANT IS IMPORTANT. SETTling FOR LESS WILL COST HAPPINESS, FISHING TIME, AND MORE MONEY.*



taceans.

"We offer separate livewells for inshore fishing," says Jordan DeLong, director of marketing, Contender Boats.

"One for the hardier scale baits and another for shrimp or crabs. But basically we customize the livewells to the customer's preference, and configure them to the needs of their area and how they fish live bait."

Options abound. Sea chests, which pump water into a holding tank and then to the livewell, provide a

consistent supply of water at any speed. They also prevent pumps losing prime. In

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

Technical aside, there's pride of ownership and an emotional component to a boat purchase. A particular model might have a quality build, plenty of features and conveniences, and a good reputation, but if you can't quite see yourself fishing in that boat in the coming years, keep looking. You'll know yours when you see it.

COURTESY REGULATOR



Bay boats excel in offering unrestricted space. As a dedicated inshore-fishing platform, this design adapts readily to a variety of styles and preferences.

lieu of that, having dual pumps—backup redundancy—guarantees a reliable flow of new water into the well in case of pump problems.

Livewells should be constructed without severe angles on the interior.

“Circular or oval wells are preferable so no hard angles affect the liveliness of bait,” says Lanie Martin, of Stamas. “Another nice feature is visibility, either a clear lid or an aquarium-style baitwell, so it’s easy to keep tabs on your bait, make sure everything is working right, and that nobody accidentally turned off a switch.”

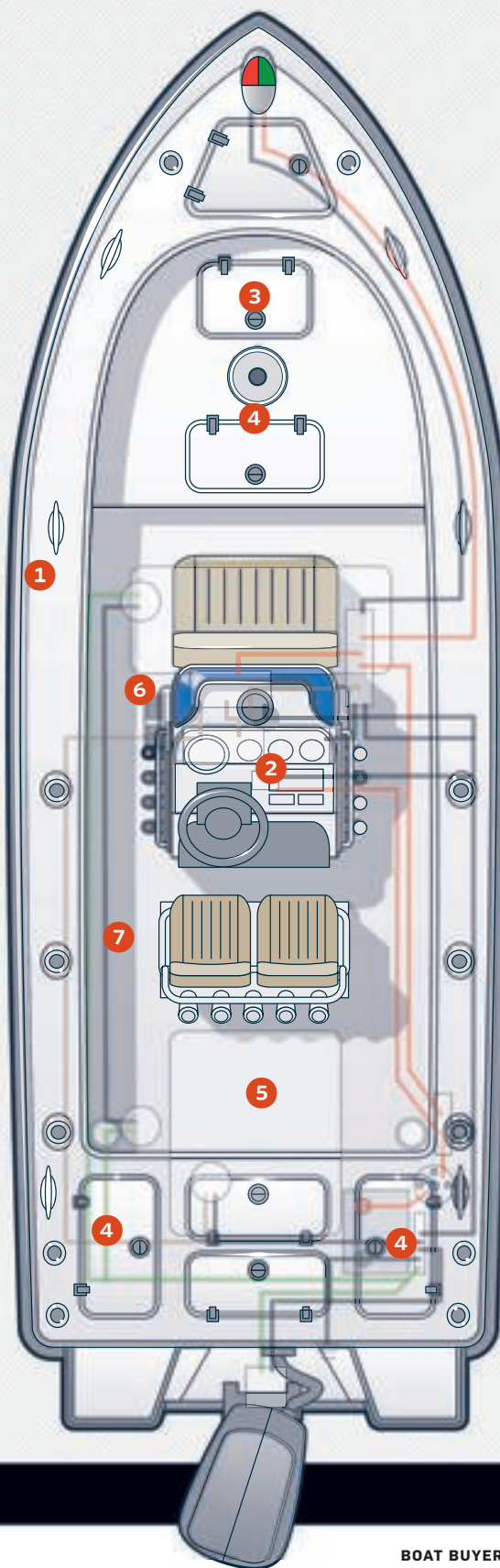
Livewell lids should fold back flat out of the way, or open wide on friction hinges, in order to provide adequate clearance for filling from a cast net or by hand, without roughing up the baits.

## PLUMBING

Plumbing, aside from livewells and washdown systems, has a single purpose:



# BAY-BOAT CHECKLIST



## 1. HULL AND DECK

Look for pleasing aesthetics, fiberglass matting or bulkhead print-through visible when sighting down the gelcoat surface.

## 2. HELM

Sightlines to instrumentation should be unobstructed, controls in comfortable reach, and visibility a clear 360-degrees.

## 3. STORAGE

Proper storage, at least some of it dry, enhances fishability and safety by keeping the deck and crew organized.

## 4. LIVEWELLS

Livewell-pump capacity should be able to replace livewell water every 10 minutes. Clear lids are important.

## 5. PLUMBING

Waterlines, through-hull fittings and pump connections should be double-clamped, sealed and easy to access.

## 6. ELECTRICAL

Wiring should be organized and labeled within 6 inches of either end. Fuse blocks are superior to in-line fuses.

## 7. FUEL

Fuel lines should be double-clamped. Fill lines must not sag, and the tank should be protected from corrosion.



# BAY BOATS

to keep water where it belongs, which is outside the boat.

From rainstorms to taking an errant wave over the bow, there are plenty of ways for water to get in, some of them not always evident.

Rod and cup holders, if they are open at the bottom, should be plumbed to drain out the scuppers or overboard rather than into the bilge. Removal of water in the bilge depends on a pump, which depends on battery power, two systems that could fail at the worst time.

Hatch gutters should be oversize to drain quickly. Deck scuppers should sit above the waterline when the boat is at rest to ensure rapid draining.

## WATERLINES SHOULD NOT RUN ABOVE ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS OR OTHER COMPONENTS.

Any through-hull fitting below the waterline should be sealed and double-clamped for safety. Through-hull fittings should be inspected closely.

“Nylon or plastic through-hull fittings are likely to fatigue and crack,” says Lanie Martin at Stamas. “We prefer high-quality stainless fittings. But you have to really look closely sometimes because some fittings are nylon with stainless caps.”

For heavier applications, such as larger drain lines and holding tanks, bronze fittings are preferable for their extra durability and strength.

The way drainage and plumbing is routed through the bilge is important as well. No waterlines should run above electrical systems, where seepage of salt water could drip onto wiring or other components.

Waterlines and drain lines should run straight whenever possible.

“We do a lot of work aligning plumbing,” says David Clubbs at Regulator. “Make sure the hoses drain without sags or traps so there is no freeze hazard. Quality plumbing is more than just getting water out of the boat.”

## ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

The electrical system is the nerve center of any boat. If it doesn't hold up to saltwater service, nothing will work right.

**WHAT READERS WANT**  
**VERSATILITY**  
**AND SPACIOUS-**  
**NESS ARE KEY**  
**TO GETTING**  
**THE MOST OUT**  
**OF A BOAT. AND**  
**YOU CAN NEVER**  
**HAVE TOO MUCH**  
**ROD STORAGE.**



Circuit breakers have largely replaced fuses, even on smaller boats, and as a first line of investigation in troubleshooting, breakers should be accessible near the helm. On a proper panel, all wires are labeled within 6 inches of their terminal.

Breakers should be labeled as well, if the wires are obscured by the breakers. Terminals should be tinned copper, and any splices sealed and shrink-wrapped.

Service loops—spare wire—at the terminals allow easy maintenance of electrical components.

Hallmarks of a sound harness are continuous runs, without splices. Deutsch connectors are standard among experienced builders.

Quality wiring follows American Boat and Yacht Council guidelines, which specify colors coded for features or accessories. National Marine Manufacturers Association certification follows these guidelines, and both endorsements ensure uniformity in

Features, design and options that suit the buyer's preference create a versatile inshore-fishing boat, with the adaptability to handle offshore ventures as well.

## CATCH THE HIDDEN CLUES

When doing your own pre-purchase survey, there is no end of details to consider, and there are likely things you'll overlook. However small, seemingly unrelated details can offer valuable information about the builder's attention to quality, and some, while insignificant in their own right, reflect a level of care and quality that can reassure you of your choice.

David Clubbs, Regulator's director of engineering, revealed a particular tell: “First of all, we chrome-plate all of our screws for additional protection. Then, when we fasten the stainless-steel strip over the rub rail, we set the slots on the heads of those screws so that they are all aligned in the same direction. In the shop we call it ‘T-ing them up.’”

So are all the slots in the screw heads set vertical, so that they don't collect water? Of course!

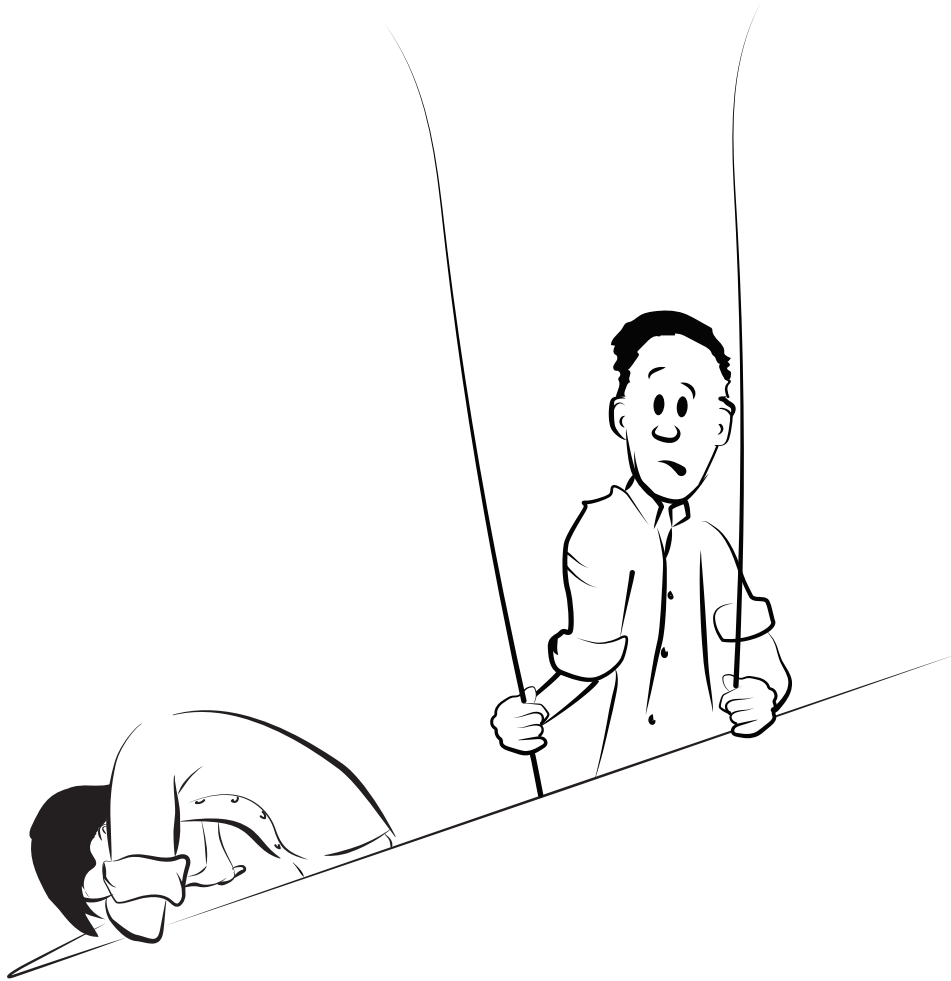
COURTESY YAMAHA

# uncomfortable

/ən-ˈkəm(p)(f)-tər-bəl / • [uhn-kuhmf-tuh-buhl]

*adjective*

When you're chumming the water but not catching any fish.



"DUDE. YOU NEED A SEAKEEPER."



**SEAKEEPER**  
STABILIZATION





Visualize a typical day's fishing, and base your assessment on realistic expectations and needs when surveying a particular boat for purchase.

construction, simplifying repairs.

The best builders not only configure a wiring harness for each model they make, but for each boat they build as well.

"Our boats are going to outlive the pace of electronics improvement," says Regulator's Clubbs. "A good design can be maintained and upgraded later as improvements come on the market."

A lot of electrical rigging is hard to see, but when visible, it offers insight to quality work. All wires and connections should be up out of the bulge and well-secured.

"Vibration creates wear when wires aren't well-anchored. Any movement is

likely to show up as exposed copper over time," Clubbs says.

With an eye to retrofitting, 65 percent of bay-boat shoppers in our survey intend to install a trolling motor, and 45 percent at least one shallow-water anchor.

If that's you, pre-wiring in the appropriate location can greatly ease installation of these accessories.

Lastly, don't forget to check for adequate 12-volt and USB charging outlets.

## FUEL

Fuel systems go largely unnoticed on a bay boat, aside

from the recognition that you put money in one end, which generates nautical miles and fishing time at the other end.

Aside from keeping the tank full and periodically changing filters, inspect connections frequently for leaks.

Fuel tanks are preferably of coated aluminum, but increasingly

## FUEL FILTERS DEMAND REGULAR CHANGES, SO LOOK FOR ACCESS WITH PLENTY OF SPACE TO WORK IN.

nonpermeable poly tanks are acceptable. Either should be mounted on a false bottom, with spacers to allow water to drain past. Fuel lines of the appropriate size for the engine should be anchored securely, by themselves, and make as direct a line from the tank to the engine as possible. Deviations, sags or unnecessary bends slow fuel flow and put additional burden on the fuel pump, which might necessitate replacement before its time.

Fuel filters demand regular changing, so access should be easy, with plenty of space to work in. Throughout the system, reputable builders recommend parts matched to the engine.

"We use all Yamaha components throughout the system," says Charlie Johnson of Maverick. "This makes for maximum compatibility. It's also important for warranty considerations."

Check for access, usually a pie hatch, over the sending unit on the fuel tank. They are notorious for failure. As well, should the fuel tank itself need attention, there should be a semipermanent access panel over the fuel tank. This often looks like a big hatch in the cockpit sole, sans hinges. It's usually sealed semipermanently into the deck, and is designed to be removed only when complete bilge access is required.

Without that access panel, partial deck removal might be the only way to get to the tank for repair or replacement.

### WHAT READERS WANT

"ACCESS THAT ALLOWS ANYONE TO WORK ON PUMPS AND ACCESSORIES WITHOUT BEING A CONTORTIONIST"



# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

No matter your level of experience, reviewing systems and features in a boat you're considering buying deserves an organized checklist to help you stay focused on the task. Develop your own, based on what you know and what you want. It'll help you do a thorough review job and provide a consistent way to compare different models.

# SKEEETER

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3 Year Limited Component Warranty

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## WHAT READERS WANT

OF FLATS-BOAT OWNERS SURVEYED, 31 PERCENT FISH LIVE BAIT OVER HALF THE TIME; 73 PERCENT CARRY ONLY A FEW DOZEN.

# Skinny-Dipping

By Alex Suescun

If the allure of stalking gamefish in skinny water beckons too strongly to limit yourself to hiring a flats-fishing guide now and then, it might be time to invest in a flats boat or poling skiff that provides the necessary access every time the itch arises. Not only do they float and run shallower than other boats, but they also excel at navigating the narrow and often meandering channels, tidal creeks, and bayous that take you to the sweet spots of your favorite flats, marshes, and backcountry bays. The choices nowadays are many, so let's discuss some fundamental attributes to take into account when looking for the right boat to take home and call your own.

## PERFORMANCE AND RANGE

Even for flats anglers, the waters you fish and distances you normally cover should play key roles in your boat selection.

If you fish mostly skinny water within a couple of miles of the boat ramp, you'll be happy with a hull designed primarily to run and float shallow. But if you must frequently cross expanses of open water—deeper than 3 or 4 feet—to get to and from the fishing, you'd be better off with a hull that cuts through a moderate chop and keeps you comfortable and dry during the ride, even if it requires a bit more water depth to float.

East Cape Boats, Orlando-based builder of premium flats and bay boats, addressed both situations by designing two versions of its popular EVO. "Both hulls feature a high bow with oversize, integrated spray rails, and the freeboard for safe rough-water crossings," explains company co-owner Kevin Fenn, but the bow of the



original EVO, touted by East Cape as the choice for open water and oceanside flats, has more of a "V" and 12 degrees of deadrise. The EVO X has 5 degrees of deadrise, draws a couple of inches less, and requires fewer horses in back than its sibling.

Speaking of which, don't overlook a boat's recommended horsepower and its fuel capacity. A 150 hp motor may provide the speed to cover distances in a hurry, but it weighs nearly 500 pounds, and usually requires a tank of about 30 gallons for decent range. Each gallon of gas weighs 6.3 pounds, so the combined heft of the outboard, fuel, two anglers and their gear isn't likely to let the boat float shallow enough to stalk fish tailing in 8 inches of water.

## ONBOARD STORAGE

A whopping 40 percent of flats-boat owners surveyed claim to be dissatisfied with their boat's limited storage, especially for tackle. So take stock of the gear and other essentials you wish to carry, and focus your boat shopping on candidates with room for all those must-have items.

Redesigned in 2020, the renowned Hewes Redfisher 16 remains a top all-round choice for the avid flats angler.

Baitwells are often touted as additional storage on flats boats and poling skiffs. But if your fishing includes live-baiting on more than the rare occasion, it's best to leave them out when you tally the stowage capacity in any boat you are considering.

## SHALLOW-MINDED

A shallow draft is imperative for any boat tasked with getting you within casting range of redfish, bonefish, snook, permit, seatrout or stripers in tidal flats and marshes. To gauge the actual draft of a flats boat or poling skiff, take to the sea trial a wooden dowel with some 18 notches—1 inch apart—at one end. With permission or assistance from the builder or dealer, idle or pole increasingly shallow until the hull starts rubbing bottom. Then stop, dip the notched end of the dowel into the water to measure the distance from the surface to the bottom, and add 1 inch.

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

Test-run any flats boat or poling skiff to get a feel for its ride and handling in both shallow and deep water. Then see how it performs propelled by a trolling motor, and how it tracks and turns with you on the push pole, simultaneously listening for hull slap—a pesky noise that afflicts certain hull designs and alerts gamefish of your presence.

COURTESY HEWES



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## Hewes

**N**early 60 years ago, says the Maverick Boat Group, Bob Hewes crafted the Hewes Bonefisher, a shallow-draft specialist for stalking spooky gamefish in skinny waters, which were until then visited by few anglers or boats.

And Hewes' flats skiff—a category he virtually created—became a legend, even more so after, with input from a fishing guide, when he invented the poling tower.

Ever since, "more shallow-water records have been caught aboard a Hewes," writes Maverick, owner of the brand since 1988. "And on any given day, it's a sure bet that more anglers are poling the flats or casting to a shoreline from a Hewes than any other boat ever made."

Hewes boats are at home in flats, inlets, passes and bays; of our survey respondents, 77 percent reported fishing inshore species in the past year.

### HEWES REDFISHER 21

The reborn, legendary Hewes Redfisher 21 "specializes in

catching bait in one ZIP code, fishing in another, and then getting back to the dock in time for a tournament weigh-in."

Biggest of three Redfisher models, the 21 is designed for up to 350 hp, producing speeds into the 60s. Trim tabs and jack plate standard, it draws just 14 inches and has a self-draining cockpit.

Huge casting decks and wide, walkaround gunwales make for a stable, uncluttered platform for multiple anglers. There's plenty of lockable dry storage, including a huge locker within the bow. The new helm accommodates a 12-inch Garmin screen, and then some.

Three-rod vertical racks flank the console. Undergunwale storage cradles rods up to 9 feet long, including the fly rods 34 percent of flats-skiff anglers say they carry; 25 percent say they carry more than six rods of all types.

Bait rides in a 44-gallon aft center livewell, perfect for the 46 percent of anglers who use live bait more than half of the time. Seventy percent say one livewell

is enough.

Options include poling tower, 40-gallon aft release well, two trolling-motor options including one with wireless electrical steering, windshield, single or dual Power Poles in 8- or 10-foot lengths, tilt steering, helm-seat backrest, and bass seat plate.

You can make your Redfisher further your own by selecting from a six-color gelcoat palette or custom colors for deck and console; two-tone treatments are also available.

### MORE INFO

[hewes.com](http://hewes.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Clear, open casting decks**

Hassle-free rod and gear storage

### OBSERVATIONS

Modern building techniques meet original Hewes DNA

**Inshore-ready for serious anglers**

### BRAND SAYS

**Solid, bulletproof fishing machine**

Excellent livewells

### SPECS

**LOA:** 21'6"

**Beam:** 8'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 50 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 2,850 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 350

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED

Wide, flush-to-the-gunwales casting deck has pathway to the stern for chasing trophies.



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[evergladesboats.com](http://evergladesboats.com)





## Pathfinder Boats

**T**he further a company gets away from understanding what dedicated anglers want in their boats," Pathfinder Boats proclaims, "the more underwhelming their products will be."

That's why the company works with its angler-driven design team, pro guide staff and loyal customers to launch models—including three brand-new models in 2021—aimed at real-world improvements that solve problems and enhance fishability of their boats.

Pathfinder, with Hewes, Cobia and Maverick, is part of the Maverick Boat Group.

### **PATHFINDER 2700**

The new Pathfinder 2700 Open—built to range from open flats to inlets, from beaches to offshore pursuits, all in a single day—combines the forward deck space of a bay boat with the open cockpit of a center-console for the best of bay and blue water on a double-stepped, VARIS vacuum-infused hull.

Instead of the bay boat's typical rear casting deck, the 2700 has an

open cockpit that accommodates a range of fishing styles. Optional aft corner jump seats are available. The bow casting platform is two easy steps up.

The 2700 has the two livewells that leave none of our survey respondents unserved. Serious center-console anglers get a 42-gallon double-pump well in the leaning post, and a handy 22-gallon tank aft well, both with aquariumlike clear side panels.

To the 2700 Open's 95-gallon standard fuel capacity you can add a range-stretching optional 31-gallon auxiliary fuel cell.

Six gunwale-mounted rod/cup holders in the aft cockpit meet or exceed the expectations of most respondents. Undergunwale storage accommodates up to six 9-foot rods, part of its overall rod-rack capacity for 18 rods of all kinds. Also fishing-friendly are in-deck cast-net lockers.

Three insulated fish boxes total 95 gallons, to which optional pump-out macerators can be added. Any can be used as dry storage too.

Other standard equipment

includes a hydraulic jack plate, 36-volt trolling-motor system, trim tabs, deluxe convertible helm seating, and Optimus electric steering.

Options include a fiberglass hardtop or T-top second station, choice of Yamaha 425 XTO or F300, Garmin autopilot and screens, undergunwale faux teak SeaDek panels, Edson steering wheel, console port-a-potty, and JL Marine stereo package.

### **MORE INFO**

[pathfinderboats.com](http://pathfinderboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### **ON TARGET**

**Storage for a variety of tackle for flexibility**

Spacious walkways flanking consoles

### **OWNERS SAY**

**Quality construction; I love a dependable, well-made boat**

Very stable and fishable

**Versatile**

### **BRAND SAYS**

The 2700 Open does so many things so well

**Born to do one thing—put dedicated anglers on fish**

### **SPECS**

**LOA:** 27'

**Beam:** 9'4"

**Fuel Capacity:** 95 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 4,934 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 450

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



Pathfinder's livewells are beyond reproach with powerful pumps and acrylic inspection portals.

# INTRODUCING THE 40HPC



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## Skeeter Boats

**E**ver since the first 13-foot molded-plywood Skeeter bass boat was built in 1948, the company has led the boating industry in innovation. Now a Yamaha brand, it continues to build performance fishing boats.

Skeeter has received 19 consecutive awards for Excellence in Customer Satisfaction for Fiberglass Outboard Boats.

The Skeeter name? That's from the early days, when the original Skeeter's nose was long and needle-shaped, like the snout of a mosquito.

### **SKEETER SX2550 FISH**

The Skeeter SX2550, largest of its bay-boat family, is an inshore/offshore boat that carries to the bluewater high-performance features of its smaller sibling. Its wide flare and tall gunwales add a distinctive look and create a smooth, dry ride.

The Skeeter SX2550 comes in Family and Fishing versions. Both versions are powered by a Yamaha F300 four-stroke outboard engine. The console is taller and larger than the other

SX boats in its lineup, and a side door opens to a first-for-Skeeter space large enough to house a portable toilet, serve as a changing room, or provide additional storage options.

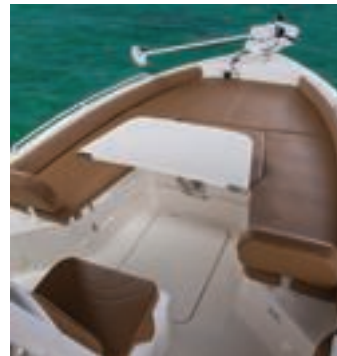
In the forward deck is a 145-quart fish box with macerator. In the bow, a three-position table converts from a step to a casting deck or for entertaining, and the family version uses pads to make it a sun deck, to match the moment's need. Horizontal rod tubes and in-gunwale storage hold more than the six rods that satisfy 53 percent of bay-boat anglers. The midship washdown system is handy to both ends of the boat.

Four gunwale-mounted rod/cup holders meet or exceed expectations, and there are nine vertical rod holders. A manual jack plate tunes the ride based on owner's use, and an optional hydraulic plate makes the SX2550 skinny-water-ready. Aft jump seats flank a generous 43-gallon livewell. The rear-seat backrests fold down to complete the rear casting deck.

The Fish model's deluxe leaning post has a fixed backrest and bolster seating. Fishing-oriented options include trolling motor, shallow-water anchors, navigation electronics and pedestal fishing seats. The Family package includes a stylish hardtop, front-seat cushions and stereo.

### **MORE INFO**

[skeeterboats.com](http://skeeterboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### **ON TARGET**

**Family/fish friendly and tournament-fishable**

Visit website for all standard features

#### **OWNERS SAY**

**Quality—very durable and dependable**

#### **BRAND SAYS**

Whether you're after performance fishing or a daily dayboat, this is your boat

**Built by saltwater anglers, for saltwater anglers**

A Skeeter is designed to be as durable in tough conditions as you are

#### **SPECS**

**LOA:** 24'6"

**Beam:** 8'4"

**Fuel Capacity:** 76 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 3,360 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 300

**Certifications:** NMMA

EXCLUSIVELY POWERED



Forward casting deck has removable cushions and the step platform can be easily moved to an entertainment table or provide a larger casting deck.



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# WHEN IT MATTERS MOST



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WARRANTY

[shakespeare-marine.com](http://shakespeare-marine.com)

PICTURED:  
Sportsman - 302 Open Center Console





## Yamaha Boats

**Y**amaha's jet-propelled boat line—category pioneer since 1995—offers 14 new models, including several on an all-new 25-foot platform.

Two 25-foot FSH center-consoles—the deck plan that makes up 37 percent of our survey's saltwater-fishing fleet—join 19- and 21-foot FSH models. Yamaha is also introducing new wake boats, and more boats with DRiVE Technology, a system of control paddles on the wheel that sets a new industry standard for easy control when docking or maneuvering in close quarters.

Yamaha jet boats, powered by compact, lightweight, and fuel-efficient jet drives and four-stroke engines, reach plane quickly with minimal bowrise. At slower speeds, Yamaha's award-winning Articulating Keel provides superb straight-line tracking. With no exposed drivetrain elements, they sneak across shallow water, and set a clean stage for the line's signature aft lounge and swim platform.

Yamaha's Connex 3.0 helm control system boasts

a 7-inch systems control and entertainment touchscreen with navigation capabilities. It also responds to joystick input. Rocker switches activate Yamaha's No Wake Mode and Cruise Assist.

### YAMAHA 255 FSH SPORT E

The 255 FSH Sport E has the classic looks and fishability of a center-console atop a new deep-V hull.

A 111-gallon fuel tank puts far-off fish within range. In the 255 FSH Sport E, a pair of supercharged 1.8L Yamaha SVHO engines combine for 500 horsepower, driven by wire. (The 252 FSH Sport has normally aspirated 1.8L High Output engines.)

The bow and its seats—the latter important to 40 percent of CC owners surveyed—contain storage compartments and an insulated fish locker. At the helm, in addition to the Connex 3.0 helm control system, a 12-inch Simrad screen displays navigation and fishing information. The 255 FSH Sport E has a finished, outrigger-ready hardtop with

five rocket launchers, and its 19 rod-holder total far exceeds the 12-rod standard that pleases 84 percent of CC respondents.

Two cockpit livewells—one transparent—exceed the threshold of happiness for 96 percent of center-console anglers.

Bench seating at the transom—a deal-maker for 44 percent of respondents—folds down to become a casting platform, and the walk-through transom makes boating big fish a breeze.

### MORE INFO

[yamahaboats.com](http://yamahaboats.com)



Dual leaning-post seats with bolsters and full-beam aft seats offer comfortable cruising.

## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

Fishing and pleasure cruising features meet all mainstream owner's needs

Multiple baitwells

Generous rod storage

### OWNERS SAY

Internal jet drive relieves concerns about striking the running gear or gouging reefs and flats

### BRAND SAYS

Built to take you where the big fish are

### SPECS

LOA: 24'6"

Beam: 8'6"

Fuel Capacity: 111 gal.

Dry Weight: 4,835 lb. with power

Max HP: 500

Seating/Weight

Capacity: 12 people/2,700 lb.

Certifications: NMMA

EXCLUSIVELY POWERED





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COURTESY YAMAHA

**S**hould you find yourself giddy with anticipation at the prospect of buying a new offshore center-console or other fishing boat, join the club. For many saltwater anglers, purchasing an offshore-fishing machine represents one of the biggest decisions of their lives. Once the deal is done and outfitting complete, this boat will become your key to adventure, glory and creating

memories that last for generations. For that dream to come true, however, you need to put in some due diligence in researching the boat and marine accessories that meet your expectations, style of offshore fishing, and budget. In these pages, we feature a wide range of bluewater-fishing boats. Use these profiles, images and video links as starting points. Narrow your wish list to those models that seem to best meet your angling and boating needs and desires. The next steps should include field research. Find out who carries the brands that interest you. Visit as many

**74** Albemarle / **76** Barker Boatworks / **78** Boston Whaler / **80** Cape Horn / **82** Caymas / **84** Century / **86** Cobia / **88** Contender / **94** Invincible / **96** NorthCoast / **98** Pursuit / **100** Regulator Marine / **102** Robalo / **104** Scout / **106** Sea Born / **108** Sea Cat /

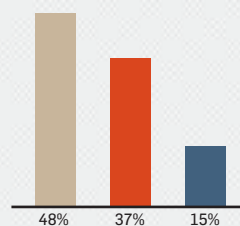


### GLORY BOUND

The first step to making your offshore-fishing dreams come true is finding a boat that fits your style of angling, a process that starts here with a review of today's many bluewater boat models in the pages that follow.

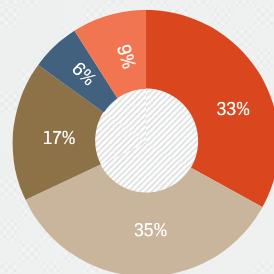
dealerships and factory-direct builders as possible within your driving range to compare value and premium brands. This will help narrow your list further. These next four pages are created to help you choose the right power and equipment, and how best to store or trailer your boat between trips. Sea trials are key to pulling the trigger, and in these pages, we deliver our editors' professional tips on making the most of sea trials to evaluate the boat, power and accessories, and whether you should slip, hoist, dry-stack or trailer your new offshore-fishing boat.

**90** Eastern Boats / **91** Everglades / **92** Grady-White / **110** Sea Fox / **112** Yellowfin



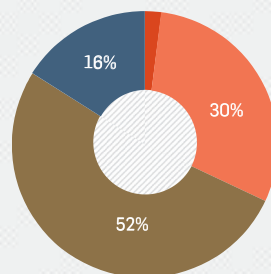
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU FISH WITH LIVE BAIT?

- Less than 50% of the time
- More than 50% of the time
- Nearly 100% of the time



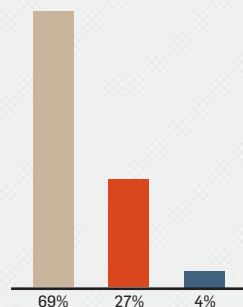
### HOW MANY GUNWALE ROD HOLDERS DO YOU NEED WHEN YOU FISH OFFSHORE?

- 4
- 6
- 8
- 10
- More than 10



### HOW MUCH ROD STORAGE DO YOU NEED ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT?

- Space for 1 to 3 rods (2%)
- Space for 4 to 6 rods
- Space for 7 to 12 rods
- Space for more than 12 rods—I lose count of rods in my boat



### HOW MANY LIVEWELLS DO YOU NEED?

- One is enough
- Two, one forward and one aft
- Three, to keep different baits separated

# GET READY FOR ACTION, BECAUSE YOUR OFFSHORE DREAMS BEGIN HERE.





## WHAT READERS WANT

THIRTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF PEOPLE WE SURVEYED STATED THAT THEY OWNED AN OFFSHORE CENTER-CONSOLE AS THEIR PRIMARY BOAT. THAT'S MORE THAN ANY BOAT TYPE IN OUR SURVEY.

# Center Stage

By Jim Hendricks

**W**hen it comes to shopping for an offshore center-console boat, you can look at brochures, watch videos and visit dealerships. In the absence of winter and spring boat shows, expect dealer workshops to pop up, hopefully with some on the water so you can climb aboard one. Until you get it out on the water, you don't know what you're getting. A sea trial lets you gauge how well an offshore center-console runs and handles big waters. Most dealers or factory reps are happy to host a sea trial for a serious buyer. A great experience should be key to the sale.

## VISIBILITY

Make sure you can see beyond the wheel. A boat that rides bow-high or has a dash that obscures your vision creates a safety issue. You should also feel comfortable at the helm, whether standing or seated.

## ACCELERATION

The boat should climb onto plane without struggling, and without trim tabs, when you punch the throttle. If not, it might be a sign of insufficient power or incorrect props. Reschedule a new trial.

## PLANING SPEED

The boat should plane at around 15 to 18 mph. An underpowered boat will not. Low planing speeds are essential to comfort and efficiency in rough water.

## FUEL EFFICIENCY

Run the center-console at various rpm to determine the best fuel efficiency, using the digital guides to read mpg. This will give you an idea of the most efficient cruising speed, as well as fuel costs and fishing range going forward.



**IF THE ROLL FEELS COMFORTABLE AND NATURAL IN A BEAM SEA, THE PLATFORM IS STABLE.**

## SMOOTH RIDE

Aim for some rough water, and if the boat pounds, adjust outboard trim and tabs. If nothing improves, look at other boats.

## STABILITY

Put the boat in a beam sea, and pull back to idle speed. You'll experience some roll, but it should not be excessive or violent. If the roll feels comfortable and natural in a beam sea, the platform is stable.

## HANDLING

Execute some hard turns. Bad signs include excessive sliding or tripping (catching the edge of chine). As you push through rollers, make sure the bow does not stuff into the waves. Check low-speed

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

When conducting a sea trial with a boat dealer or factory representative, ask politely if you can take the wheel from time to time, particularly when testing the handling and rough-water capabilities of the hull. This will give you a better feel for the seakindness of the boat, as well as visibility and how comfortable and at ease you feel at the helm. At the same time, exercise prudent seamanship; be aware of your surroundings and cognizant of the safety of others on board.

COURTESY YAMAHA (ABOVE); SCOUT (OPPOSITE)



handing to ensure the boat docks with ease and offers strong response in reverse.

## STAYING DRY

Most boats will take spray on the windward beam in gusty conditions, but if it takes a lot of spray while running with or against the wind, that might be an issue; you might want to continue your search.

## SPEED

Few boaters consistently run at wide-open throttle while offshore, yet knowing the top speed is helpful in case, for example, you need to outrun an approaching squall. Also check rpm at WOT, and compare that to the engine-maker's max rpm rating. This will tell you if the propeller selection is correct. Underrevving indicates the need for less prop pitch; overrevving means it needs more pitch.

## POWER PROGNOSIS

Today, center-console boats dominate the offshore-fishing scene, and 99 percent of these boats are powered by outboard engines, according to our survey. Ever-more-powerful motors from brands such as Mercury, Suzuki and Yamaha have spurred the growing size of center-console boats, which now extend to 65 feet in length and sport as many as five big outboards. The motors themselves range upwards of 450 hp.

So how do you decide on the outboard-power configuration for your new boat? It is best to spec out the boat with the maximum-rated horsepower, says Ry Laundry, product manager for Yamaha Outboards, which offers outboards up to 425 hp. "You might not always use all of



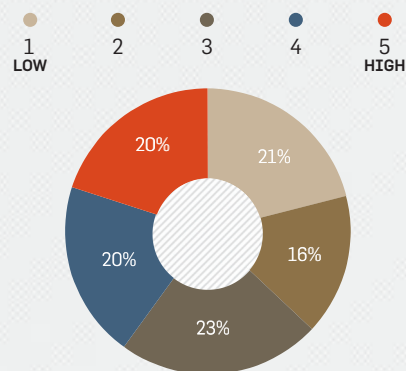
During a sea trial, gauge how comfortable it is to fish from the aft cockpit, as well as the bow area. Also, make sure you feel at ease at the helm and have good visibility.

that power," Landry explains, "but it is good to have that extra power available when you need it."

In addition, fuel efficiency is often better when running a more powerful motor at a midrange throttle setting than running a smaller motor at higher rpm. This also helps ensure that you have reserve power available to accelerate out of danger. This can be critical, for example, if a large, menacing wave threatens from astern. With extra power, you can escape trouble quickly.

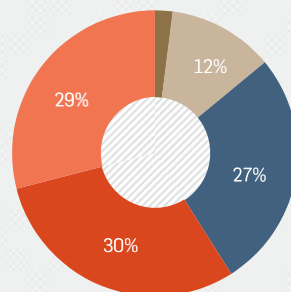
Forty-five percent of today's offshore center-console fishing boats feature multiple outboards; our survey indicates twin and triples are most common, providing assurance of having power to return to port from far offshore should one of the engines experience a failure. Multiple outboards also enable greater maneuverability when docking in tight quarters.

## ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 5, WITH 1 BEING "LOW IMPORTANCE" AND 5 BEING "HIGH IMPORTANCE," HOW IMPORTANT IS FORWARD SEATING?



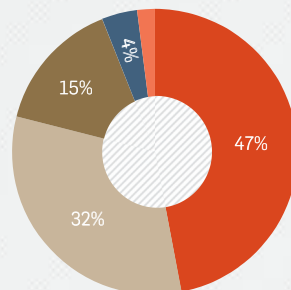
## THINKING ABOUT YOUR ONBOARD ELECTRONICS ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THEIR CAPABILITY DO YOU USE?

● Less than 10% (2%) 
 ● 10-30% 
 ● 31-50% 
 ● 51-75% 
 ● More than 75%



## APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY BUILT-IN UTILITY TACKLE BOXES DO YOU NEED IN HANDY STORAGE FOR WHEN YOU FISH OFFSHORE ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT?

● Up to 4 
 ● Up to 6 
 ● Up to 8 
 ● Up to 10 
 ● More than 10 (2%)





# CENTER-CONSOLES



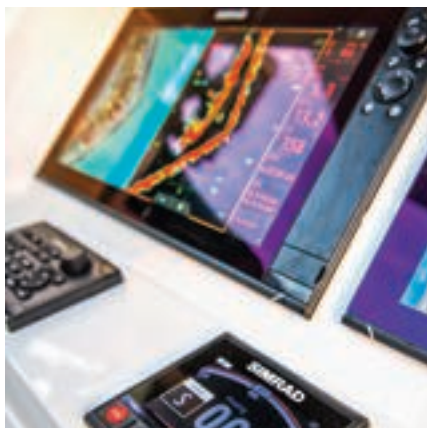
## OUTFITTING

Once you have decided on the boat model and propulsion configuration you want, it's time to place your order. In today's offshore-boat market, there are few boats standing by in inventory at manufacturers or dealerships. Most offshore-fishing boats are built only after the customer places an order. While this takes longer to deliver your boat than buying it off a showroom floor or dealer lot, it gives you the opportunity to order the boat with the accessories that match your wishes and style of fishing. You get it custom-built the way you want it.

## OPTIONAL CHOICES

It is important to carefully consider how you want your offshore-fishing boat equipped. Don't rush your decision on these items. There is a wide range of accessories that can make your offshore boat a more comfortable and effective fishing machine. The vast array of items you might consider: marine electronics, transducers, hull and interior colors, additional livewells, a permanent marine head, anchor windlass, outriggers, trim tabs or interceptors, battery charger, shorepower system, air-conditioning systems, enclosures, canvas work, a marine generator, a gyro stabilizer, additional rod holders and more.

In addition, there might be optional



upgrades such as a larger fuel tank that replaces the standard tank, or a deluxe seating package that replaces the standard seating arrangement and upholstery on your boat model.

## PRODUCTION BOATS

Your new boat's equipment will vary greatly from a model sold through a dealer or one that is sold factory-direct.

Boats sold through dealers such as Boston Whaler, Creville, EdgeWater, Grady-White and Pursuit are often called "production" boats, even though many are custom-ordered for each customer. With such brands, some of the accessories that

you desire might be standard or available as optional factory equipment. The dealer can outline and explain what items are standard, and work with you to ensure that the options you want are included when the boat is ordered and under construction. If one or more of the items that you want are not available as standard or optional equipment from the manufacturer, you can ask the dealer to work with you in adding these to the boat once it arrives at the store.

## FACTORY-DIRECT

Offshore-fishing boats sold directly and exclusively from the boat-builder (versus through a dealer) are almost entirely custom-built to your wishes. Customized elements of these



When ordering and outfitting your new center-console boat, think about items such as additional livewells, marine electronics and comfortable helm seating.

factory-direct boats can include a choice of deck plans, specially built helms, expanded fuel capacity, custom helm seating, upholstery upgrades and special paint jobs. Almost all builders commonly offer options such as rod holders and outriggers.

With some factory-direct boatbuilders such as Freeman, HCB, Invincible, SeaVee and Yellowfin, there is a wider choice of outboard brands. Many production fishing boats are packaged with just one brand of outboard power.

## MANY PRODUCTION FISHING BOATS ARE PACKAGED WITH JUST ONE BRAND OF OUTBOARD POWER.

Boats that are ordered and sold directly through the manufacturer also offer more latitude when it comes to the number of outboards versus power options for production boats. For example, with the 44ST from Contender, which sells factory-direct, you can order either triple or quadruple 425 XTO outboards.

Whether you decide on a production boat or a factory-direct model, spend the time necessary to make sure your new boat is outfitted exactly as you want it.

**WHAT READERS WANT**  
*THIRTY-ONE PERCENT OF OFFSHORE CENTER-CONSOLES HAVE TWO OR MORE ONBOARD LIVEWELLS, ACCORDING TO OUR SURVEY.*



# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

When designing your new offshore-fishing boat, find out how similar models are equipped in your area. Ask the dealer or factory representative what other customers have ordered in terms of additional equipment and upgrades for the same model you're buying. It is always easier to include your wish list of options in the construction of the boat and wrap it into the financing, rather than adding equipment afterward. And factory-installed equipment might have a better, longer warranty.



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## STORING YOUR NEW BOAT

The manner in which your new boat will be stored between trips is an important decision, one that you should reach and arrange for well ahead of your boat's arrival. There are five basic kinds of storage for offshore center-console fishing boats. These include in-water docking, a boat lift, a dry-storage facility, a mooring or a trailer. Your choice will hinge partially on the size of the boat, as well as where you reside and your personal preferences. Let's look at each.

## DOCKING

Docking (aka wet-slipping) your boat in the water at a marina, waterfront residence or elsewhere offers the convenience of having the boat afloat and ready to go fishing. It is one of the most popular methods for boats in excess of 35 to 40 feet in length. To control the growth of algae, slime, barnacles and worms below the waterline, the hull requires antifouling bottom paint (often applied annually) and periodic underwater scrubbing. Fortunately, the lower units of many outboards tilt clear of the water to prevent fouling of the drives and propellers. Marina dock fees vary with the size of the boat and regions. In waters prone to freezing, it's often necessary to haul the boat and winterize it during the colder months of the year.

## BOAT LIFTS

Boating anglers fortunate enough to have access to property on a navigable waterway can install a lift to hoist the boat clear of the water between trips using electrical and/or hydraulic power. This eliminates the potential for hull fouling and the need for bottom paint.

## COVER IT UP

When you order your new boat, also order a boat cover crafted from high-quality UV- and rot-resistant marine canvas and thread, as well as marine-grade snaps, zippers and other hardware. Your boat dealer or factory rep can help you with this. The cover might need to be custom-made to accommodate special equipment such as towers, hardtops, antennas, outriggers, rod holders and other items you have ordered for the boat. The investment in a boat cover pays off by protecting the interior finish, upholstery and other items from long-term exposure to sunlight, salt air, dust and bird droppings—all of which can degrade the appearance and reduce the value of your pride and joy. A tight-fitting cover can also help deter would-be thieves and send them looking for easier, more accessible targets.



There is a wide range of hoists available from brands such as Golden, HydroHoist, IMM, Shoremaster, Sunstream, Titan. The purchase price and installation costs can be substantial and vary with brand and weight requirements. There are usually local permits required, particularly if driving pilings is part of the installation.

## DRY STORAGE

Many marinas offer dry storage for boats, some taking the form of dry-stack facilities, with boats stored three or four high, often in covered buildings. Large forklifts and skilled operators launch and retrieve boats upon request. Facilities can handle boats up to 35 or 40 feet in length, with some newer operators able to accommodate even larger boats. Most will launch your boat the day prior so it's ready to go fishing the next morning. While dry storage eliminates fouling, some dry stacks cannot accommodate fishing boats with towers. Dry-storage fees vary with the size of the boat and coastal regions.

## MOORINGS

Keeping your boat on a mooring buoy is the least-convenient and -desirable of

all storage choices. Mooring requires a second boat such as an inflatable dinghy to access your boat for any reason, necessitates antifouling paint on the hull, exposes the boat to weather extremes, and leaves it more vulnerable to pilferage and outright

theft than any other storage choice. Consequently, moorings have fallen from favor for today's offshore-fishing boats.

## TRAILERS

Trailers represent one of the most popular ways of storing offshore center-console fishing boats under 30 feet in length. Trailer storage eliminates hull fouling, protects your boat from weather extremes, and also enables greater mobility, allowing you to pick virtually any port of departure. Your boat dealer or factory rep can help you select the proper trailer for

your new boat. In addition, make sure you have a vehicle with sufficient tow rating, power, and stability to pull, launch, and retrieve your new boat and trailer. Towing large boats might require special statewide permits. Trailering can also allow you to store your boat at your residence, so you can perform maintenance and other boat chores without leaving home.

**WHAT READERS WANT**  
IN OUR SURVEY, A FIBERGLASS HARDTOP RANKED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONVENIENCE FEATURE ON AN OFFSHORE CENTER-CONSOLE.



# The Biggest, Baddest Hewes Ever Built.



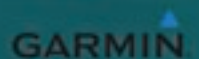
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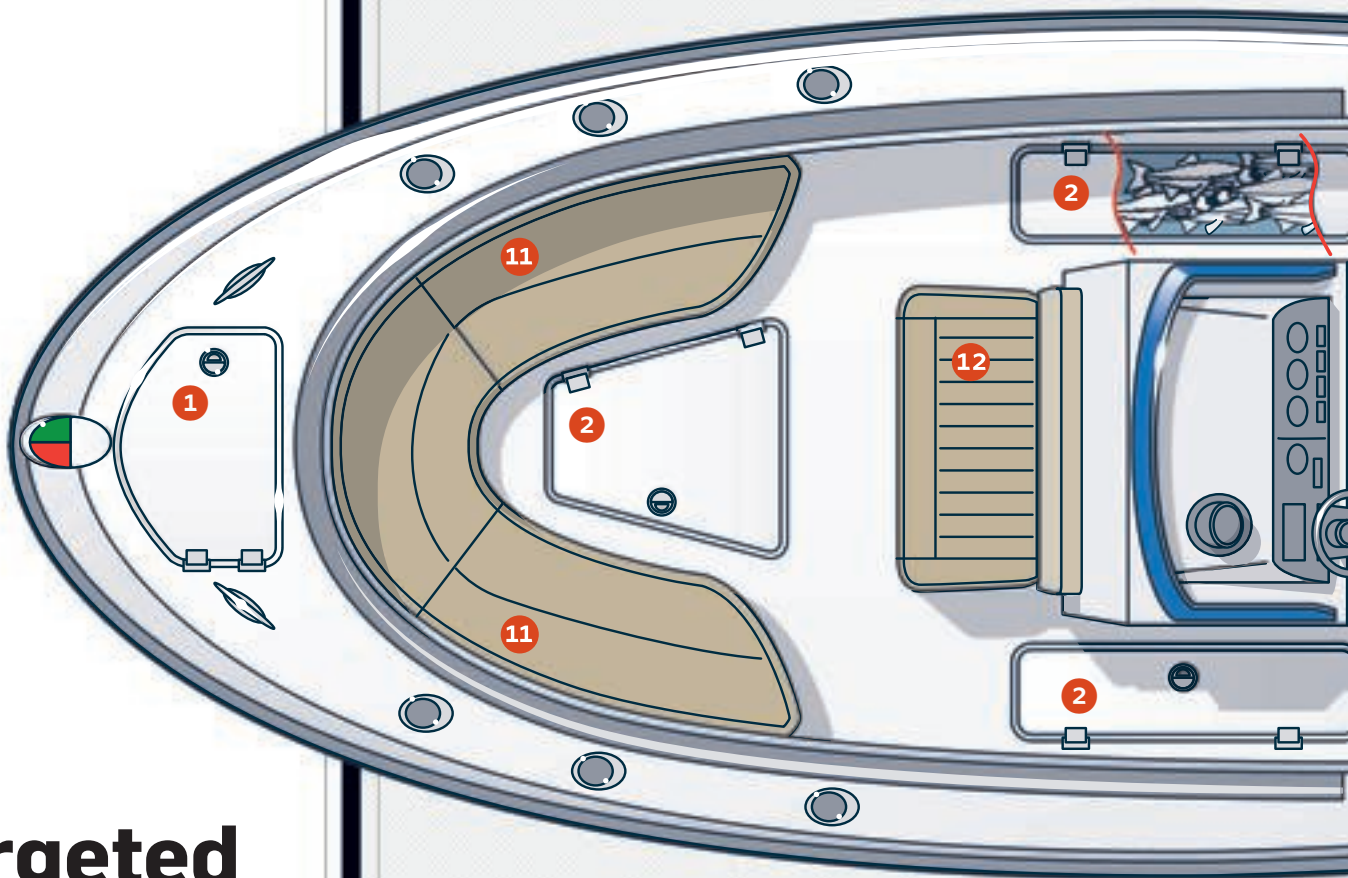
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## Targeted Quality

By Randy Vance

Quality is a function of design, construction and pinpoint targeting of features to the boat's given application.

### DESIGN

Design brings features to the boat essential for comfort, fishability and performance. A center-console optimizes deck space for fishability and is most often selected by the most serious anglers. An express or walkaround design includes cabin features for overnighting but can impact fishability by reducing overall deck space. Those are the big strokes, but the small strokes in design are usually what make a good boat great.

## TOP 12 FEATURES YOUR OFFSHORE BOAT MUST HAVE:

1

An anchor windlass should have controls at helm and locker.

7

Transom doors aren't essential with side doors.

Step hulls represent another design element, one that can add performance, fuel economy and speed. One of the most popular step designs is the SVVT hull designed by Michael Peters. It offers speed, efficiency and lift, and includes

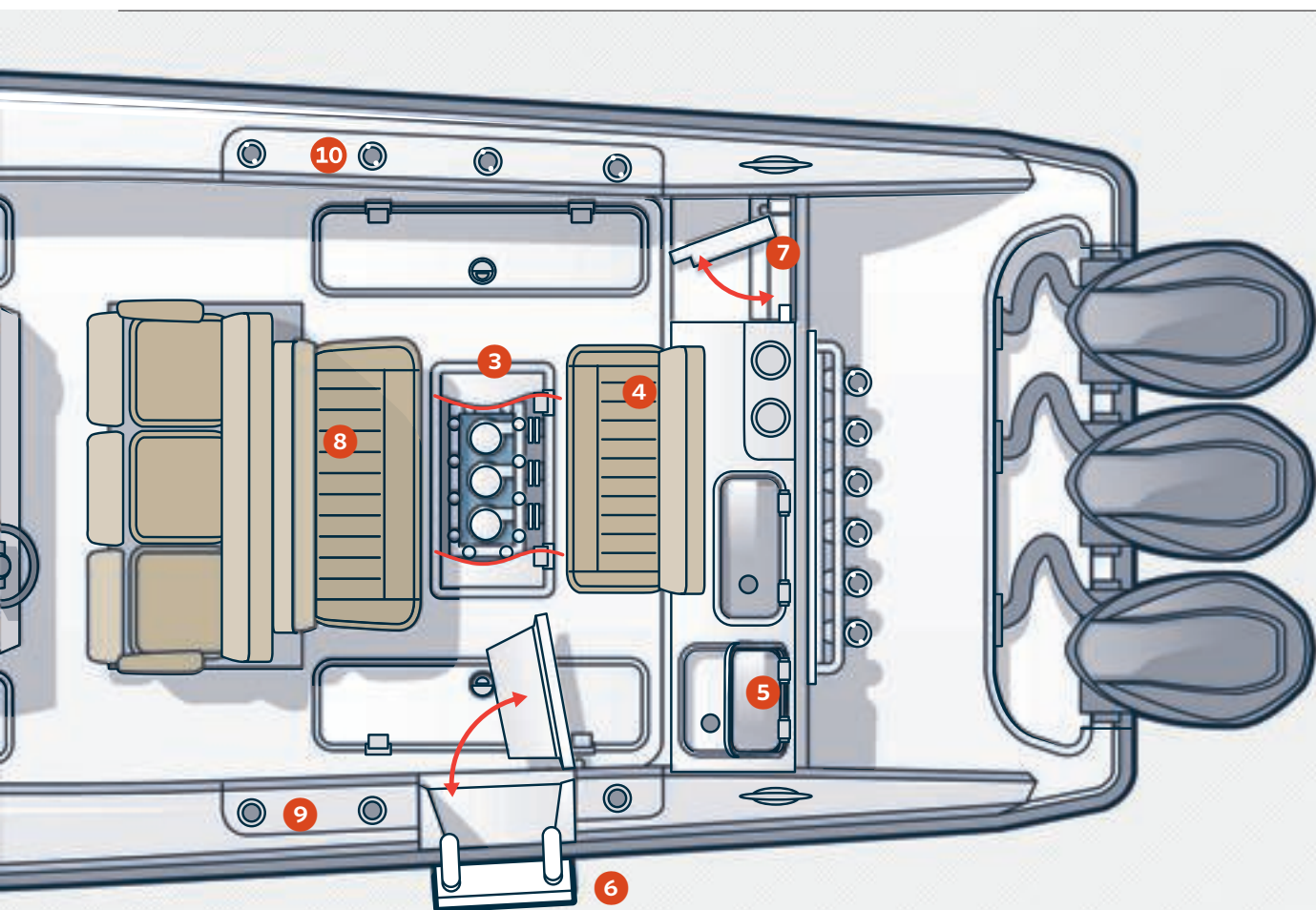
special steps in the stern to eliminate the bad behavior of old step hulls that had a tendency to spin out in turns.

Design also speaks to how the fishability and comfort features are built into the boat.

T

### EDITOR'S TIP

When considering a boat, sight down the sides and along the bottom. Freeboard should be glossy, with no ripples or signs of fiberglass pattern "printing through" the gelcoat. Also look for perpendicular ripples in hull surfaces. These are indications that the lay-up was hasty or steps were omitted to protect the gelcoated surface from the printing through of the structural grid. Such marks are cosmetically undesirable but don't normally indicate structural troubles beneath.



**2**

Fish-box diaphragm pumps won't jam due to hooks.

**3**

Sea chests ensure steady livewell flow in step-bottom hulls.

**4**

Stowable cockpit seating adds comfort and fishability.

**5**

Acrylic livewell lids allow easy monitoring of baitwell.

**6**

Side boarding doors with removable ladder yield easy entry.

**8**

Mezzanine seats should also offer tackle-rigging area.

**9**

Six gunwale, four shotgun and two bow rod holders are ideal.

**10**

Extra rod storage in gunwale, and along and inside console.

**11**

Forward seating is essential in larger offshore boats.

**12**

Bow seating with cooler beneath keeps deck clear.

## QUALITY IS A FUNCTION OF DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND PINPOINT TARGETING OF FEATURES.

Tournament anglers want a maximum number of rods rigged and ready so if one rig is damaged in the fight, another can be brought to bear in seconds. A weekend warrior might not have that many sticks, might not want that many hull penetrations for

aesthetics, and doesn't want to pay \$500 or more per optional rod holder. The design features should incorporate ample seating for crew with enough firmness to support an adult in rough waters.

Dry storage should be dry. Too many manufacturers fall down here. Look for gutter rims tall enough to divert water, hatch gaskets to seal out water, and latches to batten the hatches.

### CONSTRUCTION

Construction encompasses lamination schedule (the way the fiberglass and

structures are laid in), materials used and quality of hardware, and the convenient access for servicing all components.

A well-built boat will have no print-through of fiberglass matting in the gelcoat and no ripples in the hull from bulkheads bonded to it. Eliminating those requires careful construction and durable, high-quality resins.

Good construction also means optimal access to pumps in the bilge and wiring in the console. Some manufacturers fail to label wiring, making finding the right circuit a process of trial and painful error.



## QUALITY

Good construction also means use of high-quality components. Hatches have to be supported either by friction hinges, which work well for smaller hatches and livewell lids, or by stainless-steel gas struts. Hinges must be through-bolted or special materials must be molded into the underside of the deck to firmly and permanently seat screws from the top.

Rod holders are best through-bolted with backing plates, and the hole angle should match the rod-holder angle. That takes a special jig to cut, and this provides support of the thick, sturdy material of the gunwale covering board.

## FISHABILITY

Fishability means different things to different anglers, simply because most anglers have their own unique style of pursuing their offshore gamefish.

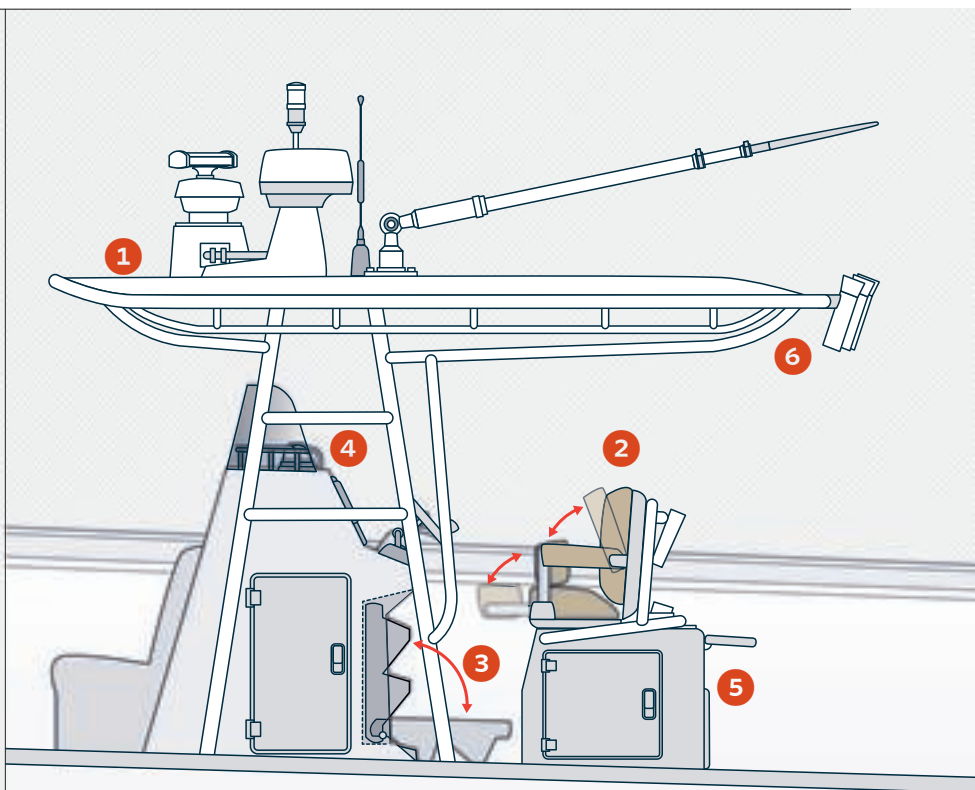


When construction quality, design and ideal features come together, the crew is kept safe and the adventure complete.

Bottomfishermen need plenty of room for hooks, leaders and terminal tackle. Trolling for big game with ballyhoo requires convenient storage of frozen ballyhoo.

A rigging station with fresh water keeps your hands and the deck clean after rigging, and that makes everyone safer and more efficient.

A thorough self-awareness of your fishing tactics and social and entertainment needs will make your search for the ideal boat a successful quest.



1

Better center-consoles now integrate T-top structure into console sides.

2

Helm seating should allow comfortable driving, whether standing or seated.

3

For shorter skippers, footrests can fold to the deck for added elevation.

4

Consoles should be capable of holding instruments and dual nav displays.

5

Behind the helm seating is an ideal place for tackle and tool storage.

6

An optional darker color in the underside of the hardtop reduces glare.

# GET THE HELM RIGHT, AND THE REST OF THE BOAT SINGS.

COURTESY YAMAHA; ILLUSTRATION BY TIM BARKER

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

The larger the vessel, the more important are digital controls. A 50-foot center-console with four outboards will drive as easily as a 23-footer with a single outboard provided it is equipped with power steering and electronic throttle and shift. Yamaha's new Helm Master EX system offers digital electronic steering, which eliminates hundreds of pounds of hydraulics and simplifies rigging. Regardless of brand, ask about electronic controls when ordering your new boat.



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# Multihull Mania

NEW CATAMARAN DESIGNS CAPTURE THE INTEREST OF OFFSHORE ANGLERS

By Chris Woodward

**S**ay the word “catamaran” in the United States, and many offshore anglers cannot contain their eye roll. “Catamaran” and “multihull” historically described sailboats, offshore racers and ferries. Not fishing boats.

But in the past decade, new multihull designs have changed the minds of many early naysayers in this country.

“Certain parts of the world embraced cats a long time ago—places like South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, where the distances are great and the seas can be pretty rough,” says yacht designer Michael Peters, well-known in the fishing world for creating everything from large inboard sport-fishing vessels to stepped-hull center-consoles. “Yet, the American market never did [embrace cats]. It seems that nobody really got the attention until Freeman [Boatworks]. Why that was, I couldn’t completely explain, but suddenly there was a boat that seemed to get good balance and aesthetics, and the fishing world took notice.”

Boating anglers who already own deep-V hulls generally stay with V’s, says Bill Cordes, director of sales for Invincible Boats in South Florida. “But we’re getting new looks from guys who are cat guys, who are looking for a bigger alternative.”

Invincible introduced 40-, 37-, 35- and 33-foot catamaran offshore-fishing boats over the past three years, and yet remains successful with its popular stepped-V-hull vessels.

Invincible and companies like Freeman, World Cat, SeaHunter, Sea Cat, Insetta



and Calcutta are driving a resurgence in multihull-boat building, particularly in the offshore-fishing world. Calcutta splashed its new 480 this summer; TAG Boats, a new South Carolina company, introduced a 36-footer, with plans for 30- and 43-footers; Barker Boatworks will soon debut a 40-foot cat, and HHH Boat-Works has released a custom 35-footer.

## CAT PROS/CAT CONS

Depending on how they’re built, cats can offer some general advantages over

V-hulls, including a smoother ride in rough head seas, a broader and more stable platform with little roll while drifting, shallower draft, better fuel efficiency and greater deck space.

But old designs featured fatal flaws, including bow steering and pulling or jerking in certain sea conditions. In a following sea, “they could be a complete handful,” says Peters, who spent 25 years building offshore racing catamarans. “In high-speed turns, they do what we call a ‘destroyer turn,’ as in a Navy vessel. They

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

Out of necessity, catamarans exhibit certain traits that most anglers would not expect. For instance, the wake behind a cat is generally smaller than that created by a deep-V, due to the weight of the boat spread over the two hulls. Those narrower hulls push less water out of the way. Trim tabs can also create problems on cats, competing with space on the aft edges of the slender sponsons. However, interceptors—blades that drop vertically—prove less problematic.

COURTESY CAPT. JOHN COLE (LEFT); COURTESY WORLD CAT (RIGHT)



Left: Capt. John Cole in Venice, Louisiana, runs Invincible's 40 Cat. He likes the boat's interior layout and space. Right: Multihulls shine in rough seas.

bank outboard."

The cats of the 1980s fell short for a variety of reasons. "Early designs were flawed. They were somebody's backyard dream," says Steve Ellis, who founded Florida-based Calcutta Boats in 1996. "They didn't have enough reserve buoyancy, and they all bow-steered really badly and sneezed really badly." (Sneezing occurs when spray shoots out the front of the tunnel and blows back toward the helm.)

Their knife-edge entry angles could easily bury the bow into oncoming waves. Few cats were really designed by naval architects, according to Ellis. Calcuttas

and many of today's modern cat builds come from the desks of designers such as Jim Ryan, of Locus International, who drew up the Calcutta 480.

Peters says the resurgence of the planing catamaran (those that rise up on top of the water rather than plow through it), and its subsequent redesign, has resulted from a perfect merger of hull technology and more-powerful outboards, which put these boats in the 60-plus mph range.

### THE LATEST EVOLUTION

Today's more-popular catamaran designs really started with Billy Freeman, who founded Freeman Boatworks in South Carolina in 2006, after years of working in boatyards and welding shops, and cutting up old hulls to rebuild them in his off time. "I bought an old cat and wanted something bigger and better," Freeman says.

"I called up [naval design engineer] Jesse Rhodes, who was an unknown back then, and I said I wanted to design a cat. I said, 'If it doesn't work, it's on me.'"

It worked.

### CATS CAN OFFER ADVANTAGES OVER V-HULLS, INCLUDING A SMOOTHER RIDE IN ROUGH HEAD SEAS.

Freeman started calling fishing guides in Venice, Louisiana, who make their living running well offshore into sometimes-gnarly seas. "I didn't have to talk them into a cat," he says.

Freeman's boats also looked better than traditional boxy cat boats, which feature near-vertical sides. That inspired longtime



# MULTIHULLS



Above: Big-game fish are plentiful from a cat. Right: Calcutta Boats recently introduced its 480, designed by Jim Ryan of Locus International.

multihull specialist World Cat to create its X series, beginning with the 280CC-X in 2017.

Invincible's Cordes says that the evolving industry piqued his company's interest. "I think the overall versatility of the boat has got the attention of a lot of folks," he says. "The sheer volume of storage, and then you get into the fishing platform that it is. It really is something new and exciting."

## DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Multihulls can sport asymmetrical or symmetrical sponsons. From the bow, asymmetrical sponsons look like a V-hull split down the middle: The inside sponson edges line up straight from hull bottom to the water, and the outside edges angle. The symmetrical hull looks like two small V-hulls side by side.

Asymmetrical sponsons force more air down through the tunnel to create lift, says Rob Coffey, director of sales and marketing for southeast Georgia-based Insetta Boatworks, which builds a 45-foot semicustom asymmetrical cat.

Coffey says that the asymmetrical sponsons float higher and help the boat turn with less outboard force.

Insettas, Invincibles and several other brands also design steps into their sponsons. Steps do for cats what they do for V's: They break the surface tension, and



create greater lift, speed and efficiency.

With asymmetrical sponsons, "you've helped correct the turning, but you've not made the head-sea ride quite as good," says yacht designer Michael Peters, who recently created the new 40 HPC cat for Barker Boatworks in Sarasota, Florida. "We're really at the beginning of the curve in perfecting the designs."

To help the new Barker perform better in a head sea, Peters says he made the bow fuller, not as sharp and pointed. A too-sharp angle of entry means the bow can act like a rudder. "What we opted for was saying, 'If you put this much horsepower in the boat to go 60-plus mph, we want a boat that can absorb all that horsepower and not become difficult to drive,'" he says. "We

**WHAT READERS WANT**  
**WHEN ASKED**  
**WHICH BRANDS**  
**THEY WOULD**  
**SERIOUSLY**  
**CONSIDER**  
**PURCHASING, 81**  
**RESPONDENTS**  
**SELECTED A**  
**CAT BRAND.**



opted for a boat that we feel will bank more appropriately in a turn."


The new designs address the old and uncomfortable nature of cats in turns, and design features also tackled the sneezing that showers boats with seawater. For instance, World Cat's Vector Pod in the tunnel near the bow helps break up and aerate incoming water, reducing friction. As air and water pass through the narrowing tunnel aft, the mixture increases in velocity with a subsequent decrease in forward pressure.

Designs will continue to evolve, Peters says. "We've got a perfect confluence of things happening. Development happens when things overlap at the same time."

# T

## EDITOR'S TIP

The latest development in cat builds involves the use of hydrofoils. Insetta Boatworks debuted its 35 IFC in 2020; the "internal foil catamaran" features a stainless-steel winglike structure with a center strut that attaches beneath the hull between the sponsons. The foil helps lift the hull higher in the water underway. Hydrofoils can improve fuel economy 30 to 40 percent. Insetta designed the 35 to deliver optimal cruise speed and range, resulting in less engine wear and less fuel burned.



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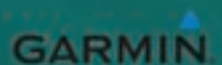
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## WHAT READERS WANT

IN OUR SURVEY, THE MAJORITY OF WALKAROUND OWNERS FISHED MOST OFTEN WITH THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.



# Walk the Walk

By Sam White

**W**alkaround boats combine the best of both worlds: hardcore fishability with family cruising and even overnight accommodations. On most designs, deep, wide alleys lead to the bow from the cockpit, with secure handrails along the way. This allows an agile angler to fight a monster gamefish all the way around the boat if needed, while also making anchoring and docking much easier on the crew.

## READY TO FISH

The majority of respondents in our survey indicated that they spent between 20 and 60 days each year in piscatorial pursuits, so having a boat that meets those expectations is key. According to the survey, walkaround owners are mostly trollers, pursuing offshore species, followed by bottomfishing with live or dead

Top walkaround designs feature wide alleys plus sturdy bow rails and handholds to make access to the bow easy and safe.

bait. Inshore fishing, isn't off the table either. So it's no surprise that the number and placement of rod holders is an important consideration for walkaround boats. An overwhelming number of respondents—86 percent—also said that cockpit space was foremost in their consideration. Among the other notable features in our survey were built-in tackle storage and livewell capacity.

## SAFE AND SOUND

With their high gunwales and forward windshield, walkaround boats are an excellent choice for families with small children, keeping them secure in their

## KEY ELECTRONICS

Having a good electronics package is vital to not only fishing success, but also for the overall safety of the vessel and its passengers, especially if you spend any time offshore. First among these should be a quality fixed-mount VHF radio. With 25 watts of power, combined with Digital Selective Calling, it's a powerful tool in case of emergencies.

For fishing, a sounder with chirp and side-scan capability allows you to locate bait and fish while trolling, or structure for bottomfishing. Radar is another useful tool—use it to spot birds over bait and fish, and for collision avoidance in low-visibility conditions.

deeper cockpits. The majority of our respondents indicated that safety was at the top of their list for performance attributes. Add optional spray curtains, and the windshield setup offers excellent protection from wind and spray as well. Brand reputation was also a key factor in purchases, with brands such as Boston Whaler, Grady-White, Parker and Pro-Line among the favorites. Each has a strong fishing pedigree.

## OVERNIGHTS ON THE WATER

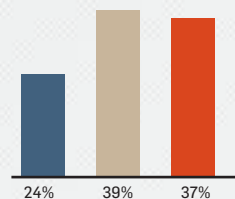
Where walkaround boats really shine is on overnight or multiday trips, inshore or offshore. These boats have some serious creature comforts compared with a comparably sized center-console, with many walkarounds boasting a full head with shower, a galley and sleeping accommodations. Suddenly, the need to head back to port at the end of the day becomes less important: Fish at night for tuna or swordfish, explore distant waters without the need to dock and find a hotel, and generally expand your horizons.

## SPORT-UTILITY BOATING

A walkaround design is also by nature a versatile boat for family outings as well as hardcore offshore fishing. Head out with the guys in the morning, then pack up the wife and kids for a relaxing afternoon of cruising and sandbar hopping, all while enjoying those onboard amenities such as berths (a hot lunch from the galley, anyone?). Walkaround boats let you do it all comfortably and in grand style.

## IF YOU WERE TO PURCHASE A NEW BOAT, WOULD YOU CONSIDER A GYROSTABILIZER?

● No  
● Undecided  
● Yes



COURTESY GRADY-WHITE

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# Double the Fun

By Sam White

**T**hanks to their unique layout, dual-console boats are considered the most versatile fishing-boat design on the water today. They can effortlessly switch gears from hardcore fishing to family-friendly cruising and sandbar lounging—throw in a wakeboard, skis or towables, and it's a party on the water.

## VERSATILITY ABOUNDS

Since the helm station is set forward, there is no console to take up room in the center of the boat. This means plenty of cockpit space, which is especially inviting for those who troll or bottomfish with regularity. The captain drives from a comfortable seated position, protected by a beefy windshield with a hinged opening for access to the open bow seating. Nearly all dual-consoles have some kind of forward seating in this area, many with folding or removable cocktail tables for an inviting lounge area. Aft is additional seating across from the captain and often along the transom, many of which fold away for storage. Most dual-consoles also have a hardtop or certainly a Bimini top for sun protection. Hardtops add space for rocket launcher rod holders and platforms for outriggers for offshore trolling.

## PERFORMANCE PEDIGREE

Since the majority of dual-console owners in our survey said they fished primarily with their families and friends, it makes sense for this style of boat to offer good performance in a variety of sea conditions. Among those we surveyed, most also indicated that a soft ride in rough weather was important to them, as was a dry ride overall. The windscreen protects occupants from wind and spray. Some of the most popular, like the Freedom line of dual-consoles from Grady-White, offer up a superb ride in most sea conditions, thanks to their SeaV variable deadrise hull. The larger models are powered by twin or triple outboard engines, although a single outboard is plenty for most applications up to about 24 feet or so. And because the occupants generally remain seated while underway, dual-consoles are also among the safest designs on the water for families with smaller children.



A key feature of dual console boats is a large, unobstructed cockpit that's perfect for a variety of activities on the water.

## FISH ON THE MIND

Our survey respondents said they spent the majority of their time live-baiting for both inshore and offshore species, including bottomfishing, so it makes sense that

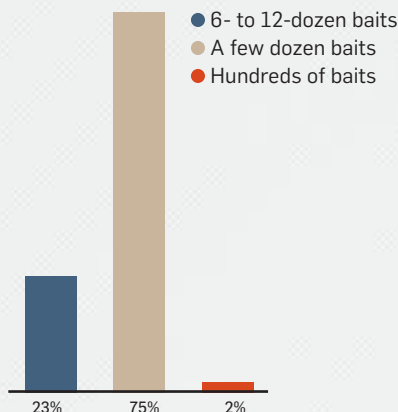
## A LARGE ROUND OR OVAL LIVEWELL OF SUFFICIENT SIZE FOR A FEW DOZEN BAITS TOPS THE WISH LIST.

livewell size is a key factor in these boats. A large round or oval livewell of sufficient size for a few dozen baits tops the wish list; a clear lid or clear viewing window is also great to have as well. Among other fishing-friendly features, the number and placement of the boat's rod holders is also important, as is having built-in tackle storage. No one likes lugging heavy tackle boxes back and forth to the boat when you can keep everything aboard and secure,

ready to go at a moment's notice.

Dual-consoles bring the best of bow-rider runabout comfort and seaworthy fishing machines from 18 to 30 feet long.

## HOW MUCH LIVE BAIT DO YOU NORMALLY CARRY ON YOUR CURRENT PRIMARY BOAT?



COURTESY COBIA



**36xs**

[www.capehornboats.com](http://www.capehornboats.com)

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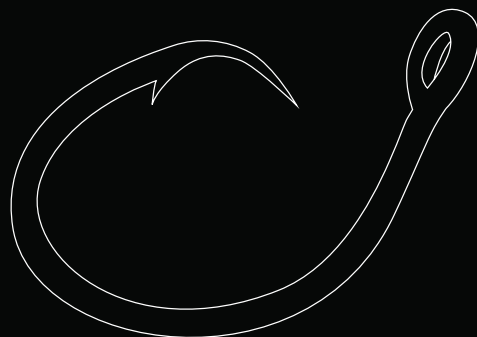
Expand your destination possibilities.

Run longer, further and in more comfort. The helm station wraps the driver and passengers in bolstered seats, while the rear fold-away bench and forward lounge entertain the crew.

The reliable Yamaha four-stroke power allows you to travel further on less by blending fuel economy with performance.

Extra storage, extra seating and extra comfort help soften the edges and define the 36XS.

Whether exploring the canyons or entertaining a group, the 36XS is dialed in.



**cape horn**  
NONE BUILT STRONGER





## Albemarle Boats

**A**lbemarle customers tell the company there are four main reasons for their brand loyalty: superior ride on the legendary Carolina-style hull, family-style customer service, unmatched quality and inherent fishability.

Albemarle Sportfishing Boats and Carolina Classic—each launched in Edenton, North Carolina—today comprise Albemarle, the Carolina Classic, makers of express sport-fishing boats of 25 to 41 feet.

### ALBEMARLE 31 DC

The new Albemarle 31 DC's 24-degree deadrise, hand-laid solid fiberglass hull and one-piece construction promise a smooth, comfortable and safe ride, even when the weather souers. It's fun too.

The dual-console format has long been a family favorite and, whether fishing or cruising, this big DC has bow, cockpit and helm seating that welcomes a family reunion, plus angler-pleasing fishing features.

The 31 DC is powered by

twin Yamaha 300s on a custom Armstrong engine bracket, and Yamaha Helm Master EX electric steering is standard.

The helm's dash is designed for large, flush-mounted electronics. Bolstered helm and portside double bench seats are made by Llebroc. Forward of the helm is a tempered-glass windshield with a molded fiberglass frame and walk-through door.

A bow anchor locker is equipped with windlass and through stem roller, amid cushioned bench seating, storable bolster cushions and table, and an insulated, in-seat dry box.

The starboard console houses a berth for two, as well as rod space and storage. Within the port console is an electric head, countertop and sink; it also provides access to air-conditioning units and other mechanical equipment.

Fishing doesn't get short shrift on this boat. In addition to six gunwale-mounted rod holders, enough for 59 percent of dual-console survey respondents, the 31 DC has two 56-gallon

cockpit fish boxes, and a 30-gallon transom baitwell/livewell that satisfies 92 percent of dual-console anglers.

The 31 DC's 62-square-foot cockpit is overseen by an aft-facing double seat; foldout aft and portside benches help set the stage for plenty of fishing and fun.

The combination of a hardtop windshield and side curtains protects the cockpit in inclement weather, and features molded-in outrigger pads, LED overhead and spreader lights, a pair of rod holders port and starboard, and a ski tow point.

### MORE INFO

[albemarleboats.com](http://albemarleboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

Hot/cold cockpit shower, plus freshwater and raw-water washdowns

Molded cabinet with sink and storage for fishing, entertaining or both

#### OWNERS SAY

The Carolina flair looks and rides nice

Great for saltwater fishing

Very versatile (family and fishing) boat

#### BRAND SAYS

Everything you need for a day offshore

Cockpit is uncluttered and well-laid-out for multiple purposes

#### SPECS

LOA: 33'8"

Beam: 10'8"

Fuel Capacity: 275 gal.

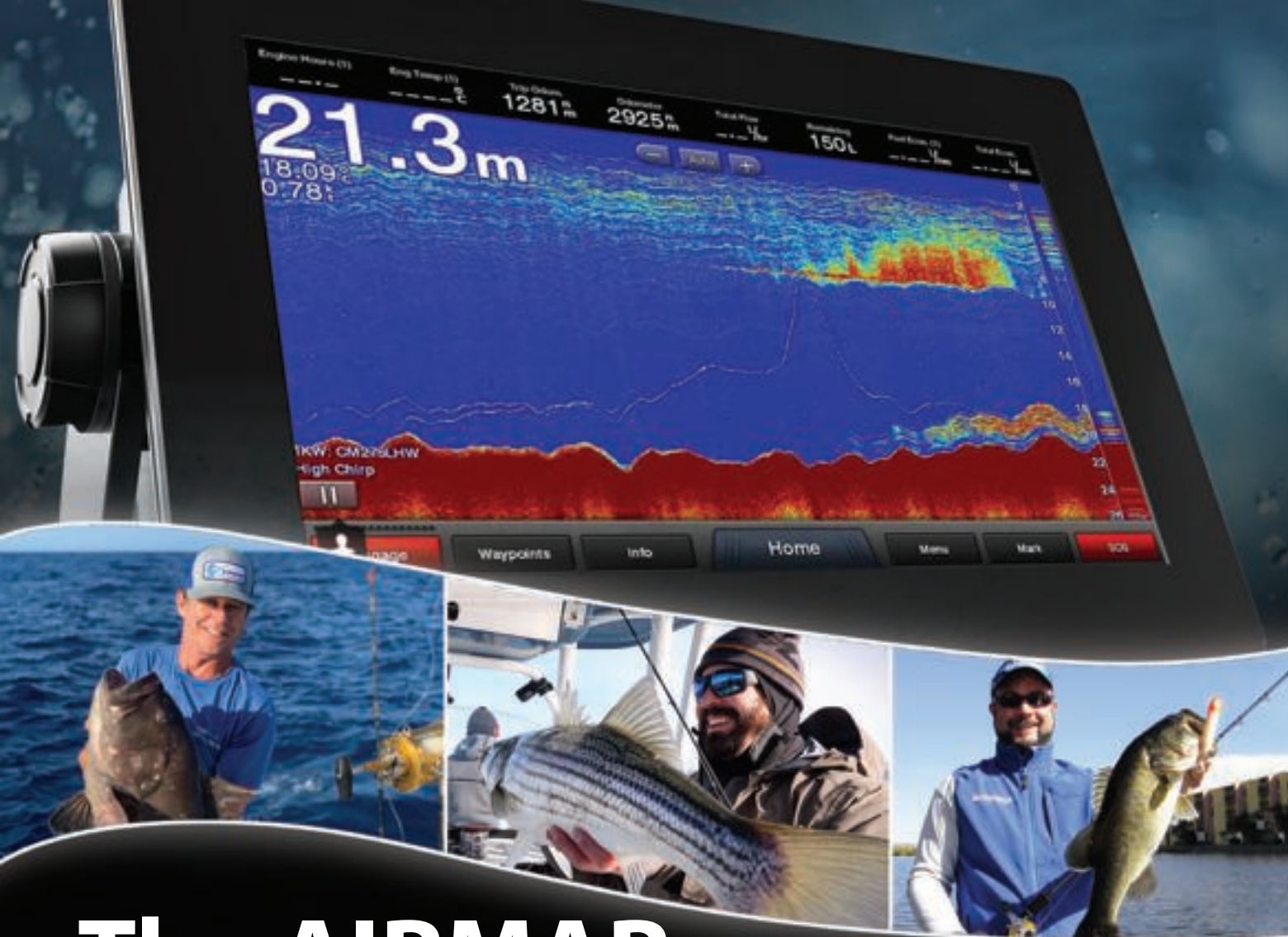
Dry Weight: 12,500 lb. with power

Max HP: 600

EXCLUSIVELY POWERED



The hardtop with wrap-around windshield and stowable side curtains protects from elements.

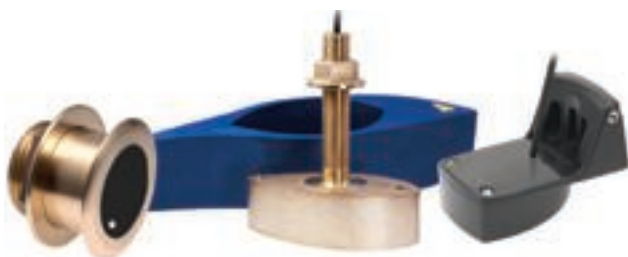


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NEW  
2021

## Barker Boatworks

A half-dozen years ago, after a decade in the boatbuilding industry, Kevin Barker set off on his own with the goal of building the "ultimate bay boat."

He drew on the expertise of world-renowned naval architect Michael Peters, a specialist in designing high-speed boats with style, performance and quality.

They settled upon Peters' Stepped-Vee Ventilated Tunnel for a pair of single-hull boats: the 26 Calibogue, a premium fly-fishing specialist, and the 26 Open, a big-water fishing machine built on the Calibogue hull with similar performance and draft, but without the casting decks.

Now comes a third boat, a big catamaran.

All Barker boats are built-to-order, no two alike. The Barker Boatworks staff of 28, based in Sarasota, Florida, proudly "overbuild" each with yacht-quality fit-and-finish and rigging.

### BARKER 40 HPC

Everything about the new Barker

40 HPC—High Performance Cat—is big: more than 40 feet of twin-hulled boat, powered by quad 300 hp Mercury Verados but capable of carrying 450Rs, fed by 670-gallons of fuel, with another 100 gallons optional.

And what it does with all that bigness! With the four 450s, it tops out at 85 mph, and the boat cruises at 40 to 60 mph.

The 40 HPC, like Barker's previous boats, is designed by Michael Peters Yacht Design, which has claimed 20 Class One World Championships on cat hulls from 39 to 43 feet.

The new boat features three-abreast custom seating and a leaning post with rear and side tackle centers, beneath an extra large hardtop bearing 15 rocket-launcher rod holders, lights, outriggers and antennas.

Lockable storage for up to 20 rods will please the 26 percent of offshore CC survey respondents who want that security. Dual side dive doors make people and fish passage easy.

Within the transom are 16 Gemlux rod holders—rod

holders, in fact, seem to be everywhere—16 are standard on either side of the front lounge seating.

Only the elite 4 percent of survey respondents need three livewells, and Barker designed the 40 HPC to please them, with two 50-gallon transom tanks fed by a Hooker Sea Chest, and two more 50-gallon wells optional within the deck.

Two sets of Frigid Rigid fish boxes, 785- and 544-quarts will keep ice for days. An additional 532-quart insulated storage/fish box is located under the forward lounge seat.

### MORE INFO

[barkerboatworks.com](http://barkerboatworks.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

Tons of rod holders, livewells, fish boxes

Flexibility of build-to-order

Kevlar and carbon-fiber construction makes for a solid hull and a soft ride

#### OBSERVATIONS

Asymmetrical cat design is easy to pilot and heels well into turns

#### BRAND SAYS

Best is the standard

Barker employees have a passion for building high-quality boats

#### SPECS

LOA: 40'4"

Beam: 11'10"

Fuel Capacity: 640 gal.

Dry Weight: 15,000 lb. plus power

Max HP: 1,800

A cat's wide beam makes for stable trolling. The hardtop accommodates plenty of accessories.



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## READER RESPONSE

*"BOSTON WHALERS  
ARE LIKE OLD FRIENDS;  
RELIABLE"*



## Boston Whaler

**B**oston Whaler balances its 60-year tradition of building unsinkable hulls with its ongoing refinement of boats built on those hulls.

The Boston Whaler brand encompasses seven distinct lines.

Super Sports are peppy load-and-go funsters. Montauks are classic, ever-popular center-consoles 15 to 21 feet. Dauntless models balance watersports and coastal fishing.

Vantage dual-console boats aim first at family-friendliness. The Conquest family has fishing-focused offshore boats with all the comforts of home. Realm 35- and 38-footers blend center-console fishability with cabin-cruiser comfort. And Boston Whaler Outrage boats are battle-ready offshore-fishing machines.

Second among primary-boat brands owned by our survey respondents, and among those

most numerous of second and third boats owned by those respondents, Boston Whaler is also one of the top two brands respondents would consider for their next purchase.

### BOSTON WHALER 280 VANTAGE

The new Boston Whaler 280 Vantage does so many things so well that the company calls the family-friendly dual-console boat the "Swiss Army knife of boating."

The 280 has a degree more deadrise and a bit sharper entry than its predecessor, the 270 Vantage, for an even dryer, more comfortable ride for the entire family, no matter the activity.

But the 280 Vantage has its eye clearly on fishing, with two aft 25-gallon cockpit fish boxes, lighted 19-gallon transom livewell (92 percent of dual-console anglers in our survey said one's enough;

75 percent say they usually carry just a few dozen baits), three gunwale-mounted rod holders (59 percent of respondents need four or fewer), plus four more on hardtop supports. Want more, Whaler can add them for you.

Anglers and cruisers alike will enjoy the secure feeling created by a coaming height 2 inches taller than the 270. So especially will parents of young children.

Dual-consoles and our survey respondents are all about the bow seating, and the 280 Vantage's includes cushions with backrests and armrests atop insulated storage lockers. You can add a bow sunshade or table. A bow redesign accommodates both an anchor windlass and a shore ladder.

An integrated hardtop with tempered-glass windshield can be fitted with an electrically actuated cockpit SureShade





and includes a standard tow bit perfect for watersports.

Standard are twin Mercury 250 hp V-8 Verados; options include up to 400 hp Verados.

### 405 CONQUEST

Ready for top-flight fishing or cruising is the Boston Whaler 405 Conquest.

The big cruiser's cabin contains a master berth with inner-spring mattress, plus a midcabin guest berth, teak cabinets and flooring, enclosed head with separate shower, and galley with cooktop, microwave, refrigerator/freezer, storage—and even lighted wineglass holders.

The angler is served by a transom prep area and a 19-gallon pressurized, lighted, insulated aft livewell. (Of walkaround respondents, 85 percent said they need just

a single bait tank.)

The 405 has five gunwale-mounted cockpit rod holders —34 percent of walkaround survey respondents say they're OK with four; another 46 percent would like six. Five more rod holders line the transom, six more on the hardtop supports. The 405 is also set up for outriggers and/or downriggers.

The stern bench folds away to add fishing space, the setup 48 percent of walkaround survey respondents prefer. Other seats are convertible, facing front or aft.

Optional on the 405 Conquest is Seakeeper gyro-stabilizing, which 24 percent of prospective walkaround boat buyers said they'd consider.

#### MORE INFO

[bostonwhaler.com](http://bostonwhaler.com)

## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

#### Unsinkable

Powerful Mercury Verado outboard engines

### OWNERS SAY

**Unsinkability, safe, and speed to get to the action**

Solid ride in all conditions

**Good all-around boat for family, friends, fishing and diving**

### BRAND SAYS

405 Conquest: "The SUV of the Sea"

**Brilliant design and advanced technology**

### SPECS

#### 280 VANTAGE

LOA: 29'1"

Beam: 9'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 180 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 6,700 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 800

**Certifications:** NMMA

#### 405 CONQUEST

LOA: 41'4"

Beam: 13'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 620 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 22,400 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 1,881

**Certifications:** NMMA







## Cape Horn Boats

**T**he last thing a Cape Horn boat sees as it leaves the factory in Milton, Florida, is the steely eye of company president Chris Fabbro.

Fabbro, who with his father, Bob, built the first Cape Horn (the 16 Classic) in their garage more than 30 years ago, inspects every boat before turning it over to its new owner. The lineup now stretches from 22 to 36 feet, in bay and offshore models.

How'd it start? Father and son wanted a fishing boat that was both hardcore and comfortable, with big fishing platforms and massive livewells. Unable to find one that suited them, they built it.

Hull voids in a Cape Horn are pressure-filled with closed-cell foam, quieting the ride, adding stiffness, and making it unsinkable—a consideration CC survey respondents always rank highly.

### CAPE HORN 36XS

The "XS" in the model name stands for extra seating, or extra storage—well, actually, both. It might as well stand for extra fishability and comfort too, in

a hand-tailored big-flare boat boasting yacht-quality hardware and appointments.

The helm station has compartments for tackle and other gear; 60 percent of survey respondents prefer permanent storage space. The dash accommodates multiple large-screen displays. EPS steering allows easy upgrade to joystick control.

Within a rear-facing seat is a 60-gallon livewell; a second 20-gallon livewell within the transom can also serve as storage; 69 percent of center-console respondents said one livewell was enough, 27 percent wanted two, and just 4 percent held out for three.

Standard are a forward lounge and a large, rear foldaway bench (76 percent of those surveyed wanted seating for four or more).

An optional VacuFlush head can be installed in the large walk-in console, which has a pullout steel sink. A flip-up seat at the console front transforms into a lounge seat with a flip-up footrest.

The 36XS's oversize hardtop

contains a pair of electronics boxes and flush-mounted speakers, with several lighting options. Revolution outriggers are standard. A laddered skylight hatch in the top gives access to adjust antennas and adds the consideration of an upper station.

More big thinking? Triple outboards produce speeds of 60 mph. A 9-foot-long insulated fish box measures 1,400 quarts volume. And then there's the rod holders—25 of them, various types and locations, standard.

### MORE INFO

[capehornboats.com](http://capehornboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Abundant rod holders in various locations and types**

Standard hardtop and outriggers

**Dash accommodates three large displays**

### OWNERS SAY

360-degree fish-fighting ability

**Feels like a Cadillac in even the roughest seas**

Built like a tank

### BRAND SAYS

**A sleek and modern design**

Go farther, faster with incredible efficiency

### SPECS

**LOA:** 36'11"

**Beam:** 10'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 385 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 7,900 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 1,400

OPTIONALLY POWERED



A laddered hatch in the hardtop gives access to antennas and a possible upper station.



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# The Deluxe Base System

An affordable alternative to our Bluewater System, offering the same under T-Top functionality and sleek look. Available with our new Internal or Collapsible Hybrid Outriggers.

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## Caymas Boats

**C**aymas Boats, founded in 2018, boasts 40 years of innovation. That's backed up by a development team whose members average 30 years' experience in fiberglass manufacturing.

The company makes freshwater and saltwater boats, the latter featuring the Michael Peters-designed, patented Stepped Vee Ventilated Tunnel hull, a revolutionary, drag-reducing design that produces increased speed, enhanced fuel economy, and a remarkably soft, dry ride in heavy seas.

The company, located in Ashland City, Tennessee, pledges superior customer service, a lifetime hull warranty, innovation, superb fit-and-finish, and quality control ensured by a sea trial and exhaustive checklist applied to every boat before it leaves the climate-controlled factory.

### CAYMAS 401 CC

The new Caymas 401 CC is designed for serious saltwater-tournament anglers, the company says, as well as

discriminating weekend anglers and their families.

For those hardcore anglers, the 401 CC boasts a massive cockpit, with optional port and starboard dive doors. There's also plenty of fishing space and access for boating fish.

The leaning post provides ample rod and tackle storage, plus rear-facing mezzanine seating. The transom contains two 45-gallon livewells, served by premium Hooker Electric pumps and sea chest; that's enough to match the needs of 96 percent of offshore CC anglers. Five fish boxes total 450 gallons of insulated storage. Lockable rod storage will please the 26 percent of respondents who call that feature important.

A hatch in the hardtop makes passage for an upper station easy while retaining traditional rod-holder placement and storage; an optional second station is available. Three helm seats serve the helm itself, whose dash accommodates dual 22-inch or triple 17-inch displays, plus additional electronics. The

console cabin has an enclosed head and berth.

The bow offers several seating options; 40 percent of CC survey respondents say bow seating's important to them. The forward chaise longue contains a 15-gallon insulated cooler and 75 gallons of dry storage.

Select triple or quad engines, up to 1,800 hp. Options include Seakeeper 3 gyroscopic stabilization, diesel generator and air conditioning.

### MORE INFO

[caymasboats.com](http://caymasboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

**Generous, range-extending fuel capacity**

Total livewell capacity of 90 gallons

#### OBSERVATIONS

**A sweeping sheerline and wide bow flare keep the ride dry**

Quad power moves the boat swiftly ahead of 1,800 hp

#### BRAND SAYS

**Remarkably soft, dry ride in heavy seas**

Your choice for a lifetime of exceptional boating

#### SPECS

**LOA:** 39'11"

**Beam:** 11'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 559 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 14,000 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 1,800

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



Mezzanine seating with easy access to an optional second station, with ample rod storage.



# SEA BORN



// Built ready to  
fish and a good  
looking boat. //



George Labonte  
Boating Editor  
Florida Sportsman

## INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW LX26 CENTER CONSOLE

LOA: 26' 6" / Beam 116" / Max. Power 500 HP / Approx Fuel Capacity 135 Gallons / Draft 20" / Weight 5,500lbs.



[WWW.SEABORNBOATS.COM](http://WWW.SEABORNBOATS.COM)





## Century Boats

**F**ishability? Luxury? Reliability? that's Century's trademark style.

Boasting more than 90 years of building high-quality boats for anglers and families, Century evolved from Lake Michigan, crafting wooden runabout and high-performance boats, to its current base in Florida, with saltwater-fishing boats its specialty. Today the company produces saltwater-fishing boats from 22 to 32 feet, including express, walkaround, center-console and dual-console models.

Century knows how to partner. Vectorply provides latest-technology glass and core materials for all-composite construction. Raymarine high-performance marine-electronics packages and Fusion True Marine entertainment products are standard. Mate Series combination rod and cup holders are also standard, as are Edson steering wheels.

Advanced storage systems throughout the boats keep tackle and other gear handy while preserving fishing room.

### CENTURY BOATS 2901 CENTER CONSOLE

What do you call a luxury crossover boat designed around a tournament-fishing rig?

Century calls it the 2901 Center Console, and it boasts a long list of fishing features presented in comfort and style to please the entire family.

Forty percent of center-console survey respondents say that they consider bow seating important; Century answers with wraparound bow seating, with standard, forward-facing backrests, and a bow table and stand.

But a rare accommodation to fishing efficiency is the double-aerator 62-gallon baitwell (69 percent of respondents say one is plenty), lockable rod storage (important to 26 percent of CC boaters surveyed), tilt-out tackle trays, and a pair of 277-quart insulated and pump-out-equipped fish boxes. Three gunwale-mounted rod holders on each side meet or exceed the needs of 68 percent of CC survey respondents; additional rod holders are on the hardtop, helm

seatbacks and transom.

Dial-in your fishing needs with options, including downriggers, outriggers and additional rod holders, plus eye candy such as underwater lights, Helm Master EX electric steering and stereo upgrades. Standard are electric head; anchor, windlass, rope and chain; trim tabs with lighted indicator; and fiberglass hardtop with spreader lights and rod holder.

Century recommends twin Yamaha F300s or XF350s for the 2901 CC.

### MORE INFO

[centuryboats.com](http://centuryboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

**Nice balance of luxury and fishability**

Handy, tilt-out tackle trays

**Dual-aerator livewell provides redundancy**

#### OWNERS SAY

Center console offers ease of movement and fishability

**Lots of room for fishing gear and plenty of rod holders**

The spaciousness of the layout, along with the cabin room in the center console

**Fishability, big livewell, and well-placed, good number of rod holders**

#### BRAND SAYS

An eye on even the smallest details

#### Passion for perfection

Solid platforms built to get you there—and back—in safety and comfort

#### SPECS

**LOA:** 29'

**Beam:** 9'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 280 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 7,000 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 700

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



The lockable tackle rigging station keeps anglers competitive and organized.

An aerial, black and white photograph showing a boat in the center foreground moving away from the viewer, leaving a wide, white wake. Several other boats are visible in the background, following the same path. The water is dark, and the sky is not visible.

We follow the calling, not the crowd.

**SENFOX**  
SMART MOVE.





## Cobia Boats

**C**obia Boats deck layouts position everything at hand when needed or wanted, and out of the way otherwise. No awkward steps or trip hazards. Enough freeboard to feel secure, not so much that fishing's a pain. Handholds are unobtrusive, but handy when you need one.

It's all done so you can focus on the fish and the fishing, not make adjustments to your boat.

There's a lot to admire when you consider a Cobia: a fine, far-forward bow entry that extends running surfaces, slicing through waves before pushing them aside to create a soft ride. Further smoothing that ride is the variable-deadrise hull, which also aids fuel efficiency.

Cobias are built with backing plates and screw-retention materials at each fastening point, double-clamped hoses reinforced with sealant, and epoxy-coated and pressure-tested aluminum fuel tanks. Decks are stiffened with carbon-reinforced beams. Bilge interiors are finished. Electrical harnesses are created in-house with copper-tinned

wiring that's labeled.

Cobia is a Maverick Boat Group brand, along with Maverick, Hewes and Pathfinder boats.

### **COBIA 350 CC**

The new Cobia 350 Center Console blends high style and hard-charging performance so you can fish hard and play easy.

A double-stepped, vacuum-infused hull makes getting to fishing grounds fast and fuel efficient, ahead of triple 300 hp or twin 425 hp Yamahas.

Fishing features include dual 42-gallon bait tanks (pleasing 96 percent of CC respondents), two large in-floor fish boxes, full tackle station, and bait prep area. Optional are deluxe top, king-fish rod holders, outriggers and kite-rod holders. Wide at 11 feet, 2 inches—as well as wide-open—the 350 CC has plenty of room for several anglers to fish.

Other options include joystick control, air conditioning and Garmin Master Suite electronics, including radar.

The 350 CC's 11-person seating includes triple helm seats, a

two-person chaise longue and cushioned sun lounge; 40 percent of CC survey respondents want bow seating. A hideaway bow table electronically rises, for picnic or party or to complete a casting deck.

Within the walk-down console is a spacious berth with wooden cabinetry, an electric head, a combination sink/shower, and hidden, lockable rod storage. Easy access to the logical wiring and electrical system assures easy maintenance down the road.

### **MORE INFO**

[cobiaboats.com](http://cobiaboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### **ON TARGET**

Seven insulated boxes serve as coolers or dry storage

Six gunwale cockpit rod holders; more in transom and throughout boat

### **OWNERS SAY**

Really takes on the waves and makes the ride smooth

Ample space to fish

### **BRAND SAYS**

Fishes hard and plays easy

Elegant topside amenities bathe you in style and comfort

Tournament-capable fishing features

### **SPECS**

**LOA:** 34'4"

**Beam:** 11'2"

**Fuel Capacity:** 320 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 10,560 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 900

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



The head is spacious, stand-up tall, and provides lockable storage for rods and gear.



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## READER RESPONSE

"100 PERCENT OFFSHORE  
MACHINE!"



## Contender Boats

Offshore anglers can dial in a Contender to match their needs and tastes: The Homestead, Florida, company offers several models from 25 to 44 feet, for which a seemingly endless list of options is available.

Each boat is built-to-order for its owner, with choices available from power to fishing appointments to upholstery stitching.

Contender, having launched thousands of boats in its more than 35 years, builds boats on both stepped and deep-V hull designs.

### CONTENDER 44ST

Designed to reach bluewater fishing grounds swiftly, the 44ST is built from the same hull as the new-last-year 44FA (fish-around). But where the FA has more cabin than console, with berth, shower-equipped head, and galley, the ST opts

for a simple but elegant step-in head, and more fishing space.

How that space is equipped is largely up to you: Contender lists more options than standard equipment.

The helm, accommodating a pair of 24-inch Garmin displays, is protected by a curved-glass windshield. The captain and two companions each have plush helm chairs. The tackle station aft of them is expansive, with room for a variety of tackle options.

Two clear-topped 55-gallon livewells in the transom will meet or exceed the needs of all but 4 percent of survey respondents; those 4-percenters will smile at the third, 125-gallon livewell within the aft cockpit deck. Nearby are two 110-gallon fish boxes.

Forward is another, 340-gallon fish box, plus 315 gallons of storage. A pair of 10-foot rod lockers protects

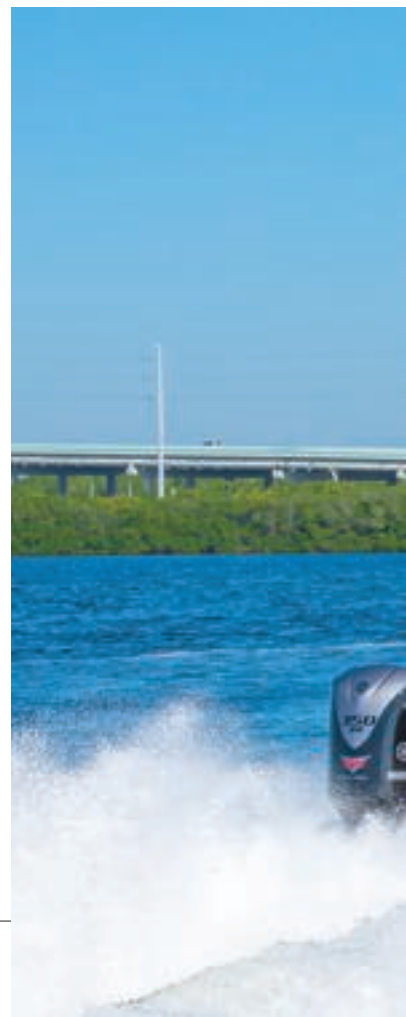
gear. A T-top is standard; a tower and second station are optional.

Four standard gunwale-mounted cockpit rod holders meet the needs of 33 percent of our offshore CC survey respondents, while a stand-mounted aft rocket launcher, helm-flanking vertical racks and additional gunwale-mounted holders forward augment them.

A lounge forward of the console has storage beneath in three separate compartments. It rises hydraulically to access a large coffin box.

Bow gunwales are recessed for forward seating, maintaining maximum fishing space while providing the bow seating that 40 percent of survey respondents say is important to them.

The 44ST is powered by triple or quad Yamaha 425 XTO engines.





## CONTENDER 39FA

The Contender 39 is a hardcore fishing machine that features all the creature comforts you could ever need. "FA" stands for fish-around, and the cabin console at its heart boasts a queen berth, microwave, refrigerator, glass-top stove and enclosed head with shower.

Riding on its two-step hull ahead of triple Yamaha F350s, the 39FA races through the 60s and into the 70s toward far-off fish, thanks to its expansive 460-gallon fuel capacity.

The helm accommodates a pair of large displays, its wheel at the centerline. Add a custom fishing tower with second station to scout fishing prospects while directing boat and crew.

Leave the bow open for maximum fishing space, or opt for bow seating, which

32 percent of walkaround survey respondents consider important.

A cushion-topped coffin box can be installed forward of the cabin. Other options include teak packages, power-actuated hatches and coolers, and several forward and rear seating arrangements.

Six gunwale-mounted rod holders meet the demands of 68 percent of CC survey respondents (80 percent of walkaround anglers), with more rod holders, racks and rod storage throughout the boat. A large tackle center includes a slide-out Engel cooler.

It's a tournament boat, but one the whole family can call a winner.

### MORE INFO

[contenderboats.com](http://contenderboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Speed and range for offshore adventures**

Plethora of options to create semicustom boat

### OWNERS SAY

**Handles offshore conditions very well**

Contender boats are the best on the water

**Easy to handle and economical to run**

### BRAND SAYS

Performance through innovation

**Sea-tested, captain-approved**

### SPECS

#### 44ST

**LOA:** 43'10"

**Beam:** 12'

**Fuel Capacity:** 600 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 9,600 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 2,000

**Certifications:** NMMA

#### 39FA

**LOA:** 39'

**Beam:** 10'10"

**Fuel Capacity:** 460 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 15,000 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 1,600

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED





# BUILDER BENCHMARK



READER RESPONSE  
"STABILITY, AND  
SHE SIPS FUEL"

## Eastern Boats

**E**astern Boats launched in 1981 with a single 18-foot Classic boat built in a two-bay shop. Today it builds Eastern, Seaway and Rosborough boats, 18 to 30 feet long, in four warehouses at the New Hampshire facility.

### EASTERN BOATS 27 TOURNAMENT

Eastern's 27 Tournament is a downeast outboard with a powerful bow, a 10-foot-3-inch beam and hard chines that produce dry, soft ride offshore. Powered by twin 150s or a single 250 to 300 on a color-matched Armstrong bracket, it's efficient at any speed.



The boat's pilot-house cabin has sliding windows and dual-opening windshields served by electric wipers. A double-wide companion seat adjoins the bolster-equipped helm seat; the companion reverses to face aft, sharing a teak table with a portside upholstered bench.

Below, the 27 Tournament has a forward V-berth with overhead rod racks, and an enclosed head with sink and shower. Atop the cabin is a 20-inch-square hatch.

The cockpit has a transom door,

#### SPECS

**LOA:** 27'4"

**Beam:** 10'3"

**Fuel Capacity:**  
192 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 8,000  
lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 300

OPTIONALLY POWERED



transom livewell and insulated fish box with pump-out, four gunwale-mounted rod holders and two more on the transom; the hardtop carries a five-rod rocket launcher. The cockpit galley includes sink, refrigerator and stove.

Popular options include additional rod holders, anchor windlass, bow thruster, full camper enclosure and air conditioning.

#### MORE INFO

[easternboats.com](http://easternboats.com)



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## Everglades Boats

**U**nsinkable construction is one of the first things people ask for in an offshore center-console fishing boat. It's at the core—pun intended—of an Everglades boat.

When Everglades came to market in 2001, with it came an award-winning Rapid Molded Core Assembly Process for crafting unsinkable one-piece, smooth-riding hulls.

Instead of filling hull voids with foam, Everglades molds its extremely dense, structural foam core first, and then bonds it to hull and deck. That, the company says, produces unexcelled safety and flotation and hull lines true to their engineering specs. Next come other components made in-house—console, hardtop, wiring harness—installed to yachtlike fit-and-finish.

Setting Everglades apart further are its hydraulic sliding tempered glass windshield and rotating leaning post—a comfortable helm seat facing forward, its back a secure leaning post when reversed.

### EVERGLADES 235 CC

Everglades refers to its new 235 Center Console as an “entry level” CC but proves that entry level, for fishing or cruising, can be at a high level indeed. With its RAMCAP hull and standard 300 hp Yamaha, the new 235 CC is ready for deepwater adventures well beyond shallow bays and intercostal waters.

Bow console seating is larger, more-contoured and richly detailed, with underseat insulated cooler storage—40 percent of center-console survey respondents call forward seating moderately or very important, and virtually everyone wants all the storage they can get. Twin seats with armrests are at the front of the console. Full beam retractable transom seating will please the 44 percent who require it.

The fiberglass hardtop has an integrated aluminum powder-coated support with molded handholds, LED and spreader lights, electronics box, four rod holders and a ski pylon. The head is enlarged.

Come fishing time, the 235 CC features a rigging station with tackle and tool storage and four rod holders. Six gunwale-mounted rod holders meet or exceed 68 percent of demands, with six more at the transom and four in the top. A standard portside door welcomes people and big fish.

Within the transom is a standard 17-gallon starboard circulating livewell—meeting 69 percent of respondents’ wishes—with a clear acrylic lid.

### MORE INFO

[evergladesboats.com](http://evergladesboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

#### Unsinkable, durable RAMCAP construction

Structural foam is cast and then bonded to hull and deck

#### Rod and tackle storage exceeds expectations for any boat in its class

Rotating dual helm-seat swivel aft for mezzanine seating, also providing a leaning post for skipper

### OWNERS SAY

#### Like the seating configuration at the helm and forward of the console

Favorite feature: everything

### BRAND SAYS

#### No compromise in materials or processes

The timeless and true design leader in the “unsinkable” category

### SPECS

LOA: 24'

Beam: 8'6"

Fuel Capacity: 105 gal.

Dry Weight: 5,600 lb. plus power

Max HP: 300

Certifications: NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



The 235 CC features a patented 360 degree swivel helm/mezzanine seating.





## READER RESPONSE

*"A SOLID, SEAWORTHY  
BOAT IN ALL TYPES  
OF SEAS"*



## Grady-White Boats

**F**ounded in 1959, Grady-White Boats builds 26 models of fiberglass offshore, sport-fishing and family-fishing boats, from 18 to 45 feet, in Greenville, North Carolina.

One of the best-known and well-respected brands across several categories—and most represented in our survey—Grady-White's reputation rides in large part on its hand-laid SeaV2 progressive hull. Deadrise begins at a stable 18 to 21 degrees at the transom, with wide chines providing stability both at rest and trolling, sharpening as it approaches the bow to split waves cleanly and softly.

The company has been awarded every third-party customer-satisfaction award ever presented in the marine industry, including JD Power and Associates Customer Satisfaction Awards and NMMA Customer Satisfaction Index honors.

### GRADY-WHITE CANYON 306

Grady-White's popular 30-foot Canyon 306 has evolved, while retaining signature features.

Bow seating on the center console now features forward-facing backrests that fold away to further boost already generous fishing room. An optional insert converts the entire bow to a roomy casting platform. Beneath the seat cushions are a pair of 150-quart insulated fish boxes.

The 306's helm can accommodate two 16-inch displays, plus additional electronics and controls. The standard fiberglass T-top has a large radio box, rod holders, outrigger plates, overhead PFD storage, LED lights, molded-in sound-system speakers, and spreader lights fore and aft, plus a full-height windshield.

Aft of the companion seat is a 47-gallon lighted livewell with a

patented full-column aeration plenum and viewing window. A stand-up rigging station/multipurpose area attends it.

The console features a roomy stand-up head enclosure with marine head, shower system and sink, teak accents, and recessed lighting.

Tuna-stick storage is important to offshore center-console respondents—68 percent stash seven or more—and the Canyon 306 meets their demands. Gunwale storage accommodates fly rods 9-plus feet, or 50-pound-class trolling sets, reels positioned forward or aft, secured behind a hinged locker door.

A 304-quart aft cockpit fish box, in addition to the two in the bow, awaits the catch of the day.

### GRADY-WHITE EXPRESS 370

Grady-White's revisited Express 370 offers more cabin





room, performance, details and reliability than many inboard boats larger in length, with plenty of sport-fishing focus too.

The cabin, with teak and holly sole, takes advantage of space otherwise dedicated to an inboard engine room. The dinette includes an adjustable table and booth-type seating. Berths are forward and aft, with a convertible dinette berth, and it's all air-conditioned. Besides a full-feature galley, there's abundant storage in cabinets, closet and drawers.

A deluxe captain's helm chair adjusts vertically and horizontally. An electromechanically controlled enclosure raises and lowers to present electronics and instruments at the right height when needed, tucked away when not.

The 370's hardtop has a

motorized sunroof, four side rod holders, LED spreader and recessed lights, outrigger plates, SureShade electrically retractable shade, and side and drop curtains.

A starboardside rigging station includes sink and lockable tackle drawers (welcoming the four utility boxes that 49 percent say they need), along with a 48-gallon livewell.

A reinforced floor area awaits a fighting chair. Four gunwale-mounted rod holders meet the needs of 27 percent of survey respondents in the inboard sport-fisherman category, in which this outboard boat most nearly fits. A 291-quart aft refrigerator/freezer fish box with thermostat dramatically reduces ice demands.

#### MORE INFO

[gradywhite.com](http://gradywhite.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Patented foldaway transom seat**

Unsinkable construction

### OWNERS SAY

**Very reliable and steady offshore platform**

Sturdy, reliable, functional

**Quality and customer support**

### BRAND SAYS

The size-range standard in the luxury sport-fishing market

**We always keep key fishing features first in our designs, then we add the luxurious comfort and other features**

## SPECS

### CANYON 306

**LOA:** 30'6"

**Beam:** 10'7"

**Fuel Capacity:** 290 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 6,950 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 700

**Certifications:** NMMA

### EXPRESS 370

**LOA:** 36'7"

**Beam:** 13'2"

**Fuel Capacity:** 344 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 15,224 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 1,275

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED







READER RESPONSE  
"SUPERIOR OFFSHORE  
RIDE"



## Invincible Boat Company

**W**hether you want your Invincible boat to be a monohull or catamaran, the company pledges, you'll be stepping aboard the "the fastest, driest and best riding" boat.

Invincible's original monohull was and remains the patented Stepped-Vee Ventilated Tunnel design created by naval architect Michael Peters—the tough, fast, smooth-riding boat that company founders desired, possessing what it proudly calls Invincible's "athleticism."

Next, Invincible revolutionized the catamaran category with a design created in partnership with Morrelli & Melvin, naval architects expert in computational fluid dynamics. The patented, hybrid, semi-asymmetrical multihull design is noted for ride quality, handling and speed.

Distinctive Invincible features include vacuum-bagged

infusion, diamond-patterned nonskid deck, ergonomic console design, and hardtop-frame lines of sight designed for better navigation and fishing.

In either hull format, central to the fishing experience is Invincible's single-level deck and 360-degree fishability.

### INVINCIBLE 33 OPEN FISHERMAN

Invincible's 33 Open Fisherman rides and fishes like a big boat but handles as deftly as a small one. It incorporates both the SVVT hull that made its big brother famous, the classic Invincible 36 Open, and twin-engine ease and economy.

Standard features include a transom door, AGM sealed batteries, deluxe console with lined interior for full-size head, high-speed pickup for livewell sea chest, sink with tackle drawers, saltwater washdown, and triple 2,000 gph bilge pumps.

Power options include your choice of twins, either 300 hp Yamahas, Mercury Verados from 300 to 400 hp or Mercury 450HP R (racing) motors. Mercury VesselView upgrades are available.

Pick your top option: hardtop, crow's-nest for same or folding tower with dual station plus optional outriggers.

Center-console survey respondents differ on gunwale-mounted rod-holder needs—33 percent are happy with four, 35 percent want six, and 32 percent need eight or more. With Invincible, order what your fishing requires. Other fishing-friendly options are livewell sea chests, undergunwale rod racks and gaff holders, and electric-reel outlets.

Forward bench seating will please the 40 percent who consider it of medium to high importance in their CC, while rear bench and rear lounge





seats can meet the needs of some buyers; they're about half as common as foldaway aft seats on respondents' current boats.

Additional convenience options include a bow thruster, freshwater washdown, deluxe electric head within the console, dive ladder and in-hull windlass.

### INVINCIBLE 37 CATAMARAN

Invincible's 37 Cat, at the midpoint of its five-cat center-console line, offers amenities and equipment of a much larger boat in an efficient, powerful package.

Standard are above- and below-deck livewells (96 percent of CC survey respondents are happy with two), saltwater washdown, AGM sealed batteries, and generous underdeck fish and storage compartments.

Beyond that, you craft your own fishing machine, selecting from options such as hardtop, crow's-nest, folding tower with dual station, Rupp or Gem outriggers, multipump livewell sea chests, electric-reel outlets, and rod holders and racks. Other options include a deluxe bait-prep station, rear-facing tackle station, and coffin boxes in medium, large and extra-large—the latter two available with backrests.

Power? Quads from 300 to 450 hp, Yamaha or Mercury.

Seating choices include triple custom Llebrog helm chairs, a forward seating section like 40 percent of respondents prefer, foldout bench seats and aft jump seats, and removable rear lounge seats.

#### MORE INFO

[invincibleboats.com](http://invincibleboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Features are nicely aligned with advanced angler demands**

Single-deck fishability; no steps for stumbling

**Spacious, fishing-friendly design**

Options provide ability to build one's own boat

### OWNERS SAY

**Invincibles ride the sea with superior speeds and comfort at the same time**

Fantastic ride

### BRAND SAYS

**No one today builds a more athletic machine**

The best products start with the best materials

**A truly better boat that was purpose-built**

### SPECS

#### 33 OPEN FISHERMAN

**LOA:** 33'10"

**Beam:** 9'7"

**Fuel Capacity:** 320 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 8,100 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 900

**Certifications:** NMMA

#### 37 CATAMARAN

**LOA:** 37'

**Beam:** 12'

**Fuel Capacity:** 550 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 14,000 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 1,800

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED





# BUILDER BENCHMARK



**READER RESPONSE**  
"RUGGED, VERSATILE  
PERFORMANCE"

## NorthCoast Boats

**N**orthCoast boats—five cabin models and six center-consoles (some of those made in modified-V and deep-V versions)—have reverse chines for stability and aggressive longitudinal strakes for better performance.

NorthCoast, based in Rhode Island, is a division of C&C Marine, which has made hulls, decks and small parts for several boat brands.

### **NORTHCOAST 230CC DEEP-V**

NorthCoast's new 230CC Deep V, with 21-degree deadrise, specializes in faster travel in bigger seas. Its wide reverse chines boost stability,



and NorthCoast describes it as having "one of the most pleasing sheers on the water." Its engine is mounted on an Armstrong bracket.

There's storage within the forward casting platform, and in-deck forward of the console, above which is a molded T-top with spreader light. The two-beanbag cockpit invites movable seating.

Standard are two illuminated, clear-topped livewells, satisfying 96 percent of CC anglers surveyed, totaling 35 gallons. The standard

### **SPECS**

**LOA:** 27'6"

**Beam:** 8'6"

**Fuel Capacity:**  
124 gal.

**Dry Weight:**  
4,331 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 250

OPTIONALLY POWERED



14 rod holders include four gunwale-mounted, and you can add more, including swivel-butt rod holders for tuna and shark.

The family might lobby for forward cushions (40 percent of offshore CC respondents called bow seating important), folding aft cockpit seat, console head, stereo and anchor windlass. Additional fishing options include outriggers.

### **MORE INFO**

[northcoastboats.com](http://northcoastboats.com)

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[www.albemarleboats.com](http://www.albemarleboats.com)





## READER RESPONSE

"MADE WITH  
EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY"



## Pursuit Fishing Boats

**P**ursuit Boats are manufactured in two state-of-the-art plants totaling nearly 400,000 square feet in Fort Pierce, Florida, where patented designs are crafted using refined lamination techniques, vacuum-infused stringer grids, and validated installations.

Pursuit specializes in high-quality, luxury offshore-fishing boats, in express, center-console, sport and dual-console models from 23 to 43 feet.

A transferable Pursuit Protection Plan includes a five-year warranty on the hull and deck structure, plus a two-year limited warranty on other components and systems.

### PURSUIT S 378 SPORT

There's no need to make the tough choice between fishability and luxury in a

large-format boat: Pursuit's S 378 Sport checks both boxes emphatically.

Blue-water-bound with a 12-foot beam and a 22-degree deadrise, the S 378 Sport reaches those destinations swiftly ahead of standard triple Yamaha XTO 425 outboard engines.

The boat has a total of 10 stainless-steel rod holders, a standard lighted livewell (the second one that 27 percent of survey respondents require is available within a Fishing Package option), undergunwale rod storage, two fish boxes, and the lockable rod storage requested by 26 percent of respondents. Also available are outriggers, hardtop rocket launcher and additional rod holders.

An electrically activated entertainment center moves into place at the touch of a button, otherwise poised out of the

way for hassle-free fishing. It features Corian accents, faucet and sink, grill, refrigerator/freezer, cutting board and more.

### PURSUIT S 428 SPORT

The all-new Pursuit S 428 Sport is the largest and most powerful Pursuit ever—massive at nearly 44 feet long and 13 wide, it is the flagship of Pursuit's center-console Sport series.

Even the range, capacity and power of the S 428 Sport are all big: fuel capacity of 547 gallons feeding a quartet of Yamaha 425 XTO outboards. Top speed is over 59 mph, with cruising speed 37 mph at 4,000 rpm.

The S 428 Sport boasts an industry-first mezzanine seat module that power-slides aft, beneath an oversize hardtop revealing a second row of helm seats. Bow seating, important to 40 percent of CC respondents, boasts the inclusion of hinged,







power actuated, forward-facing backrests that allow either reclining or cocktail seating at deck level.

Below, a spacious and tastefully designed cabin boasts yacht-quality features and abundant light.

Swimmers can deploy and reboard at an electrohydraulic hullside beach platform.

An optional second-station tower is accessed from ladders on either side of the cockpit.

For anglers—Pursuits are fishing boats, after all—12 rod holders are posted in the gunwale, transom and bow, plus there's undergunwale, undertop and cabin rod storage. Storage space abounds, as does cockpit room—among the top demands of 82 percent of CC respondents.

Three fish boxes include a 68-gallon refrigerator/freezer transom box and a pair

of in-floor boxes totaling 66 gallons, all draining overboard. Lighted and insulated transom livewells are acrylic-topped at port and starboard, which is good news for the 52 percent of offshore CC anglers who use live bait at least half of the time.

With freshwater capacity of 70 gallons, holding-tank capacity of 22 gallons, and diesel-generator-tank capacity of 24 gallons, the Pursuit S 428 Sport is ready for outings as big as it is. And that's big!

#### MORE INFO

[pursuitboats.com](http://pursuitboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Thoughtfully appointed with clever convertible mezzanine seating**

Massive amount of fishing space

### OWNERS SAY

**Great platform for fishing and watersports/cruising**

Love the durability, dependability in any weather/sea, and the way she runs through the water

**Takes the waves beautifully**

### BRAND SAYS

The Pursuit Sport Series takes the center-console boat to a whole new level

**Fish, cruise and entertain in unrivaled style and comfort**

### SPECS

#### S 378 SPORT

**LOA:** 40'5"

**Beam:** 12'

**Fuel Capacity:** 427 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 18,000 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 1,275

**Certifications:** NMMA

#### S 428

**LOA:** 43'9"

**Beam:** 13'

**Fuel Capacity:** 547 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 23,600 lb. with power

**Max HP:** 1,700

**Certifications:** NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED







## READER RESPONSE

*"GOOD RIDING, DRY, WITH  
TONS OF STORAGE"*



## Regulator Marine

In our survey, Regulator was among the handful of respected brands current boat owners were most likely to consider for their next purchase.

It's no wonder, with hand-built Lou Codega-designed hulls, their four components crafted and then polybonded, fiberglassed and foam-filled to create a single no-wood unit free of noise, creaking, soft spots, leaking, cracks and caulk. A boat ready for the brand's signature, "Offshore Life."

Standard are fiberglass hardtops, which 23 percent of offshore CC owners list as the most important convenience feature in a boat like theirs. Those hardtops welcome options such as Taco Grand Slam outriggers. Other options include Yamaha Helm Master EX controls that include autopilot, waypoint deceleration, and Multimode Set Point

to hold the boat in desired position.

### REGULATOR MARINE 31

One can arm this massive center-console with a pair of twin Yamaha 300s, but an exciting new option is dual Yamaha 425s, producing a top speed of 64 mph, making this the fastest boat in the swift Regulator fleet.

The helm is served by a factory-installed Garmin Offshore Package electronics suite to complement the Yamaha CL5 display. Seakeeper 2 gyroscopic stabilization is an option, controllable via the Garmin or CL5 displays. Seakeeper is sought by 32 percent of those surveyed.

Helm-seating and tackle-center options include a new 3X Deluxe Mezzanine Tackle Center, with rear-facing seating in addition to twin

forward-facing console seating.

Angling is enabled by the 31's massive cockpit, with four gunwale-mounted rod holders that meet the demands of 33 percent of survey respondents; tackle center, in-deck fishbox and T-Top hold more.

Forward are three 200-plus-quart fish or gear compartments within seats, plus a 500-quart in-deck compartment that can also provide the lockable rod storage that 28 percent of CC survey respondents request. Within the transom are a 228-quart fish box and a 36-gallon livewell, which meets the needs of 69 percent of survey respondents.

### REGULATOR 28

First, in 1988, there came the original Regulator 26. Regulator stretched it a decade or so ago to create the Regulator 28 and, more recently, that new classic received a "refresh"





treatment including, among other touches, a fiberglass T-top with LED lights and integrated wraparound windshield, and Garmin 28 Offshore Premium electronics package.

Fishing is prominent in this boat's DNA, and that's clear at its 28 Tackle Center, with rigging area, rocket launchers, tackle storage and more. The standard T-top is ready for optional, additional rod holders, while the four gunwale-mounted holders meet the needs of 33 percent of survey respondents.

At the helm are bolstered seating and individual footrests. Underneath, a lined console is equipped with an electric head wiring access and rod racks.

The transom houses a 124-quart fish box and 25-gallon livewell. A flush-folding transom seat will please

the 44 percent of CC survey respondents who consider aft seating important.

Up front is an illuminated 456-quart fish/storage box, flanked by a pair of 169-quart insulated fish-box/dry-storage bins, also illuminated. A center in-deck dry-storage compartment offers 256 quarts more space, which could be the locked rod storage that 26 percent say they need.

A tuna door admits fishers and big fish, and is handy for diving.

Forward seating with flip-up backrests, plus forward console seating for two, will please the 40 percent of our center-console survey respondents who called bow seating important.

**MORE INFO**  
[regulatoremarine.com](http://regulatoremarine.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

#### Cockpit and forward SunShade options

Stand-up head with rod storage on the 31

### OWNERS SAY

#### The ride in rough seas is fantastic

Well-laid-out boat; comfortable in the water

### BRAND SAYS

#### Tested against in the conditions of the Outer Banks

Maximum versatility

When nothing is moving beneath your feet, you know you are on a boat built to handle the high seas

### SPECS

#### 31

LOA: 31'4"

Beam: 10'4"

Fuel Capacity: 300 gal.

Dry Weight: 10,800 lb.  
with power

Max HP: 850

Certifications: NMMA

#### 28

LOA: 27'8"

Beam: 9'5"

Fuel Capacity: 219 gal.

Dry Weight: 9,480 lb.  
with power

Max HP: 600

Certifications: NMMA

EXCLUSIVELY POWERED







## Robalo Boats

**R**obalo has 50-plus years of boatbuilding experience, crafting each fishing vessel in a 1.2-million-square-foot production facility in Nashville, Georgia, which is the birthplace of their Kevlar-reinforced hulls in a Hydro-Lift design that produces swift times-to-plane, top speeds, thrifty fuel efficiency, and smooth rides. The variable deep-V hulls split waves and track straight, while an extended running surface adds stability. High free-board creates deep cockpits.

Robalo fabricates its own hardtops, storage-compartment lids, dash consoles, doors and interior components, including seating made with top-of-the-line 37-ounce performance marine vinyl with a 10-millimeter top-coat for stain resistance and UV protection. The company installs stainless-steel hardware, loom-wrapped wiring, triple O-ring waterproof electrical connectors, and stainless-steel rub rail.

### ROBALO R360

Robalo Boats' new R360, the company's biggest ever, blends

luxury and fishing features atop a stepped hull designed by marine architect Michael Peters.

Three seats with flip-up bolsters face the helm, with its full suite of electronics, including Simrad dual 16-inch color displays, radar, autopilot, VHF and sonar. Control is by Yamaha Helm Master EX steering system with autopilot and joystick.

A large fiberglass hardtop has an opening skylight and electrically activated rod-holder frame that brings rocket launchers into easy reach. There's a premium JL audio system, and underwater lighting is a switch-flip away.

The console interior, accessed via portside door, has a headroom height of 78 inches, with berth, porcelain head, vanity, sink and faucet, plus racked storage for four tuna sticks.

Eight shotgun rod holders on the transom and six more in gunwales nearby generously exceed the needs of 91 percent of center-console anglers. Twin 30-gallon insulated and clear-lidded livewells will please 96 percent of CC respondents.

A transom door, in addition to port and starboard cockpit entry doors, welcomes passengers aboard, and makes it easy to drag a big fish to the deck and slide it into one of the pair of 100-gallon in-floor cockpit pump-out fish boxes.

Fishing done, there are port and starboard lockable rod-storage compartments, important to 26 percent of offshore CC respondents; for cleanup, there's a raw-water washdown and freshwater transom shower.

### MORE INFO

[robalo.com](http://robalo.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

Abundant storage throughout

Generous rod holders and rod storage

#### OWNERS SAY

I like everything about my [Robalo] boat

Comfortable for family fun trips and fishing trips

Nice fishing platform

#### BRAND SAYS

A world-class fishing boat

Cutting-edge technology with timeless styles

#### SPECS

LOA: 36'6"

Beam: 11'4"

Fuel Capacity: 350 gal.

Dry Weight: 14,000 lb. with power

Max HP: 1,200

Certifications: NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



Rugged but comfortable, the 36 CC has a wide, protected helm, for a full navigation suite.



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teams of  
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**800-448-7360** [nationalseminarseries.com](http://nationalseminarseries.com)





## Scout Boats

**S**cout luxury sport-fishing boats span styles from center-console, dual-console and inshore/bay-boat models, and range from 17 feet to 53 feet—the latter an exciting full 11 feet longer than was true last year!

Proud of its superior fit-and-finish; best-in-class strength-to-weight ratio; fully finished compartments, lids and doors; and more than 30 years of family ownership and operation, Scout has also built a reputation for being first to market with innovations. Those include the company's patented bow camera, and an optional articulating rocket launcher that works in unison with a SureShade retractable aft awning, both electronically actuated.

Epoxy infusion utilizing carbon fiber/E-glass, used in Scout's 530, 420 and 380 LXF model (38- to 53-foot) hulls, is a process borrowed from the aerospace industry. It provides a rigid hull with more strength and stability at a lower overall weight. Models from 33 to 35 feet are also created using epoxy-infused E-glass.

### SCOUT 530 LXF

Scout calls its new 530 LXF a "mega center-console." Two years in development, it's a jaw-dropping 53 feet, 5 inches long, and ready to carry four or five powerful Yamaha or Mercury outboards.

Beam is 14 feet, 8 inches, stretching to 17 feet, 6 inches when electronically actuated dual beach platforms are extended port and starboard for entertainment space or swimming access.

Standard are a Seakeeper 6 gyro stabilizer, glass helm enclosure, cockpit island, generator, air conditioning, heat, electric sliding sunroof, and heated helm seats. At the helm is a Garmin 24-inch MFD touchscreen, with a 12-incher in the overhead helm.

The boat can be configured into 21 comfortable seating areas throughout the boat, several with tables. The helm area seats seven. (Only 16 percent of boats in our survey seat eight or more.)

Below deck is a master stateroom with a large berth, enclosed head, shower room, galley,

a convertible single and fixed aft double berth, hanging closet, and central vacuum system.

For anglers, seven shotgun rod holders across the transom stand ready, plus more mounted in cockpit gunwales. Rods stow beneath the cabin's master-stateroom berth as well as in-deck. Two 30-gallon livewells will meet the stated needs of 96 percent of center-console survey respondents, while a pair of aft fish boxes awaits catches.

### MORE INFO

[scoutboats.com](http://scoutboats.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

Medley of rodholders, livewells and tackle storage makes it tournament ready

Flexible power options

### OWNERS SAY

Style, great riding, fun to fish on

Very comfortable offshore

### BRAND SAYS

Yachtlike center-console masterpiece on so many levels

An on-the-water entertainment platform

### SPECS

LOA: 53'5"

Beam: 14'8"

Fuel Capacity: 875 gal.

Dry Weight: 26,500 lb. plus power

Max HP: 2,250

Certifications: NMMA

OPTIONALLY POWERED



The wide beam accommodates a large helm station and centered entry to the cabin below.

**STRESS FREE DOCKING  
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#### **True Positioning Control**

Mounting directly to the outboard creates a "Steerable Thruster" for superior rotational performance and lateral control of the entire boat. Eliminates the need for a bow thruster on all outboard-powered boats.

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Attaches directly to any single, dual or multiple engine setup on boats up to 50'. By mounting above the motor's cavitation plate, our compact design means no drag or handling issues at any speed.

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The complete kit is a perfect DIY project, and can be installed in only a few hours right at the dock. Our wireless joystick eliminates wire runs to the helm, and includes the Sideshift remote wireless key fob that puts precision control in the palm of your hand.

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Heavy-duty water cooled motor and 8" aluminum propeller provides the quiet, powerful responsiveness you've come to expect from all Sideshift thruster systems. Available color-matched to most outboards in Phantom Black, Pearl White and Yamaha Gray/Blue.

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## Sea Born Boats

**S**ea Born center-console, bay and offshore boats 21 to 28 feet long are manufactured in a 90,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art production facility in Blackshear, Georgia.

The 27-year-old company says buyers of its boats spend as much time cruising and sandbar hopping as fishing, and so it makes sure those boats serve multiple roles—and offer plenty of value.

It also makes a point of making boat shopping simple by packaging models and options in familiar, carlike offerings to reduce confusion and make comparisons more meaningful for shoppers.

### SEA BORN LX26 CC

At the helm of the LX26 Center Console, introduced in spring 2020 and Sea Born's newest and largest CC, captain and companion enjoy a two-position leaning post that converts into a captain's-style chair with backrest.

The console features a distinctive black-glass dashboard

with Simrad touchscreen display and stereo. Overhead is a standard hardtop with a massive wired electronics box, lights and outrigger brackets.

The beamy bow nestles U-shaped seating demanded by 40 percent of respondents looking for a center-console. Removable backrests aim passengers forward comfortably, and stow for an open fishing deck.

A divided SeaFreeze super-insulated cooler is housed beneath the cushioned lounge at cockpit front (or it can be plumbed as a third livewell).

In the cockpit is a portside dive/tuna side door, while a transom door accesses a swim platform and ladder. Grab rails throughout boost safety and comfort.

Four rod holders mounted in the gunwales and five more in the transom exceed the eight that satisfy 85 percent of offshore CC survey respondents. Eight rocket launchers line the hardtop, with four more at the leaning post, and there's undergunwale storage for six rods. Aft, a rounded 20-gallon

baitwell is topped by a clear plexiglass lid; a compartment beneath the aft bench can be plumbed to become another, to please the 27 percent of respondents who say they need a second livewell.

XSF Sport Fishing and XLT Luxury touring packages bundle options; individual options include electronics, display and seating upgrades, as well as autopilot, joystick, toilet with tank, light bars and Grand Slam outriggers.

### MORE INFO

[seabornboats.com](http://seabornboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

Standard rod holders, racks and storage are abundant

Versatile bow seating and casting platform

#### OWNERS SAY

Great storage space

#### BRAND SAYS

Modern style and best-in-class value

Already a classic in looks and durability

#### SPECS

LOA: 26'6"

Beam: 9'10"

Fuel Capacity: 135 gal.

Dry Weight: 5,500 lb. plus power

Max HP: 500

Certifications: ABYC

Sea Born's deep-V cleaves waves, while its wide chines improve lift and at-idle stability.

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## Sea Cat Boats

**S**ea Cat merged the best of a bay boat and an offshore catamaran, creating the Sea Cat 260 Hybrid.

There is more than 100 years' combined experience in building high-performance offshore-racing boats under their roof, and they use a lamination schedule formulated by one of the industry's top naval-engineering firms.

### SEA CAT 260 HYBRID

Catamaran hulls come in pairs, but so do other features in the Sea Cat 260 hybrid: two fuel tanks of 60 gallons each, two livewells at 25 gallons per, as well as a pair of Suzuki outboards—up to 600 hp combined—each served by its own fuel tank and battery.

We drove one, and the ride is exemplary. Draft is a shallow 14 inches, ideal for bay fishing while using a bow-mount trolling motor. It planes easily on one of its dual outboards and is happiest in a brisk chop, ably sliding through it, giving the passengers a terrific ride. Then while fishing, it's as steady as a Falcon 9 landing barge.

It has at least two distinctive skill sets too: fishing inshore or heading offshore. Of survey respondents, 77 percent fished inshore species in the previous year, 54 percent offshore. That's a substantial overlap.

An aft foldaway seat meets the needs of 44 percent of offshore CC anglers. It's flanked by a pair of lighted 25-gallon pressurized livewells, enough to please 96 percent of those surveyed. Six gunwale-mounted rod holders match or exceed what 68 percent need.

The massive bow fishing platform tops cavernous storage compartments. In-deck fish boxes in wide passages between helm and gunwale are 7 feet long. One can become a rod locker with an added rack; the other can be divided for more-efficient ice use.

Fishing-friendly options include a fiberglass T-top, custom helm seating housing a custom tackle station, a (third) forward livewell, rod-locker seating with backrest, additional rod holders and T-top rocket launchers, and Lleboc bow cushions and

bolsters, for the 40 percent who call it important in a CC fishing boat. Other options include MinnKota factory-installed trolling motor, Wet Sounds speakers, and Garmin or Simrad electronics.

With the twin Suzuki 300 hp motors that Sea Cat recommends, the 260 Hybrid tops out in the mid-60s mph.

### MORE INFO

[seacatboats.com](http://seacatboats.com)  
(228) 206-4042



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

**Massive and flexible storage for fish and gear**

Top-quality hardware, hinges, latches and cleats

**Good fuel efficiency for long range with dual Suzuki outboards**

#### OWNERS SAY

There is a place for everything, and everything is in its place

#### BRAND SAYS

**A dream come true for everyone involved**

A unique hybrid

#### SPECS

**LOA:** 26'

**Beam:** 8'6"

**Fuel Capacity:** 120 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 4,900 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 600

The wide beam accommodates dual navigation displays. Wiring below is organized and secure.

# DON'T LET THIS



# TURN INTO THIS

Where cause of death was known, 79% of fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those drowning victims with reported life jacket usage, 86% were not wearing a life jacket. \*

If not for yourself, always wear your life jacket for the ones that love you!

\* source: 2019 U.S. Coast Guard Report



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.





## Sea Fox Boats

**S**ea Fox describes its boats—center-, side- and dual-console—as “family-friendly in the bow, fisherman-friendly in the stern.”

That’s evident in sumptuous bow layouts, and fisherman friendly cockpits. Between them are well-appointed, visually appealing helms.

Paired with Yamaha outboard power, Sea Fox boats 20 feet and longer are equipped with Yamaha Command Link digital gauges.

### SEA FOX 268 COMMANDER

The Sea Fox 268 Commander’s Carolina-style bow flare provides a smooth, dry ride in big water.

Bow seats, important to 40 percent of survey respondents, feature curved cushions and foldout-bolster backrests atop storage/fish boxes. A deck compartment houses a 5-gallon bucket. Forward of the console is a coffin box, with a lounge on top.

The 268 Commander anchor system is optionally windlass-powered with a through-stem anchor davit. A standard Ultima

hardtop has recessed LED spreader lights, storage boxes, stereo and speakers, and reinforced pads for dual antennas and radar. Taco outriggers are optional but easy to mount in the pre-molded pads.

The new black acrylic dash has space for two 10-inch displays—more than the single smaller display 44 percent of offshore CC boats have. Garmin electronics are optional.

The helm seat/leaning post has a backrest and flip-up bolsters. Upgrade to a family-friendly pair of deluxe bucket seats with armrests, or a fishing-minded tackle center.

Within the console is a portable toilet, sink with countertop, and dedicated dive-tank storage.

Aft is a bench/trunk seat atop bilge access. There’s a side door for boarding and hauling fish. A walk-through transom gate accesses a telescoping ladder, between them a beach anchor or cooler compartment.

Two in-floor insulated fish boxes drain overboard.

Aft, a 30-gallon pressurized aquarium livewell—a single one satisfies 69 percent of center-console anglers—has a handy bait net-storage compartment adjoining it.

Four gunwale-mounted cockpit rod holders are standard, and there are five more on the transom, seven rocket launchers on the hardtop, four on the leaning post, plus starboard gunwale rod storage.

### MORE INFO

[seafoxboats.com](http://seafoxboats.com)



### Survey Says:

#### ON TARGET

**Freshwater and raw-water washdown at midship to reach either end**

Generous appointments of rod holders, rocket launchers and racks

#### OWNERS SAY

**I can fish anywhere on the boat safely**

Large livewell, storage space, range and fishability

**Good family boat**

#### BRAND SAYS

The finest boats for the fairest price

**A unique blend of fishing-/family-friendly options**

#### SPECS

**LOA:** 26'

**Beam:** 9'3"

**Fuel Capacity:** 140 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 5,250 lb. plus power

**Max HP:** 400

OPTIONALLY POWERED



Sea Fox pays close attention to family comfort in its line of fishing boats.

---

# Epic Performance Endless Fun

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The Century Boats 30 Express delivers a smooth, stable, solid ride for inshore and offshore adventures.



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BOATS

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## Yellowfin Yachts

**Y**ellowfin Yachts founder and president Wylie Nagler listens to his customers. They asked for a bigger boat; he's launched a 54-foot center-console. They wanted a midsize boat that can perform a variety of tasks; he built a 26-foot hybrid. They ask and Nagler delivers.

Whichever custom-built boat one selects from an impressive Yellowfin lineup, from a 17-foot skiff to that 54-foot CC, Nagler pledges personal responsibility for standout quality. Every Yellowfin features the highest-grade materials and delivers a product skillfully assembled for the harsh demands of saltwater fishing.

Built in Sarasota, Florida, Yellowfin boats nonetheless clearly show their design influences in their wide flares and high bows. They snap onto plane on stepped hulls.

### **YELLOWFIN 54 OFFSHORE**

Yellowfin's biggest boat ever by 12 solid feet, the all-new 54 Offshore, the company says, "raises the bar in terms of what buyers can expect from a center-console boat." What won't change is the level of stepped-hull performance that has become synonymous with the brand.

Power options include quad and quint outboards which, along with a 900-gallon fuel capacity, provide the ability and range to reach the bluewater big ones—and at speeds of 60-plus mph.

A hardcore fisher, the 54 Offshore doesn't skimp on comfort touches. Beneath the console, a spacious cabin area houses a full queen berth, fully equipped kitchenette, wraparound seating that converts to a bed, along with a head, sink and shower

with stand-up headroom.

The helm seats four before a massive dash that can support three 24-inch displays. Behind the helm seats, a sumptuous bench—atop storage and mechanicals—provides more forward-facing seating.

Handrails provide gunwale security, and racks port and starboard hold five dive tanks each. A gyro stabilizer is optional. Forward seating is built-in, with a space at the bow between them to make fish-fighting easier.

Yes, this boat remains all about fishing, and proves it with aft livewell capacity totaling 150 gallons, installed as one massive well or divided into two 75-gallon tanks. That clever arrangement is a crowd-pleaser—69 percent of respondents said that they needed just one livewell, but 27 percent wanted a second to keep bait separated (52 percent





of offshore CC anglers say that they use live bait at least half the time).

Six transom-mounted rod holders meet or exceed the needs of 68 percent of survey respondents, with more holders circling the boat's gunwales.

A door at starboard provides access to crew, passengers and, in keeping with this boat's purpose, big fish; it adjoins a transverse 800-quart fish box in the cockpit sole. A massive in-deck compartment forward provides storage for fish or gear.

## YELLOWFIN 26 HYBRID

Some boats have a single focus, but others, known as hybrids, are designed to excel at a variety of tasks. Yellowfin's 26 Hybrid, with features of both the company's larger offshore center-consoles and

its legendary bay boats, is a splendid example.

With freeboard higher than a true bay boat but lower than an offshore CC, the 26 Hybrid can shift from fishing a shallow bay for redfish to running well offshore for such large pelagic species as tuna. Fish-box capacity is appropriately generous.

The 26 Hybrid's livewell options match the needs of hardcore live-bait enthusiasts. Other choices include four leaning-post designs, T-tops (Key West, hardtop or soft-top) and second station, forward and/or aft seating and bolsters, and swim platforms. Its single or twin outboards are mounted on standard jack plates.

**MORE INFO**  
[yellowfin.com](http://yellowfin.com)



## Survey Says:

### ON TARGET

**Custom-built to owner specs and wishes**

Both fishing-focused and comfortable

### OWNERS SAY

**Most comfortable ride around**

Fast and fuel efficient; great hull design

**Best ride**

### BRAND SAYS

Serious fishing platform

**Unmatched attention to detail**

### SPECS

#### 54 OFFSHORE

**LOA:** 54'

**Beam:** 15'

**Fuel Capacity:** 900 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 28,000 lb. with power \*

**Max HP:** 3,000

#### 26 HYBRID

**LOA:** 26'

**Beam:** 8'8"

**Fuel Capacity:** 118 gal.

**Dry Weight:** 5,000 lb. with power \*

**Max HP:** 450

OPTIONALLY POWERED



\*approximate weight





**GOD DOES NOT CHARGE TIME SPENT FISHING** against a man's allotted life span, says an old American Indian proverb. So, for immortality's sake, a boat is cheap. A well-built fishing boat is cheaper still and, it's no wonder, as the world faced its mortality in the 2020 pandemic, boats sailed out of inventory and into the hearts of families.

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