



Top Shelf

Sailfish have earned a reputation for tough, big-volume cats, many of which are serving time in marine-rescue fleets. They have recently introduced two new boats aimed right at offshore anglers. John Ford reports on the larger of the two – the 6.3m Shelf Runner.

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Cats have a deserved reputation for their soft ride and stability at rest and Sailfish have been producing larger-size aluminium catamarans from their factory in Ballina, NSW, for many years. Most sales are handled through Gavan Daly and Ashley Faraj, partners in Webbe Marine in Sydney. Their boats have met the needs of an affluent market, but let's face it, not all of us have mega bucks to throw at our favourite pastime. As Gavan explained, he was getting lots of inquiries for a smaller version from people who liked the cat concept, but wanted something more easily handled and at a lower price.

Sailfish decided to introduce trailerable boats that would appeal to the broader fishing community, and so the new Shelf Runner and Reef Runner were born. As the names imply, the Shelf Runner is the larger and more offshore-orientated of the two. At 6.3m LOA and 1850kg many vehicles can easily tow this boat. Because of the cat's design it has much more room than a similar-sized monohull, as it carries its beam all the way forward. It has a very imposing look on the trailer for a 6m boat – the deep, wide bows and twin motors make a really strong statement.

Once on board the feeling of space is immediately noticeable. Entry is easy from the stern walkway between the motors to a large cockpit

area. Here space is maximised by placing the helm as far towards the bow as possible. The helm has two pedestal seats with the driver's on a storage bin, while the passenger's seat lifts to reveal a plumbed livebait tank. A bimini covers the helm area and comes with clears. The cockpit is uncluttered, with high-sided decks making it an ideal fishing platform.

The design and list of standard features adds up to a drive-away package with everything needed for offshore fishing. First, its aluminium construction is strong and practical – the self-draining deck can be easily cleaned and the metal construction withstands the rough and tumble of heavy-duty fishing and trailering. Additionally, the cockpit space and the cat's stability are suited to fighting fish in rough weather. Twin motors add safety and make manoeuvring very easy – it will turn in its own length, and for slow trolling you can run on a single motor. The walkway between the motors is ideal for getting right to the back of the boat to fight fish and keep lines away from the motors.

COMPLETE PACKAGE

Sailfish have put together an impressive list of standard features. These include a rocket launcher, bimini, Garmin GPSMAP 750S colour sounder/GPS, Fusion stereo, VHF radio, livebait tank, Autex floor

carpet, big anchor well, bolster seats, rod storage and lock-up cabin.

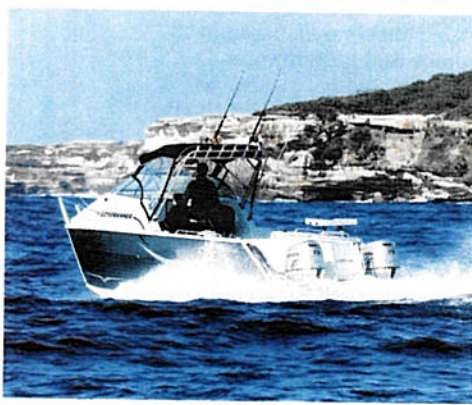
While the boat comes as a complete package, there is a choice of bow and transom layout. The test boat came with a cuddy cabin, but a walk-through bow is available. The cuddy has storage across the width of the bow and the walk-through allows easier anchoring and boarding. Both have space for a chemical toilet to be fitted. The stern has the choice of the walk-through with transom cut out or a full transom with a step over to the walk-through.

We took the Shelf Runner for a run across Botany Bay and out to sea on a day that gave us flat bay conditions with a 1.5m swell and 12kt wind-chop offshore. The boat got moving very quickly, and the dual throttles were well-placed forward of the driver on the dash. The driving position is comfortable from either a standing or sitting position and all-round vision is good. We got to a maximum 33kts with the twin 70hp Honda 4-strokes at 5800rpm – they are smooth and willing right through the rev range. There is none of the metallic resonance heard in some aluminium hulls, and the boat had no discernible rattles or shakes. At 4000rpm we achieved a fast cruise of 23.5kts from the easily driven hull. The motors emit a wonderful 4-stroke growl, but at no stage is the noise too loud to impede conversation.

“The Sailfish Shelf Runner is a well-built, rugged boat.”



SPEC CHECK



SAILFISH SHELF RUNNER

PRICE AS TESTED

\$94,990

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Six-rod rocket launcher, plumbed livebait tank, Garmin sounder/GPS, cutting board, EPIRB, VHF radio and more.

OPTIONS FITTED

None

GENERAL

Material: Alloy catamaran 5mm hull, 3mm sides and cabin

LOA: 6.3 metres

Beam: 2.45 metres

Weight BMT: 1850kg

CAPACITIES

People: 7

Berths: nil

Fuel: 2 x 140 litres

ENGINES

Make/model: Honda 75 (x 2)

Type: EFI 4-stroke SOHC

Rated hp: 75hp

Displacement: 14.96 litres

No. Cylinders: Four

Weight (ea): 163kg (L-type)

Gearbox ratio: 2.33:1

Propeller/s used for test: 19-inch x 13.3/8-inch

Max Rec hp: 75hp

Min Rec hp: 65hp

SUPPLIED BY

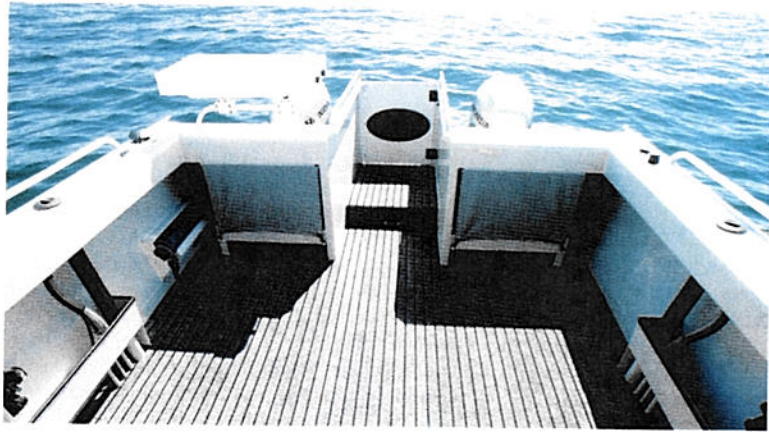
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There is a definite feel from a cat that is different to a monohull. This is particularly noticeable in the way it turns and rides over waves. The twin hulls have a tendency to lean out in turns and this can feel a little unusual at first. It's like the difference between a car and a motorbike. A catamaran, like a car, has two tracks with the outside one keeping things upright. It leans out in a turn. However, a monohull, like a bike, has one track and needs to lean in to keep balance. That said, the Shelf Runner handles well and any lack of nimbleness in turns is made up for in its knife-edge ride over waves and stability at rest.

CUSHION OF AIR

Heading to sea into a short swell, we were able to easily sit on 25kts. The air between the hulls acted like a cushion as the boat settled over waves. It makes for a soft ride and it is possible to keep up good progress without it being uncomfortable. Across the waves and down-sea the boat handled the conditions well. In a following sea, the big volume up-forward kept the bows from digging in, with no tendency to broach even when driven hard. Spray was pushed wide of the boat to keep things dry on board.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Comes equipped with everything for fishing, including twin Hondas.
- Great fishability - roomy cockpit and access right out past the motors.
- Soft-riding hull and very capable offshore performance.
- Packs a lot of room into a boat that is easily towed and stored.
- Very stable at rest and can turn within its own length.

Multihull admirers will be pleased that Sailfish have filled a gap in the market for a smaller aluminium cat. The boat is filled with standard features usually found as options in other vessels, and the complete set-up accurately targets the dedicated angling community. The Sailfish Shelf Runner is a well-built, rugged boat that should find a proud place among the list of classic fishing boats. 🎣

