

# SURTEES GAMEFISHER 5.8 NZ BAY FISHER BOAT

BY KEVIN POWER

**We have replaced our NZ Bay Fisher boat with the same model again ... well, nearly!!**

We had decided another sub-six-metre boat was the sweet spot for our requirements: easy to tow, enough room for 4, big enough to go out wide and reasonably economical.

We'd had such a good run with our last Surtees 5.8 Gamefisher and after looking at several other similar models we found the Surtees still ticked the most boxes for us, so we're stoked to have taken delivery of this upgraded new model. A thicker hull, additional fuel capacity and a raft of small detail changes will keep the model continuing to be one of New Zealand's best-selling boats. NZ Bay Fisher has customised the boat in several places to accommodate some of the latest fishing and navigation technologies that are now available for the trailer boat market - gear which we'll review over the course of the next 12 months.

## Hull

5.8m hardtop monohull with a flooding keel ballast system, rated for outboards from 100 - 150hp. Aluminium construction with 5mm bottom and 4mm sides - up from 4mm and 3mm respectively on the previous model. A fine entry and very small chines make the 5.8 Gamefisher arguably the softest-riding aluminium hardtop in its class. Traditionally, deep v hulls with little chines are unstable at rest, but Surtees gets around this with a flooding keel ballast system.

The welding on the new hull really impressed me as I appreciate fine workmanship and this is real craftsmanship standard - an absolute joy to look at.

## Watersnake GPSmart

Electric trolling motors are popular in the States and Australia and primarily utilised by flats boats fishing harbours and lakes, and sneaking up on fish in the shallows. However when Watersnake released a Saltwater GPS version capable of powering larger vessels it opened up a whole raft of fishing possibilities. The Watersnake GPSmart electric motor uses patented GPS technology to automatically lock your boat in position, like a virtual anchor; it can also track along a recorded route and cruise at a chosen speed in a set direction. This has transformed our fishing in so many ways ... it is simply fantastic and I can see this item becoming a common sight on trailer boats in the coming years.



## Thermal Imaging Camera

Raymarine T200 Thermal Imaging camera: This little beauty makes navigating at night, particularly in harbours, so much easier - picking up moored boats, markers and debris in the water with ease; you're finding your way by just looking at a screen. While it doesn't have the range of radar or radar's ability to track targets, it makes navigating at night safer and easier. A great add-on - or maybe an alternative to radar on a smaller vessel.

## Radar

Raymarine RD418 HD 4kw colour radar: This HD radar has the "bird function" which will allow us to search for bird life over a huge area, saving time and fuel while getting us quickly into the fishy zone.

## Outboard

Our last 5.8 Gamefisher was powered by a Yamaha F115 which was extremely economical and powerful enough - but with the heavier hull material and the addition of several hundred kilos of accessories the new boat is considerably heavier than our old one, so this time Yamaha's super-reliable F150 is our motor of choice with power, reliability and resale in mind. Initially we tried an 18 pitch prop in the Yamaha's new Reliance Series range but this was slightly over-propped, so we've swapped to a 17 pitch and found the sweet spot, with snappy out-of-the-hole performance and nearly 50mph at WOT (wide open throttle).

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## Electronics

We've really gone overboard with the electronics, courtesy of Raymarine ... we have a rig capable of exploiting a full range of fishing techniques, from jigging trout on the lakes to big game fishing at sea.



### Sonar

**Raymarine E9 MFD:** A touch-screen multifunction display which acts much like a smartphone to use, which means it's easy to select functions and change settings. It's the control and display centre for all the electronics on board, with an ultra-bright display that's easy to read in all light conditions.

**Raymarine Downvision CP100 Chirp Module:** provides x-ray-like images of the bottom, providing you with a clear picture of the structure you're fishing; it's particularly useful for all vertical forms of jigging, helping you place your jigs precisely.

The Raymarine CP450 Chirp Module connected to a 1kw transom mount transducer is a must for fishing the deep drop-offs and seamounts, giving superb bottom imaging at 500m and more.

**VHF Raymarine.**

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## Anchor Winch

We have upgraded to a **Stress Free drum-style anchor winch** as it has distinct advantages over a windlass-style auto anchoring system for a mid-sized trailer boat. A windlass system tends to jam when retrieving warp, due to insufficient drop in the anchor well; the rope builds up and jams underneath the windlass. The Stress Free drum system circumvents this problem by simply winding the line onto the drum while retaining the free-fall features of a windlass.

We will be reviewing the different gadgets over the upcoming issues

## Lighting

As is the norm now, **all lighting on the boat is LED** and supplied by Hella NZ. As we do lots of night fishing we have two spotlights mounted under the hardtop and LED strip lights under the gunwales to light up the cockpit for a well-lit work area. **Blue Seavision LED** underwater lights will help in attracting baitfish and squid. We have also specified Hella LED for our trailer and interior lighting as I had to replace some "no-name" brands on our last rig.



## Fit Out

**Ultraflex hydraulics** take care of the steering; the system costs a bit more than cable but is a must for ease of use and low maintenance.

**Locator Beacon:** A Rescue Me PLB was our choice over an epiRB this time around, as it's compact and can be used either on the boat or taken on hunting trips.

We opted for **twin Exalto wipers** for extra visibility.

The addition of **Ocean Blue outrigger brackets** and **Reel Rods telescopic outriggers** not only look good but free up all-important rod holder space while giving a wider lure spread.

Cockpit space is everything on a fishing boat, so we again opted for the **Surtees foldaway seat system**.

A **powerful deck wash system** has been installed for ease in keeping things clean while fishing - and it's great for making up an ice slurry.

**Twin inbuilt tuna tubes** are a new option for the 5.8 Gamefisher. They're out of the way, and are a neat way of keeping everything inboard while leaving the duckboard uncluttered. They're not cheap - but they're a worthwhile addition if you intend chasing game fish in the warmer months.

A **Live Bait Tank** is built into the walk-through transom.

## Dual Battery System.

This is a must for all boats with an array of electronics, particularly if you intend venturing beyond the harbour limits on a regular basis - as flat batteries are the most common cause of vessel breakdowns. We also have an additional two deep-cycle batteries up in the bow to power the 24v Watersnake GP Smart unit; these are separate from the rest of the electrics and are recharged after each trip with a CTEC 24v charger.



## First impressions of the new Surtees 5.8 Gamefisher.

The slightly thicker hull material definitely sits the boat down in the water and provides a more settled ride compared with the outgoing version, and is the main performance gain. There's extra storage in the cabin floor where previously it was part of the ballast chamber; this provides additional buoyancy in the bow when the flooding chamber is closed at rest. A raft of small detailed improvements and refinements include twin bollard cleats on the rear quarters, a new see-through cabin hatch - which replaces the old aluminium plate version - and a new trailer tie-down system. As I mentioned earlier in the article we will be reviewing the different gadgets over the upcoming issues of **NZ Bay Fisher**, and we also plan a long term review of the Surtees once we have plenty more hours under our belt.



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