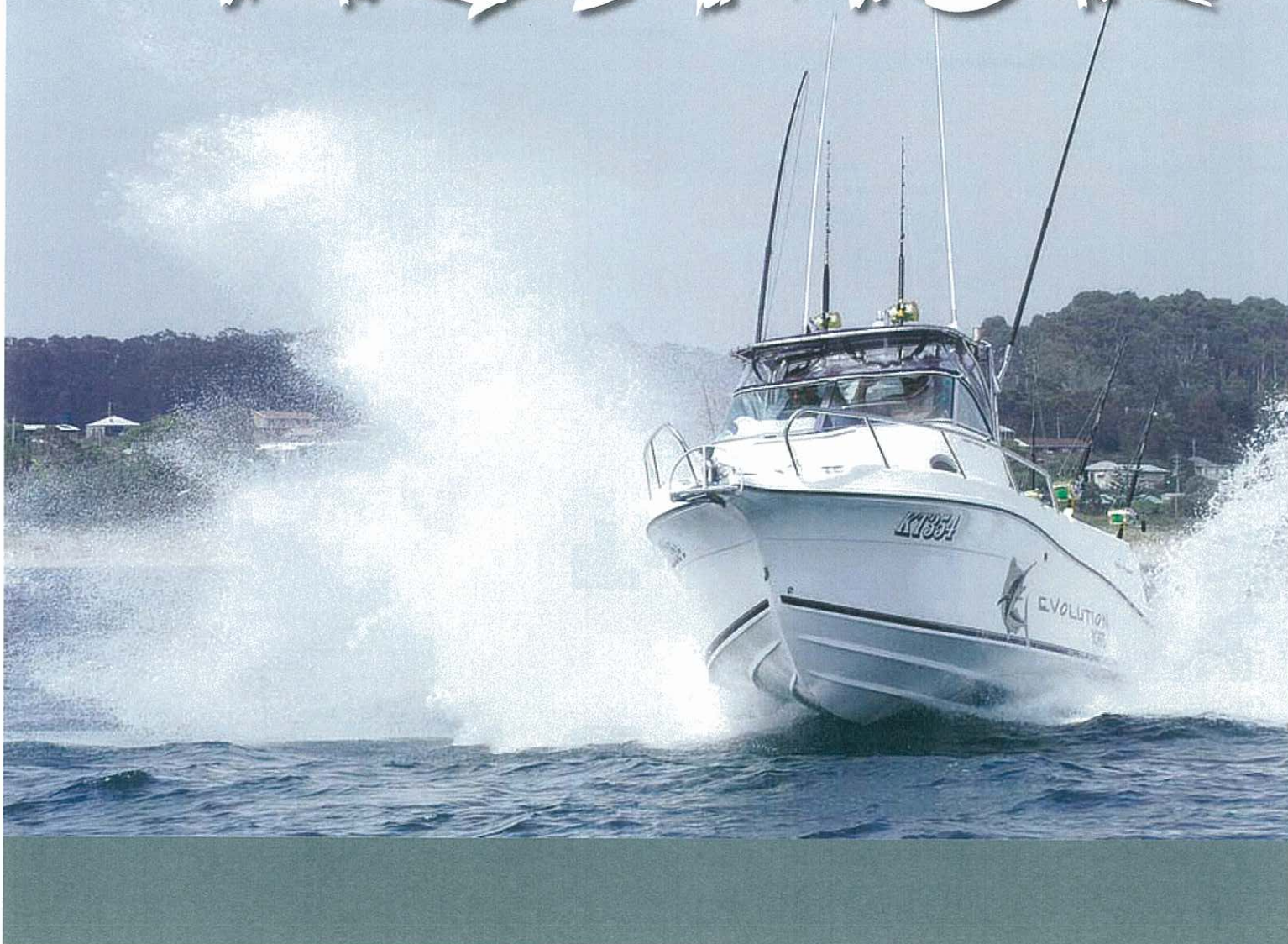
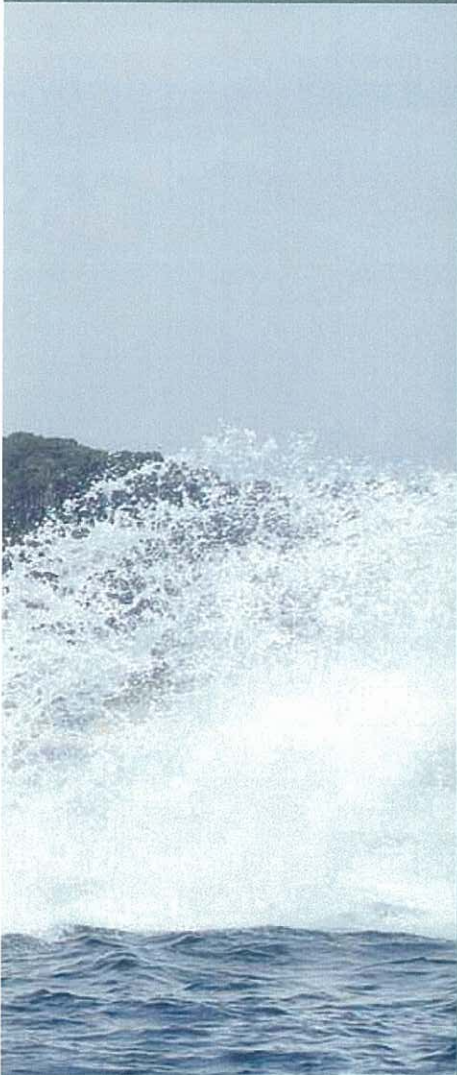


# Apex

# PREDATOR





AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHY: RICK HUCKSTEPP

Rick Huckstepp tests the Evolution 650 Predator and finds a boat that ticks all the boxes. It's kitted-out for gamefishing, it fits on a trailer and its price tag and fuel consumption will give you a pleasant surprise.



*Above: Plumbed tuna tubes and a viewing panel on the livebait tank are nice additions. Below: The step-up walkway to the bow.*



Take a glance at the many game and light-tackle tournaments conducted around this country and with the exception of a few, the majority of the participating boats arrive there on trailers. Very few have been manufactured specifically for gamefishing. This boat has.

The Evolution 650 Predator is only the second model out of the Victorian-based factory of PM Marine Manufacturing, but it comes with good credentials. Paul Junginger has been involved in the manufacture of fibreglass boats for 19 years, and prior to branching out on his own he was the manufacturing foreman at Streaker Boats – another Victorian company synonymous with quality trailerable fibreglass vessels.

Initially PM Marine Manufacturing specialised in fibreglass boat accessories such as bait boards, seat boxes and livebait tanks. They use the vacuum moulding method, which results in exceptional quality and is most likely the future in this style of manufacture due to its eco-friendly nature.

'Junger', as he is known to most, fishes extensively around the south-east coast of Victoria and also spends a lot of time at that southern NSW gamefishing mecca,

## SPEC CHECK

### EVOLUTION 650 PREDATOR

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$110,000

#### OPTIONS FITTED

Fridge, freshwater tank/sink/wash-down, auto pilot tuna tubes, outriggers, vertical rod racks

Priced from: \$99,000

#### GENERAL

Material: Fibreglass

Length overall: 7.2m

Length: 6.5m

Beam: 2.49

Deadrise: 21 degrees at transom

Weight: 1700kg hull only

BMT 2850kg dry

Tow vehicle: Nissan Patrol, Toyota Land Cruiser or larger

#### CAPACITIES

Fuel: 320lt

Freshwater: 60lt

People berthed: 2

People day trip: 7

Rec. max hp: 300

Rec. min hp: 225

#### ENGINE

Make and Model: Evinrude E-Tec 115hp x 2

Type: V4 Direct Fuel Injection 2-stroke

Weight: 170kg

Rated hp: 115 x 2

Displacement: 1726cc each

Gearbox ratio: 2.25:1

Propellers: Rebel 17-inch

#### SUPPLIED BY

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Factory 9-10, 254 Canterbury Road, Bayswater, Victoria.  
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Bermagui. He was heading there with the 650 Predator for the Australia Day long weekend fishing tournament, and it was the perfect opportunity to test this boat in the conditions it was designed for.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

My initial impression was one of a beamy boat, and this was aided by the fact that the sides of the aft end of the boat are vertical while others tend to slightly slope in at the gunwales. This continues to the stern, which is square rather than tapered in. It leaves you with a full beam of 2.5m and a great cockpit from which to fish.

Working from the bow, the anchor well has a gas-assisted hatch that houses a Stressfree winch holding 80m of rope and 10m of chain in an overly large locker. This is run over a sturdy bowsprit, which is manufactured in the top and bottom side of the hull. A SARCA anchor and its specific bow roller is installed and the chain and rope exits over a Teflon skid when it's deployed.

The hull has a deep leading forefoot on the keel line and sweeps up to flared gunwales on which heavy-duty 32mm bowrails are mounted surrounding a walk-around path about the cabin. This path allows foot-over-foot passage

and lets you get to the ground tackle if need be, or to the bow of the boat to fight a fish while your backside is parked on a rebate in the forward part of the cabin roof.

Access from the cockpit to the walkaround is easy via a moulded step in each corner of the outer cabin structure. The walkaround has a lip at its aft end and a drain to take water off the front section to the outside of the boat. There are three rebated cleats on the port and starboard gunwale for tying off fenders when hovering-to.

At the transom, the stern has been manufactured to take a single or twin-engine application. The test boat was fitted with twin Evinrude E-Tec 115hp engines, which are not available in a counter-rotating propeller configuration. A pair of Lectra Tabs was fitted and the rams are fully recessed into the transom of the boat, and the tabs themselves sat retracted in their own rebate on each side. This allowed for accessories to be fitted across the back of the boat without interfering with performance of the tabs. In this case, a smart pair of tuna tubes was mounted over one and on the other side a berley bucket was fitted to the side of the engine rack. The hull features a planing plank of just over 200mm width at the transom and

tapers to a point in line with the rear of the cabin.

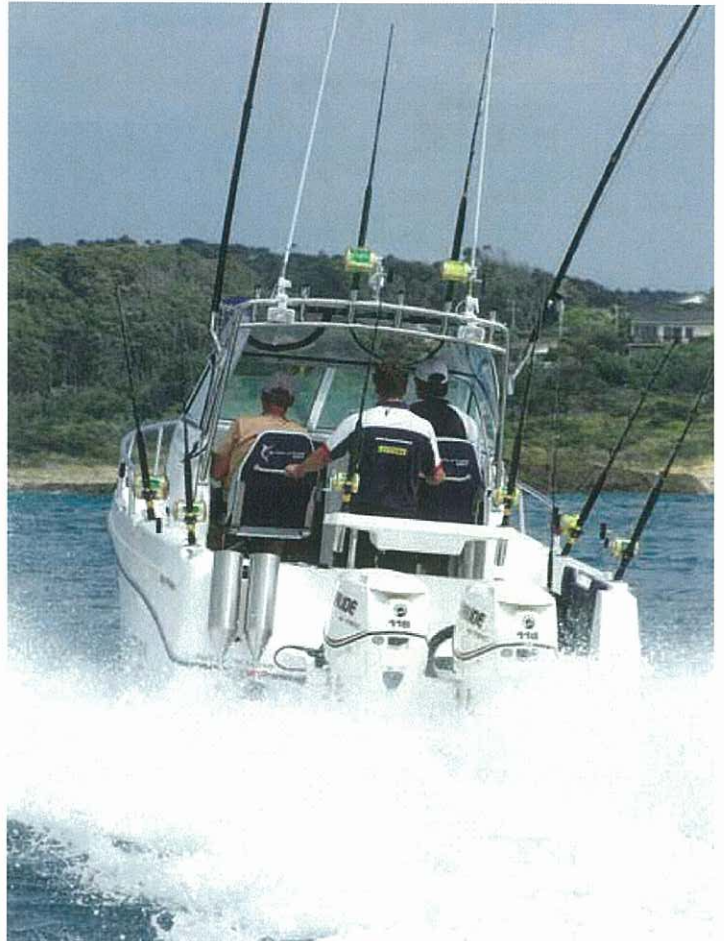
### CABIN

Inside the cabin, the starboard aft end has a galley unit moulded into the inner liner. It features a butane cooker and a small sink that is plumbed to the 60lt freshwater tank. Fitted into the face of this unit is an Isotherm refrigerator. This leaves enough room for about three people to sit on the berths with heaps of headroom above.

Two medium-sized adults could sleep here on the cushions with the infill in place. There is dry stowage under those cushions, beneath nylon hatch covers. The usual stowage space for gear is found behind the padded back rest and ventilation is available via the ceiling hatch or the two side windows that are fitted with stainless-steel flywire.

### HELM STATION

The helm is neatly laid out with BRP gauges up the starboard side of the dash and Furuno's Nav Net system flush-mounted in a purpose-designed area. A Furuno autopilot was also installed on the Predator along with Sea Star hydraulic steering. While no compass was fitted to this boat, a



“HEADING INTO THE SWELL AT SPEED, THE BOAT HULL PUSHED WATER OUT AND DOWN WITH VERY LITTLE SPRAY COMING ON TO THE WINDSCREEN.”

raised binnacle to mount one sat high above the electronics and out of the way.

In the raised deck between the seat posts, a flush hatch opens to a 120cm ice box that has insulation installed on the top liner. This and the foot well in the cabin both drain to the bilge.

All this sat behind a wrap-around windscreen that had hardened glass front panels and Perspex sides (on future models there will be hardened glass all round). Clears were fitted on the test boat and a sturdy canvas-top bimini with a rocket launcher at its rear provided plenty of shade. This entire assembly is hinged and can be quickly folded back into the cockpit for access under a low garage or to reduce fuel-slurping wind resistance when long-hauling on the highway.

### FISHING FEATURES

Reelax outriggers are fitted and illustrate the thought gone into the set-up of this boat. Tapered mounting blocks are installed under their bases to get the maximum reach and the correct angle when the ‘rigger is set.

Next to the spring-loaded pedestal seats for the helm and the passenger, rebates in the liner offer stowage for lure wraps and the like. An extra spot on the portside had a hinged

hatch where one can stow keys and a mobile telephone and also access the freshwater tank filler inside.

It would have been easier for the manufacturer to make straight side pockets in the cockpit, but Evolution have gone to the trouble of moulding a protruding fascia at the forward end of each side pocket. Inside that extra space they’ve fixed a stainless-steel vertical rod holder. The tubes are staggered and allow you to stow three gamefishing rods and reels or four smaller snapper-type outfits on each side. There are also horizontal racks at the back of and above each pocket – where gaffs, boat hooks or more rods and reels could be stowed and secured under elastic straps.

A freshwater hose sits retracted into the face of the starboard step to the walk-around, and with the outfits in the vertical racks, rinsing with freshwater at the end of the day is easily done on the way back to port.

The transom bulkhead is also well thought-out and has all the necessary padding for the upper thighs when fighting fish and also long, rebated hand rails on the inner edge of the coamings. A removable bait-station has a basin under the hinged, fibre cutting board, and a couple of light-tackle rods can be stowed in the additional rodholders.

The livebait tank in the port aft corner features a clear window so you can keep check on the inhabitants. In the face of this bulkhead there’s a drop-down lid that accesses a rack of tackle drawers. Another of these is on the starboard side under the walk-through transom. In future models this will have a gateway swinging on hinges and will be fully moulded and hollow with a rubbish bin inside.

Behind double doors sit the oil bottles for the engines (which are filled from caps in the top of the bulkhead) and the engine and house batteries and their isolator switches.

At the aft end of the deck there’s a hatch to access a wet stowage area that fits a Nally bin. A rear stopper prevents it sliding backwards into the bilge pumps and transducer. There’s also a wet box 1kW transducer installed here along with the bilge pumps and water pump. Through-hull fittings throughout the 650 Predator were all high-quality stainless steel.

### ON THE WATER

With the credentials checked out, it was time to hit the water and head wide of Tuross Canyons, some 40km north-east of Bermagui. The weather initially was good with a gentle swell running, which rose to about 2m



Left: A well laid out helm puts it all at your fingertips.  
 Above: Well crafted rod storage and gaff racks keep your tackle well organised.  
 Below: Twin doors reveal the battery compartment and isolator switches.



with a half-metre of sea on top. The dryness of this hull was immediately noticeable. Heading into the swell at speed, the boat pushed water out and down with very little spray coming on to the windscreen. With a following sea the boat tracked straight and did not show any nasty habits while cutting across the running sea. The boat could track easily with or without the aid of the autopilot.

After criss-crossing a lone patch of blue water among a sea of green, we managed a strike that soon became detached – but not before showing itself to be a blue marlin of around 120kg.

On the long trip home, the seas were not very friendly and wind was up to 20kt over the port forequarter. This didn't faze the Predator one bit and it churned through it at speed throughout the 39km back to Bermagui. At 4100rpm, with the GPS showing SOG at 27kt, the Evinrude 2-strokes performed faultlessly and smoothly with the minimum of noise – just as good as you would expect from a pair of 4-stroke engines. The BRP instrumentation showed fuel usage at 28lt/h per engine.

When trolling lures during this trip we ran at 7kts and 2000rpm and fuel consumption fell dramatically to an economical 6lt per engine per hour. On the next day out, dead-baits were skipped with only one engine running at 1500rpm and the fuel consumption for that application was 2lt/h. Not bad going in anyone's books, and comfortable fishing to boot.

These boats will be popular among those that do a lot of trailering around the coast following the gamefishing action. They are a very capable vessel in less than pleasant seas and provide a stable platform to fish from whether you are trolling a spread of lures or soaking a bait on the bottom while looking for a feed. 🐟

# EVOLUTION BOATS

INNOVATE NOT IMITATE



Introducing the all new EVOLUTION 650 PREDATOR

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