



Off the Trailer



Tough customer

Kiwi boat builder Surtees revamps one of its most popular models.

The Surtees 5.8 Gamefisher Hardtop isn't a brand new model – it's been around for a number of years and is one of the Kiwi company's more popular hardtop models, with Surtees building 10 every month.

Like all other Surtees models, the 5.8 comes with the company's famous ballasted keel system that, on this model, can hold an impressive 340lt of water. Open up the adjustable ballast gate when at rest and it makes the boat ultra stable and, once underway, it drains out. Or lock it in to add some extra weight to the boat during rougher conditions.

As with other Surtees boats I've tested, the 5.8 is designed to be non-pounding, stable and comfortable. Surtees says the smooth ride is the result of combining three innovative design features – the Surtees Non-Pounding Super Deep V Hull, the ability to carry water ballast in rough conditions and the Ultra Strengthened Deck System.

Surtees fully welds the stringers to the hull – they are not stitch-welded. The checkerplate floor is fully welded and gussets are all fully welded in. The strongest part of the boat is under the floor where you can't see it – if that doesn't move, the rest of the boat isn't going to move. Over engineered? You bet!

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Surtees knows that listening to its customers is a must, and when the 5.8 owners spoke, Surtees listened.

"We have always listened to our customers. In fact, you could say a number of our boats were designed with significant customer input," says Surtees Boats Managing Director, Phil Sheaff. "In the case of our 5.8, the market demanded a boat with a 5mm hull, which we feel now turns an already great-riding boat into an exceptional bluewater performer.

"The 5.8 retains all the attributes it's known for, such as seaworthiness, stability, and safety, but now we feel we've made it even better, taking these features to a new level.

"We haven't changed the hull shape of the 5.8 in any way. All we have done is upgrade it from 4mm to 5mm aluminium. New 4mm sides, upgraded from 3mm, now help the 5.8 to be even

By Freddy Foote



quieter on the water; the added weight further improving performance in rough water conditions.”

While, visually, the 5.8 remains largely the same, the model now features hydraulic steering and alloy rodholders as standard.

BUILT TO FISH

Once aboard and under the protection of the sizeable hardtop section, you immediately feel well-protected and the layout and configurations give you the feel of a much bigger boat. With a distinct focus on fishing, there is plenty of provision and amenity for a big day of action on the water.

The spacious cabin has plenty of room to store gear, with pockets along the sides and space under the V-berth bunks, which also house the optional electric-flush toilet. The large stand-through plexiglass hatch above provides access to the anchor locker, though anchoring can be done from the helm.

Our test boat came fitted with the optional adjustable pedestal seats – standard seating comes in the form of foldaway helm seats that



Above: The cockpit is big and roomy and has underfloor storage for wet gear or the day's catch.

Right: The flooding keel ballast system makes the 5.8 rock solid in the rough.

maximise cockpit space. Extra passenger seating comes in the form of movable seats that slide along the cockpit shelves and can easily be removed, while the battery compartment's hatch in the transom drops down to form a bench seat.

Aft, the cockpit boasts wide coamings featuring four recessed alloy rodholders and cupholders on each side that double as a handy place to hold your sinker when re-baiting lines.

An underfloor 150lt fuel tank leaves enough room for a sizeable storage compartment, which can be filled with water and drained.

Fishermen will love the walk-up-style transom. A large bait station is a prominent feature there, while boarding platforms on both sides of the outboard provide access into the cockpit, the port one featuring a sturdy drop-down ladder. A livebait tank is located underneath the low-profile walk-through in the port corner and the walk-through can be closed off with a drop-in door.

The conditions on our test day on Auckland's inner harbour were fairly choppy and perfect for boat testing. With the ballast weight captured underneath it really helped us push through choppier conditions. It also made the boat rock-solid and stable when at rest. Underway, you really feel the variable 19-degree fine-entry hull making short work of the choppy conditions and delivering an incredibly dry ride, largely thanks to the spray deflector chine.

At the helm, the seating position is quite comfortable, with the throttle controls within easy reach and a well-positioned footrest below.

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The dash is minimal, but practical, and has enough room above to mount your preferred electronics package.

The hull is rated for outboards from 100hp through to 150hp, with our test boat fitted with a new-generation Yamaha 115hp four-stroke outboard. For those who wish to use their 5.8 Gamefisher as a game fisher, a troll speed of 7 knots (13km/h) at 1200rpm will use just 5.3lt/h when powered by a Yamaha 115hp four-stroke outboard.


At a comfortable cruise speed of 22 knots (40.7km/h) at 4000rpm, it was consuming 17.7lt/h and, at wide-open throttle, it did 32 knots (59km/h) at 5500rpm and used 41.5lt/h.

At the time of our test, the Auckland dealer for Surtees, Andrew Carlson at Fishing Boats NZ, was still finding the optimum propeller set-up for the new Yamaha four-stroke. The 16K propeller fitted didn't quite hit the maximum rpm of 6000 that it should, but going to a 15in propeller should help the revs climb and allow the boat to hit around 35knots (64.8km/h) at wide open throttle.

Back at the ramp, the 5.8 has a clever catch system on the trailer that enables you to drive the boat up onto your submerged trailer and drive forward until the hook, built into the bow, catches the latch on the trailer.

I've always been very impressed by the build quality, attention to detail, and finish of every Surtees I've been on. The 5.8 Gamefisher is one

of the company's biggest sellers and it's easy to see why: it's well-appointed, has heaps of room, plenty of features (many of which come as standard) and offers an extensive options list for owners to customise their perfect vessel.

Overall it's easy to see why Surtees has amassed such a superb reputation on both sides of the Tasman. 

SPECIFICATIONS: SURTEES 5.8 GAMEFISHER HARDTOP

LOA:	5.98m
Beam:	2.26m
Deadrise:	19 degrees
Weight (dry):	580kg
Trailerable weight:	1235kg
Power:	100hp-150hp outboard
Fuel capacity:	150lt
Trailer:	Surtees
Price from:	NZ\$58,000 (AU\$60,000 plus freight)
Price as tested in New Zealand:	NZ\$72,000

For more information, contact: Surtees Boats, tel: +64 7 322 8461. Web: surteesboats.com. Test boat supplied by Fishing Boats NZ, tel: +64 9 443 0708. Web: fishingboatsnz.co.nz.

PREMIUM xtra

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Above: The Surtees 5.8 Gamefisher can be powered with 100hp through to 150hp outboards. Our test boat was powered by a new 115hp Yamaha four-stroke.