

Tabs 4800 Wildfisher Tested

By John Boon
Emu Park

I was truly excited to be contacted about the proposition of testing a Tabs Wildfisher, as I have seen a few of these bad boys zooming around our local waterways. There has been a fair bit of hype about these boats being the bee's knees, so I was really keen to put it through some rigorous testing.

Colin Brett from Barra Jacks Rockhampton, being the recent proud owner of a Tabs 4800 Wildfisher, was kind enough to put his hand up to be the guinea pig on this occasion. I quizzed Col about what he had purchased this type of boat for. His reply was that he wanted a boat that had good range, was comfortable and that was setup well to chase barra. He also wanted it to do some light coastal work as well.

Walking up to the boat sitting on the trailer my immediate reaction was that *this is a boat that would turn some heads*. A stylish, sleek design that would be sure to get the dedicated estuary fisherman drooling at the mouth. Sitting on a dual axle Redco trailer there is only one word that came to mind to describe first glance at the boat, motor, trailer setup and that would be "sexy". I was very excited to walk around the back of the boat to find it powered by a Suzuki four stroke. 140 horses would sure make you secure any loose items in the boat and make you sit on your hat. Whilst at the back of the boat I really liked the two large bung holes which is great for draining the water quickly when cleaning the boat (not so good if you forget to put in the plugs though) and the added piece of plate to mount the transducer on.

While we were having a look over Col's boat I turned around to notice the exact same boat rolling up

to the Cawarral Creek ramp. Col just winked at me as he had invited another good mate of his Todd Van Den Heuvel to also bring his 4800 Wildfisher down for a run as well. So we not only had one Wildfisher terrorising the waterways, but two.

As previously mentioned, the designated waterway that was chosen for the test would be Cawarral Creek which is near Emu Park, approximately 40km drive east of Rockhampton. We had a nice bright sunny day with a 10-15 knot forecast which would be ideal test conditions.

We launched the boats and brought them around to the floating pontoon for an internal investigation. Looking through the layout it was very obvious that these boats are setup as a tournament style boat. Casting decks on the front and the rear with a rod locker on one side and the side console on the other. The front casting deck was a full size deck which finished just under the gunnel providing plenty of room for two people to comfortably throw lures, or sunbake if you're that way inclined, and a third person could easily fish from the rear casting deck. Casting decks also create underfloor storage and the amount of space available under floor in the Wildfisher was truly amazing. The main underfloor storage was converted to fit a 100L esky in it (available as an optional extra) and the two smaller hatches towards the bow gave you access to the rest of the underfloor storage where things like anchors, rope and toolboxes could be stored. I personally would like to have seen some gas struts to secure those hatches once lifted as you either needed to fold them all the way over, hold them with one hand or get some assistance.

The rear casting deck had small hatches all over it providing more valuable space to store gear. With the amount of underfloor storage I



The Wildfisher is a very stable fishing platform for serious anglers.

believe tabs has worked very hard to make sure that there would be no requirement to have gear stored on the floor which means that driver and passengers are free to move around the boat without tripping over gear.

I grabbed my gear and stepped onto the bow of the boat. While I was moving around putting everything in its place I noticed that the Wildfisher didn't lean much at all. I even went over and stood on the gunnel on the same side as where Col was sitting and to say the lean was minimal would be an understatement. The stability on water would have to be one of the best I have ever been in. For a serious estuary fishermen this is absolute gold as you don't want that boat rocking and rolling when you have got one angler fighting a fish and the other chasing him around with the net.

The next test which I performed was comfort ability while travelling. This was my first trip in a tournament style boat so the seating arrangement was very different for me - it felt like you were almost sitting on the floor. Other boats of this size have taller consoles and higher sides, meaning that when you sit down it's like sitting on a normal dining room chair. It did take some getting used to. However, once we were under way I just lounged back and enjoyed the ride. The chairs themselves also need a mention - plenty of padding and very comfortable.

We were now traveling comfortably around the 4500rpm at approximately 60km/h. This was about what Col likes to call his *cruising speed*. I turned to him and said, "This is supposed to be a boat test isn't it?" And with those words Col punched it to WOT and all I can say is it got there in a hurry. We topped out at 5900rpm with a top speed of around 75km/h. I had a smile from ear to ear as that really is some great speed on the water and I was impressed with the overall handling from both hull and motor. The maximum horsepower rating for the 4800 is 150 and, as previously mentioned, Col had opted for the 140 Suzuki four stroke which, in my

opinion, was paired nicely to the hull.

We had made our way out to the mouth of the creek and were greeted by a 15 knot south-easter. We purposely pulled up in the chop to give the boats stability a bit more of test. We put the electric down and pulled the rods out to work a bit of timber. I was definitely impressed with the stability the Wildfisher offered while we were standing on the front casting deck with the chop rolling through. We moved around the boat with ease and at no time did I ever feel that I was off balance.

While we were out in the wind we did a few laps to see how it performed with a bit of chop. I was surprised by the way the hull deflected the wa-

ter. You will get wet in any type of open boat with a bit of slop and a cross wind but the chines deflected the majority of the spray with only minimal being kicked up enough to make it into the boat. I was also impressed with the way that the hull cut through the chop. We were able to still sit comfortably and on a very economical speed while zooming across the top of the waves.

Taking a look at the side console I thought it was well setup. This console was actually mounted onto the front casting deck. It's not something I have seen much of, but it seemed to work very well.

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Note the very comfortable padded seats and abundance of casting deck and storage space on both the stern and side.



The side console fixed to the front casting deck is a great space-saver. Note Col's Humminbird sounder that can be turned for use while fishing from bow or stern.



Front on of Col's Wildfisher. There is so much deck space and underfloor storage!



The Wildfisher not only does around 75km/h, it also does it drier than most boats thanks to some sizable spray chines.