



A Star Aligns



Morning Star's pimped-up Bay Fisher A Pro delivers solid performance with a comprehensive list of fishing features.

SCOTT THOMAS REPORTS.

WE first heard of Morning Star Boats in early 2014 when the newly formed boat manufacturer released its 460 Angler. The original boat of showed a departure from traditional aluminium boat building methods. The Taiwanese-built hulls used state-of-the-art car manufacturing robotics to construct a one-piece aluminium hull. The traditional sharp entry of aluminium boats and standard keel design has been eliminated with this construction method. There's no join at the keel and the sleek 18

degree variable deadrise results in performance and appearance reminiscent of fibreglass.

You can read more about the hull design in the April 2014 issue of *Boat Fishing* or check out our website at www.fishingworld.com.au for a video on the construction process.

Improvements

While the 460 Angler ticked all the boxes in regard to performance, it was still a basic fit-out with minimal fishing options. Since

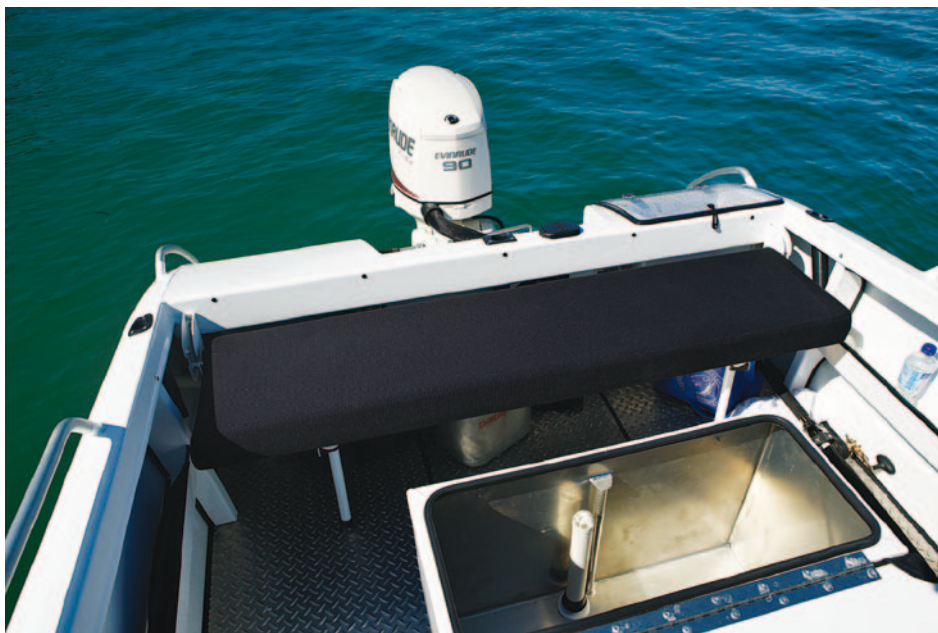


For an aluminium hull, the Bay Fisher features an impressive finish.

RIGHT: The transom has a fold down seat made from tough waterproof fabric.

its release, Morning Star Boats has listened to feedback from customers, dealers and boating media and moved fast to implement a series of improvements into a new model – the Bay Fisher A Pro. It's good to see a boat manufacturer taking suggestions on board, and the company's attitude bodes well for future models in this range.

Morning Star has added a plumbed livebait tank into the port side transom. There's also a large 80 litre livebait tank



built into the seat box behind the console. This livewell would also double as a kill tank or storage for lifejackets and other safety gear. It's nice to have the livewell option if you need one.

Another major difference with the Bay Fisher is its chequer plate floor. This style of floor is popular for larger plate boats and Morning Star has obviously tried to tap into this market by appealing to the hardcore fisho looking at this style of boat but in a smaller, more affordable package. The chequer plate looks good, although it can produce glare in strong sunlight and is tough on bare feet. This floor replaced the carpet used in the 460 Angler. My personal flooring preference for a boat of this size is Sea-Dek or a similar synthetic material that cleans easily, is comfortable under foot and holds grip.

The console is an average size and two people can squeeze behind for protection. The top of the console has abundant space for electronics and there's additional space for mounting a stereo on the front. Underneath there's a shelf and an open storage area. Morning Star said the next model will feature a door. Not a bad idea to keep things dry underneath.

The front of the console features vertical rod holders with another couple of gunwale mount rod holders toward the back of the boat.

Moving forward and there's an elevated platform at the bow. It's a good height; not so high that you feel uneasy fishing in choppy water. With reasonably high freeboard in this boat, the casting platform does a good job of elevating you when fishing from the bow area. There's storage underneath for gear or safety equipment. The Bay Fisher now features a bow mount electric motor mount as standard. There's also a new lid covering the small anchor well and unpainted grab rails around the boat.

Versatility

The Bay Fisher offers true versatility in a small package. While that sounds like a cliché, the 4.6m Morning Star's new rig will easily take care of estuary, impoundment and even some offshore fishing.

With three on board, we left Bayview boat ramp on Pittwater in Sydney's north. With a few rigged rods on board, our aim was to catch a few kingies or salmon. We spotted a few good sized kingfish and fired a few casts before a pod of dolphins appeared and shut down proceedings. We moved on and had some fun casting small metal lures at the large schools of Pittwater tailor. With three people aboard, the Bay Fisher remained quite stable and easy to walk around and fish. With a simple centre console, and loads of floor space, you don't feel too cramped.



Hooked up to a big tailor while testing the boat's stability.

THE DETAILS

MORNING STAR BAY FISHER

LENGTH: 4.65m

BEAM: 2m

WEIGHT (HULL ONLY): 386kg

POWER: 60-90hp (as tested, with 90hp)

CONTACT: Enterprise Marine;
www.enterprisemarine.com.au and
www.morningstarboats.com.

Performance

We caught a few fish and went for a look around Broken Bay and Lion Island. This stretch of water is exposed and at times unfishable in small boats. The sea was moderately lumpy and the Morning Star gave a good account of itself. We stayed dry and the ride was soft. A good cruising speed around 20 knots meant we covered some ground and never felt unsafe. Of course, it's still only a small boat and I wouldn't tackle the

open ocean without a good forecast and a confident skipper.

The Bay Fisher was fitted with a 90hp Evinrude E-TEC. This is the maximum horsepower rating and a good match to this hull. The 90 ensures the Bay Fisher pops on the plane without a fuss at 13 knots with the DI two-stroke at 2600 RPM. A rough water cruising speed of 18 knots and 3000 RPM would give superior fuel economy. In calmer water we achieved a good cruising speed of 26 knots doing 4000RPM. Throttle wide open,

the 90 E-TEC pushed the Bay Fisher to a top speed of 36 knots at 5200RPM.

It's a fun boat to drive and handles tight turns at speed with ease. The only improvement in regard to performance would be the addition of hydraulic steering. While initially it may prove more expensive, the standard "push/pull" steering felt a bit tight with 90hp as fitted so upgrading to hydraulic seemed a worthwhile option.

Big small boat

Small quality centre consoles aren't that easy to find. Not everyone has space at home to garage a large boat and most of us can't afford one anyway. Morning Star with its Bay Fisher has tapped into a good market by producing an affordable boat around the 4.5m mark. For a 4.6m boat, the ride and fishability of the Morning Star is impressive and at \$31,990 as tested with a range of standard inclusions as covered above, the price is within reach of the "average" boatie.

As a company, Morning Star has so far proved willing to listen and improve each model. It should be interesting to see what's in the pipeline ...



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