

Perfectly FORMED

Words by **John Eichelsheim** Photos by **Bryce Taylor**

“In creating a completely new design, Haines Hunter has incorporated modern construction techniques and materials, which means the boat is lighter in relative terms than its 535 sibling.”

Haines Hunter meets the new demand for mid-size fibreglass boats with the SF545. A new design, it's the spiritual successor to a Haines Hunter favourite: the 535.

For decades, the mid-size trailer boat was the mainstay of family boating in New Zealand, but about 15 years ago a trend began towards larger, more expensive trailer boats. Haines Hunter, like other New Zealand boat manufacturers, developed larger models to meet customer demand. But lately, there's been a sea change.

Lionel Sands, managing director of Haines Hunter Boats, saw it coming. “For the first time in many years we've identified a strong demand for mid-size fibreglass trailer boats,” he says.

He's backing his hunch with the release of a new, mid-sized model, the Haines Hunter SF545 (Sport Fisher) which debuted at this year's Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show.

“The new model was very well received by visitors to the show,” says Sands, “and the positive feedback has translated into sales, so we think we are on to something.”

There are many reasons to like the SF545. It's the spiritual

successor to Haines' long-running 535 series. That will continue in production as long as there is demand for it, but the SF545 delivers more boat in many ways. It's bigger and beamier, with a larger cockpit; it has a larger, more useable cabin and has higher freeboard. Its transom is designed to accommodate modern four-stroke engines with 25-inch shafts.

“In many ways the 545 is like a smaller Haines 600 rather than a larger 535,” says Sands, “but it shares the same underwater profile as other models in our range, from the 535 upwards, with a variable deadrise deep vee hull opening out to 21 degrees at the transom.”

EASY LIVING

One of Haines Hunter's aims with the SF545 was to produce a family oriented, mid-range model that is easy to tow and doesn't require a lot of horsepower to perform well.

Towing weight on a galvanised steel, single-axle, multi-roller

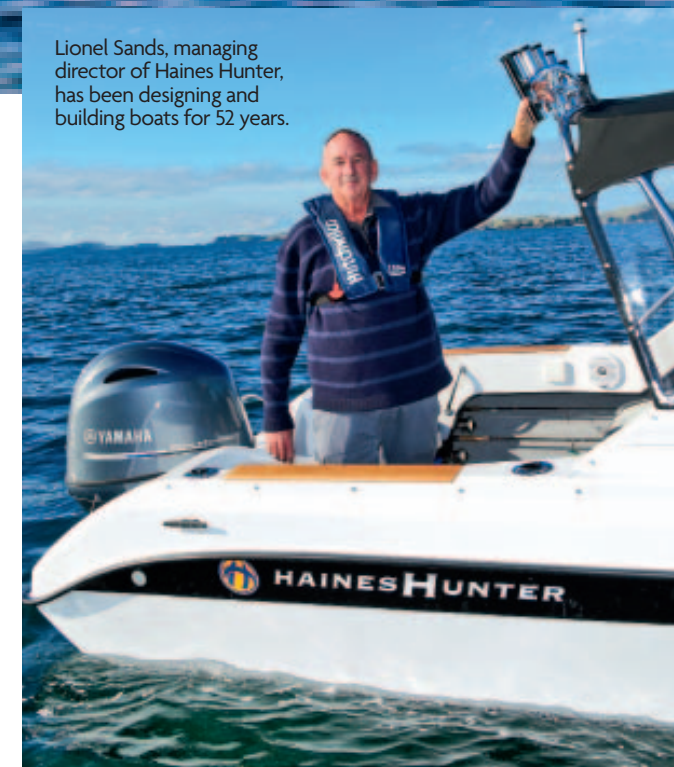
trailer is 1.35 tonnes, which is well within the capabilities of larger family sedans and mid-size SUVs. The boat will go nicely with as little as 100hp on the transom, while performance with Yamaha's new, lightweight F115 four-stroke is excellent. The model will accept outboards up to 150hp, but 115hp is a good fit for family boating.

In creating a completely new design, Haines Hunter has incorporated modern construction techniques and materials, which means the boat is lighter in relative terms than its 535 sibling. Sands and his team designed the interior with an instrument console to accommodate large screen electronics displays, extra storage in moulded parcel trays and side shelves, and a full fibreglass liner. Speakers can be mounted in the optimum position and an automatic capstan is an option. Such features were not easy to achieve on the smaller 535.

FACTORY FIT UP

As reviewed, the boat is well specified with Lowrance Elite 7 multi-function display, VHF radio, Fusion entertainment system, compass, USB outlet, Yamaha digital gauges, LED cockpit and cabin lighting.

Lionel Sands, managing director of Haines Hunter, has been designing and building boats for 52 years.





ABOVE: The hull responds instantly to the helm; there's a useful range of engine trim and the new ultra-quiet Yamaha F115 is extremely responsive. ABOVE LEFT: Haines Hunter designed the instrument console to accommodate large screen electronics displays; the interior has a full fibreglass liner. Speakers can be mounted in the optimum position and an automatic capstan is an option. Such features were not easy to achieve on the smaller Haines Hunter 535. LEFT: The berths are long enough for children to sleep in. There's provision for a portable toilet.

ALL ROUND ABILITY

The SF545 has a practical layout that makes it a good all-rounder – as much as possible in a sub-6m boat.

As a fishing boat, the SF545 steps up with its good-size cockpit and generous freeboard. There are sufficient through-gunwale rod holders to take care of trolling duties, Haines Hunter's moulded fibreglass bait table slots into additional rod holders across the back of the transom well and an optional rocket launcher bolts on to the bimini top. Moulded side shelves run the full length of the cockpit with toe room underneath. There's additional rod stowage under the coamings, and the marine carpets can be left at home or removed for easy cleaning. Rear corner seats lift out for better transom access and there's room underneath for a fish bin or spare tote tank, while an underfloor locker between the front seats is large enough for dive bottles.

If towing the kids around is on the agenda, an optional ski-pole drops into a hole in the transom. There's plenty of space on the bunks for skis and water toys, or use the side shelves. Back-to-back king and queen seating provides for an observer and the cabin is spacious enough for the kids if they need to warm up on the way home. Berths are long enough for children to sleep on and there's provision to fit a portable toilet.



Handholds are well positioned, including right around the windscreen and there are plenty of storage options for odds and sods, including moulded recess on the dashboard under the screen.

Construction

The Haines Hunter SF545's solid GRP hull is hand laid using multi-layered chopped strand mat with woven rovings, high performance isophthalic gelcoat and resins and featuring a full fibreglass cockpit liner. Longitudinal girders and transverse bulkheads are encapsulated in GRP and a protective brass keel strip is standard.

The boat's decks are moulded in gunstock with a PVC foam core.

All mouldings are produced in temperature and humidity-controlled conditions using resins, gelcoats and glass fibre to internationally recognised standards in Haines Hunter's modern Ellerslie, Auckland, facility.

The company offers a five-year structural warranty on all its hulls.

For picnics, an insulated bin under the king and queen seats will keep refreshments cold or ice down the day's catch. For family boating, there's seating in the cockpit for five, a sturdy fold-away bimini top with clears providing standing headroom and good protection from the elements, or a less costly, standard canopy.

The 545's king and queen seats are comfortable, with deep, contoured cushions and good quality marine vinyl upholstery. The helmsman benefits from a fully adjustable, soft rider pedestal seat, a moulded footrest for both front passengers, and hydraulic steering. A 135-litre underfloor fuel tank is big enough

1 Fit base

2 Add wiring

3 Clip on actuator

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Haines Hunter SF545

- **loa** 5.95m
- **beam** 2.25m
- **draft** approx 0.4m
- **weight** approx 1350kg incl trailer
- **construction** GRP
- **engine** Yamaha F115 four-stroke
- **deadrise** 21° at transom
- **fuel capacity** 135 litres
- **cruising speed** 22-30 knots
- **max speed** 36 knots
- **packages from** \$57,339
- **manufactured by**
Haines Hunter Boats,
web www.haineshunter.co.nz
- **boat supplied by** Haines
Hunter Boats, 09 579 9661, 0508
HAINES, sales@haineshunter.co.nz

for the longest fishing day or all-day family boating fun.

ON THE WATER

On the water the SF545 feels bigger than it really is. That's partly due to the spacious interior and a reflection of the way it handles. The hull responds instantly to the

helm; there's a useful range of engine trim and the new ultra-quiet Yamaha F115 is extremely responsive. Acceleration from a standing start is strong and the top speed is respectable, but not crazy, at 36 knots. The hull feels stable and self assured, even at full speed with the engine trimmed well out, and standard hydraulic steering makes the boat a pleasure to helm.

There were few waves to challenge the SF545 on our outing, but I got the feeling the hull won't disappoint in rough conditions. It has the full complement of Haines Hunter DNA, so it should get you home safely and comfortably if the weather gets up.

Around 26 knots was a sweet cruising speed with a fuel burn of around 24 litres per hour, according to the Yamaha's computer; at 22 knots consumption reduced to a respectable 18lph. Shifting is smooth and quiet and the stainless steel propeller provides excellent hole shots.

CONCLUSION

The Haines Hunter SF545 is a significant newcomer to the New Zealand trailer boat scene. Conceived in response to a perceived lift in demand for mid-size fibreglass trailer boats, the new model's boat show debut was a big success and there's no doubt about its success on the water. Like all Haines Hunters, it should attract strong demand on the secondhand market a few years down the track, which is doubly good news for new boat buyers. ■

Yamaha F115

Yamaha F115 is an in-line four cylinder engine said to be the lightest four-stroke 115hp currently available, 11kg lighter than its nearest competitor.

With a displacement of 1.8 litres, its DOHC four-cylinder design features larger intake and exhaust valves for easier breathing, more power and better mid-range torque. Additionally, the higher full-throttle RPM range – 5,300 to 6,300 – helps maintain top speed while allowing lower-pitch propellers to be used for better hole shots and acceleration. Knock sensors, usually the preserve of larger, more expensive outboards, protect against damage from low octane fuels.

Already popular with new boat manufacturers, the F115 features the same 26-inch mounting centres and bolt patterns as many two-strokes, and uses mechanical rigging. This makes it easy to install on existing boats to replace older two-stroke outboards.



For fishing, the moulded fibreglass bait table slots into rod holders across the transom well. Rear corner seats lift out for better transom access.