
review

**Sealegs 7.5m
Amphibious RIB
All-Round**

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Released at last year's Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show to considerable acclaim, the new Sealegs 7.5m Amphibious RIB finally became available for review in late October 2020 after Covid-19 stymied our earlier attempts.

W

ith a modular deck plan, this is Sealegs' most customisable model to date. Almost 30 have already sold in New Zealand and overseas. Three different layout options are offered in two different models. This one is the 7.5m All-Round, set up for a bit of everything: fun fishing, casual tow sports and family days on the water.

As its name suggests, the 7.5m Social has an even more sociable deck plan, complete with sink, refrigerator and wrap-around cockpit seating. These two variants have sold in roughly equal numbers and the 7.5m is also produced in Sealegs' Electrosol (electric drive) versions.

With the 7.5m Sealegs has upped the ante when it comes to style. The review boat has the Premier Accents package



FAST TRACK

featuring fresh new colours and high-quality, water-resistant upholstery with classy diamond stitching that sets off two-tone Hypalon tubes and dark-grey Ultralon U-Dek flooring.

The styling cues are very European, which makes sense since Europe is a fast-growing market for Sealegs amphibious boats, but the layout of the All-Round still has plenty of appeal for Kiwis wanting to mix things up by fishing a little, towing the kids around or exploring the coast.

With inflatable tube manufacturer Lancer now part of the Sealegs family, the 7.5m benefits from custom tapered tubes that help the boat look super-sleek. The variable deadrise hull is constructed from 5mm aluminium plate supported by a very strong, stiff ladder frame under the floor. There's a relatively wide reverse chine and 21° of deadrise at the transom.

All Sealegs hulls are built with plenty of internal structure to support the vessel and its payload (700kg or eight people for the 7.5m) while operating on land. This pays dividends on water as well, in the form of quiet running and solid handling.

The strengthened hull, as well as the AWD system's hydraulic engineering, wheel assemblies and 35hp Briggs and Stratton four-stroke engine used to power it, add considerable weight, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. On the water, the 7.5m feels assured and nicely planted. A lighter boat would ultimately be faster, but the 200hp Yamaha outboard provides a very respectable 40-knot top speed and the Sealegs doesn't lack for urgency off the mark either.

The Briggs and Stratton is housed inside the extra-wide centre console. Earlier Sealegs models had the engine under the



seat base or in the transom. The Hydrosol arrangement results in better weight distribution, with a 40-60 split fore and aft.

The Briggs and Stratton sips fuel from the same 180-litre underfloor tank as the outboard. It powers the three hydraulic wheel motors and their deployment systems, which give the 7.5m a top speed of 7.5kph on land. Extended run time is a standard feature and the exhaust exits under the hull.

The wide aluminium console and large, curved acrylic windscreen offer good protection to anyone seated on a pair of fully adjustable, shock-absorbing JoltRider seats. The console's width also affords ample space for electronics, switches and controls, which include those specific to Sealegs' amphibious operation. With advances in Sealegs' amphibious technology, these have become simpler over time and now take up very little dashboard space.

The most noticeable are the lever regulating speed in forward and reverse, and a large red emergency brake button, but there's also an engine throttle control and simple rocker switches to

raise and lower the 'legs'.

A 16-inch Simrad MFD fills a good part of the console's textured fascia. The MFD is complemented by a digital display for the Yamaha four-stroke outboard, Simrad VHF radio and Fusion Apollo Bluetooth and wireless head unit. The vessel uses proprietary digital switching throughout.

There's ample room on the fascia for additional instruments or controls – an electric capstan is an option, for instance – and there's handy dry storage in a console locker/glovebox; a second console locker opens to reveal various circuit breakers and resets. A fabric-look material is used to cover the fascia, colour co-ordinated with the upholstery. It looks very smart.

Because there's an engine inside the centre console, there's no room for storage, apart from the glovebox, but there's space under the front-facing console seat and also under the bow seat, which is where people often stow the anchor and warp. There's also an underfloor locker. A fairlead was fitted to the review boat, but the front wheel needs to be lowered to use it – an





LEFT The console layout works well ergonomically and the various controls are now nicely streamlined.

ABOVE The 7.5m Amphibious RIB is a premium product manufactured with premium materials.



The transition between terrestrial and aquatic operation is seamless and the controls are simple to master.



auto capstan and extended fairlead is an option allowing anchor operation from the helm.

The sides of the console feature distinctive panels covered with fine black mesh. These ensure the Briggs and Stratton engine gets enough air to breathe properly. This mesh has a very fine weave and is impervious to water while allowing air to pass through it. The same mesh material is used on the seating module midships, aft of the centre console, to let the sub-woofer breathe and to alleviate dampness and condensation in the enclosed space.

The midships module in this model is used for dry storage and also accommodates a 58-litre Icy-Tek chilly bin under comfortable queen-style, aft-facing seats and the amp and sub-woofer for the six-speaker sound system.

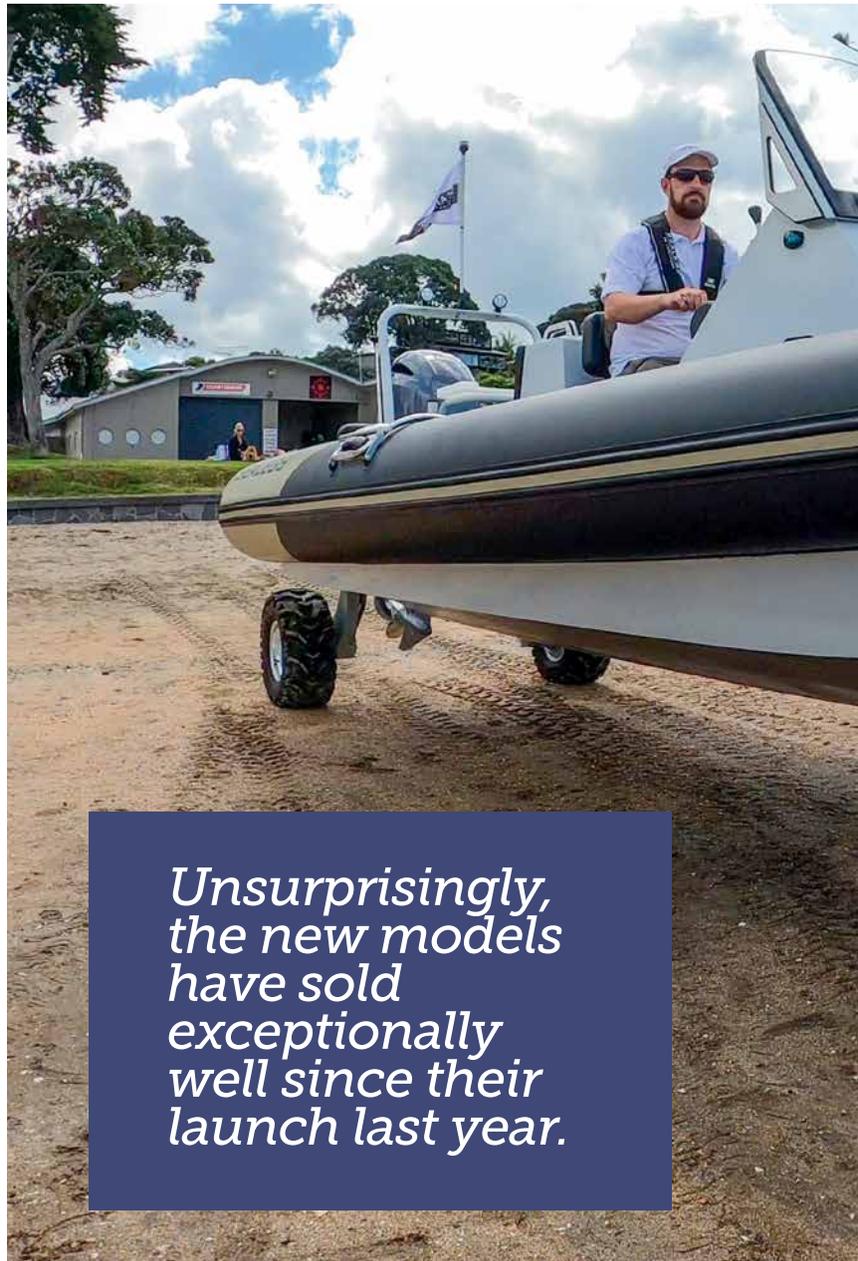
A handy storage bin/tray on the top of the module equipped with a couple of USB charging points is ideal for phones and other devices and there is no shortage of drink holders. In the Social layout this module contains a sink,

food prep counter, drawers, freshwater supply and a refrigerator instead of the chilly bin.

The midships module is sturdily built, since it's designed to support the 7.5m's optional T-Top. Like the windscreen, the stylish aluminium and canvas T-Top can fold down to make storing the boat easier. The T-Top uprights feature similar profiles to the screen supports and transom arch, with cutouts that make useful handholds/handrails for standing passengers.

The transom area of the All-Round features a drop-in bait table with additional rod holders under the arch. The arch is equipped with cockpit floodlights and a tow point – it's sturdy enough for tow-sport duties. Transom lockers give access to various pumps, hoses and the bilge, as well as the 1100gph bilge pump. A pair of upholstered corner seats are bolted in, but they could conceivably be removed to make more room for fishing if desired.

The 7.5m Amphibious RIB is quite capable on land, its Hydrosol all-wheel-drive system able to cope with moderately soft or loose surfaces, as well as gravel and stony beaches. Normal sandy beaches pose no challenges and we happily took the vessel ashore a couple of times at Rakino Island, easily negotiating submerged papa rock ledges in the shallows directly in front of the beach. Around 3000nm of torque and a diff lock option enhance the drive train's ability in difficult terrain.



Unsurprisingly, the new models have sold exceptionally well since their launch last year.

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ABOVE & LEFT AWD easily manages soft surfaces – hard sand is easy; the All-Round layout caters to fishers as well.

RIGHT The 7.5m is a pleasure to drive; kneeling takes the pressure off the hydraulics and makes it easy to embark.

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With standard extended run time, the AWD system can operate for up to 30 minutes non-stop and the ability to 'kneel' a Sealegs makes embarking and disembarking over the transom or by swinging a leg over a tube easy. A stainless steel boarding ladder is fitted to the starboard side for access from the water.

Kneeling a Sealegs so it rests on its keel takes most of the pressure off the hydraulic system when storing the boat or transporting it by trailer.

PLAY TIME

On the water performance is similarly refined. The transition between terrestrial and aquatic operation is seamless and the controls are simple to master. Once afloat with the wheels clear of the water and the outboard trimmed for optimum power delivery, the Sealegs behaves like an ordinary RIB, albeit one that rides and handles very well. It's dry, too, the reverse chine and tubes doing an excellent job of keeping spray outside the boat.

We were impressed by this RIB's smooth

ride and effortless control, the power steering doing all the work at the wheel. Trim tabs are not normally fitted, nor were they missed. Windage is minimal and the vessel is very stable laterally, underway and at rest. At full speed the boat feels stable and well-behaved, but cruising at 30 knots is very comfortable while 25 knots, a sweet spot, feels downright relaxed.

The JoltRider seats do their job in choppy conditions, cushioning any bumps, but passengers in the rear-facing queen-style seats are comfortable too. The wide, curved windscreen offers good protection to front seat passengers and also when standing up to drive, the slipstream passing well overhead.

With All-Round and Social layouts in Hydrosol or Electrosol drive variants, the Sealegs 7.5m Amphibious RIB represents Sealegs' latest styling philosophy combined with its most up-to-date amphibious technology. It looks smart and performs well. Unsurprisingly, the new models have sold exceptionally well since their launch last year. **BNZ**



Sealegs 7.5m Amphibious RIB All-Round

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HIGHLIGHTS

European styling and high-end finish projects quality

Seamless transition between land and sea

40-knot performance

Available in AWD Hydrosol or Electrosol variants with three different deck plans.

SPECIFICATIONS

loa (wheels up) 7.55m

hull length 6.29m

beam overall 2.71m

draft (O/B up) 0.42m

displacement 1600kg

construction 5mm aluminium plate, tapered Hypalon tubes

engine 1 x Yamaha DEC 200hp four-stroke O/B

fuel 180 litres

cruising speed 25-33 knots

max speed 40 knots

WATCH IT

