

Superlight Dinghy

Carbon-fiber version of classic tender sheds weight, looks great.

It is a shame that just as the materials for an ideal rigid dinghy have become readily available, outboards and rubber inflatables have all but swept conventional dinghies from the waterfront.

For those who still appreciate the feel of a good pair of 7-foot, feathering spruce oars and the ring of bronze oarlocks, a new tender from Wing Systems offers hope. The lines for the tender date back to Nat Herreshoff's *Frost Fish*, a timber-built dinghy with a reputation for performance both under sail and when being rowed. Her moderate beam, gently curving buttocks lines, plumb bow and wide but graceful transom deliver stability, load-carrying capacity and an ability to be rowed into a stiff breeze—all very valuable attributes in a tender.

Diana Russell is the president and chief designer of Wing Systems, a small sea-going think tank that has come up with solutions for sailing craft that range from efficient sailboard hull shapes to patents on fuel-saving sails for super tankers. Diana got her start as part of the Sparkman and Stephens research and development group that pioneered the development of sailboat velocity prediction programs. Her keen interest in dinghies, canoes and kayaks, and her firm commitment to “messing around in small boats” has led to some very worthwhile innovations. For cruising sailors, her 9-foot Wing Dinghy is a good example of how modern boatbuilding materials and technology can make a classic design better than ever.

To evaluate the Wing Dinghy, we

Wing Systems designs include canoes, kayaks, and the 55-pound 9-foot-long Wing Dinghy.



Lightly loaded, the Wing Dinghy presents very little wetted surface. It can carry over 1,200 pounds and still have 5 inches of freeboard.

compared it to the popular Trinka 10, a rugged Bruce Bingham design that has served many cruising sailors over the years. The evaluation points were sailing ability, rowing ability, durability, ease of hoisting, and towability. The Wing Dinghy proved to be a better sailer and was much easier to hoist, while the Trinka scored highest in the durability department. Both dinghies were evenly matched in the rowing and towing evaluations.

At the top of the list of attributes is the Wing Dinghy's light weight hull (55 pounds). In comparison, the popular Trinka 10 weighs in at 140 pounds. By carefully controlling resin volume and using high-modulus materials to build the Wing Dinghy, the result is a stiff and durable hull that's easy to launch

and retrieve.

Wing Systems and the tender's builder, the Savage River Works, a builder of racing and recreational canoes, have eschewed heavy teak trim and hand lay-up for advanced composites technology. The dinghy is built with either a conventional fiberglass FRP skin or a lighter and more expensive carbon outer and Kevlar inner hull skin. A controlled resin transfer process and vacuum-bagging ensure consistent bond and eliminate excess resin. What doesn't contribute to the structure of the vessel needs is eliminated.

The boat benefits from Diana's time spent sailing small craft, and it's these little details from an experienced sailor that contribute to the dinghy's success. Take for example how the all important



WING DINGHY	
LOA	9 feet
BEAM	4 feet, 2 inches
DRAFT	4.125 inches
WEIGHT	55 pounds
SAIL AREA	60 sq. ft.
LOAD CAPACITY	1,263 pounds (with 5" freeboard)
DISPLACEMENT	279 lbs. (loaded to displacement waterline)
PRICE	Dinghy only \$3,125 (fiberglass) \$3,750 (carbon/Kevlar) Sailing dinghy \$6,355 (fiberglass) \$6,980 (carbon/Kevlar)

bow pennant is secured to a bonded stem tube using no hardware at all. Other builders rely upon massive U-bolts that they add to the stem, not recognizing the damage that such a protrusion will do to the topsides of the mother vessel and other boats approached with a little too much enthusiasm. Similar nuances such as oarlock placement, thwart positioning, and gunwale protection are delivered with the same attitude toward form and function. Missing is the teak trim and gingerbread that may seem attractive to onlookers, but adds little to the structure and lots to the weight of the boat.

The Wing Dinghy is a dinghy in the way that a Leica is camera. Like the Leica, the price tag is commensurate with the quality of the product. It's true that for the same investment, one can find a RIB and an outboard that will plane across the bay, but for those who enjoy the solitude and silence of natural surroundings, and welcome a morning row and an afternoon sail, the Wing Dinghy is both a practical solution to getting to shore and an elegant way to get there. ▲

Photos courtesy of Wing Systems (top) and by Ralph Naranjo (bottom)

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- SEPTEMBER 2009:** Polarized Sunglasses Test; Expensive Handheld VHF's; Internal Tank Sensors; Diesel Contamination; Liquid waxes; Sailing books for women; Chandlery: Winchmate, Synergy dockline; PS Advisor: Synthetic oils for diesels; Where Credit Is Due: Suncor Stainless
- AUGUST 2009:** Morgan 30 boat review; Furlers with head swivels; Gripper knots (hitches); Mooring anchor types: Cabin fan update: Caframo Bora; Topside paint: Interlux Perfection vs Epifanes polyurethane; Chandlery: ActiveTrax Deluxe, Seattle Sport; Where Credit is Due: Nauta, West Systems, ICP Solar, Sea Frost, Ferriello; PS Advisor: wet teak, bottom paint; Camp Bucket, Quick dry towels; Anchor rescue
- JULY 2009:** Gear of the Year, Speedster boats: Santa Cruz 37, Open 6.50, Andrews 28, Stealth 14.6, Starboard Futura; Furlers without swivels; Children's and adults harnesses and tethers; Acrylic coatings one-year follow-up; Chandlery: Dinghy Dry, WindPaddle9/1/09; Where Credit is due: Ullman sails, Dwyer, Navionics9/1/09, p. 6; PS Advisor: Aluminum pox, stuck zipper
- AUGUST 2009:** Pearson 32; Cordage Review: Halyards; Snatch Block Test; The Dark Side of Fiberglass; Plotter/Sounder Update: Garmin 498C; Navigation Software: Nobeltec Admiral 9.1; Exterior Wood Coatings: One-part Varnishes; Chandlery: Fast-drying Wick-er Warmup Towel and Waterproof Ego iPod Case
- JUNE 2009:** Refrigeration Conversion Kits; Handheld GPS Update; Raymarine A50D; Tillerplots Field Test; Rope Clutches Update; Heavy-weather Sails for Furling; PS Advisor: Fouling fix for the waterline
- MAY 2009:** Exterior Wood Finish Six-month Checkup; Practically Green: Belowdecks; Ratchet Blocks Test; Wind Gen Field Test; Handsfree Onboard Communication; Ocean Tested: Tethers; Chandlery: Inflatable Hobie i12s; PS Advisor: Boat buying in a down market
- APRIL 2009:** Affordable Dream Boats; Entry-level Fixed and Handheld VHF's; Digital Thermostat for Galley Fridges; Nesting Cookware Test; Rust Busters; Chandlery: Flow-Rite Pro Fill, Big Kahuna shower, Fresh Flush Gas Watch, Fender Cleat, Chafe-Pro, Wrino Hook, Leatherman LEDs, Great Neck tools, Bionic Wrench; PS Advisor: Group Calls on DSC-capable VHF's
- MARCH 2009:** Maintenance Special: Bottom Paint 2009, Vinyl Window Restorers, Stripping Barrier Coats; Rope Clutch Test; 9.9 Outboard Shootout; ; Chandlery: Dry Suits; PS Advisor: Sail Shape
- FEBRUARY 2009:** Heavy-weather Sailing: Drogues sea trialed; Boat Design: Comfort vs. Speed; Mid-priced Fixed VHF's; Paste waxes; Alado Jib Furler; Chandlery: Firts-aid products; PS Advisor: Sea anchor sizing
- JANUARY 2009:** Boat Review: Trophy Daysailers; Interior LEDs test; 5Mile Wi-Fi Test Run; Seasick Medications; Small Stoves Update: CookMate; Mildew Stain Removers; Chandlery: Book Reviews; PS Advisor: Water-logged Rudder
- DECEMBER 2008:** Gear of the Year; New Handheld GPS Units; Medical Kits: Bluewater Crusiers; Skip Allan's Farewell to Wildflower; Heavyweight Anchors Test; Ocean Tested: Honda genset, EarthNC software; PS Advisor: Wood finish for cabin sole
- NOVEMBER 2008:** Boat Review: e-33; Ethanol Additives Test; Raymarine AIS250 Review; Emergency Tillers of the Day; Cold-weather Gloves Test; Heavyweight Anchors by Manson and Rocna Test; Chandlery: UK Water-tight Box, Boye Basic 3 Cobalt Knife, Redi-Edge Sharpener; PS Advisor: Antifouling for Inflatables
- OCTOBER 2008:** Bottom Paint Test; Folding-transom Rigid Inflatable Boats test; 5-inch Plotter-sounders Test; Ocean Tested: Wet-cell Batteries; Teak Caulk Test; Trends in Windlasses; Chandlery: Original Nantuckett Diddy Bag, Wera Tools; PS Advisor: Search for a DC-DC Converter
- SEPTEMBER 2008:** Electric Propulsion; Medical Kits III: Offshore kits; Performance Sailing Gloves; SPOT satellite personal messenger; Acrylic Coatings for Fiberglass (Gelcoat restorers); Large Ice Chest Test; Chandlery: SteriPEN; PS Advisor: Marine plywood vs. regular plywood
- AUGUST 2008:** Navy 44 MkII; Inflatable PFDs with Harnesses; Garmin vs. Raymarine chartplotter head-to-head; Topside Paints Test; Catalina 22 refit report; Storm Trysails; Snatch Blocks Update: Ronstan Blocks; Chandlery: Boatsense boat alarm; PS Advisor: Painting Your Deck
- JULY 2008:** 10-foot Rigid Inflatable Dinghy Shootout; Safety and Electronics for the Singlehander; Standard Horizon CPV50 review; Foul-weather Gear for Women; Inflatable Fenders; Mooring Chain Test Finale; Chandlery: Summer reading list, Walker Bay Airis inflatable kayak, Crocs kneepads; PS Advisor: Troubleshooting AC units
- JUNE 2008:** Singlehanded Sailing Part 1; New Inflatable PFDs without Harnesses; Flir Thermal-imaging Camera Review; Aftermarket Bowsprit Kits; Baseball-cap Style Hat Test; Medical Kits for Coastal Cruisers; 12-volt Inflators; Chandlery: Natrapel bug spray, Freezer Safe fridge thermometer, West System G-Flex epoxy kit, power tools for restoring gelcoat
- MAY 2008:** Weta multihull; Practically Green: 'Green' Maintenance products for boaters; Aussie Barbecue Grills; MOB alarms and direction-finding devices; Internal Holding Tank Sensors; Collinite vs. Meguiar's topsides wax; Headlamp Test; Chandlery: Norcross Hawkeye handheld depth sounder
- APRIL 2008:** Beneteau 46; Forward-looking Sonar; Medical Kits for Small Boat Sailors; Updating Digital Charts ; Exterior Wood Coatings Test: Teak Oils; 12-volt Cabin Fans; Paint Stripper Redux; Chandlery: Whirley Bird, FiveFingers, Steer-iT tiller tool
- MARCH 2008:** Etap 28s; Furlers for Light-air Sails; Walker Bay Tubes on Rigid Dinghy; Bi-annual Bottom Paint Test; Teak Cleaners Test; Inflatable Boat Cleaners; Chandlery: Rydlyme vs. MaryKate On&Off

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