



Senator Typhoon MH 820 – long-legged Bay boat

Hawkes Bay is wide, open water with virtually no islands or other structures to provide shelter for boaties when the weather suddenly cuts up.

And those who wish to access the offshore fishing in the Bay must be prepared for the weather to turn to custard. Consequently, big, long-legged boats that eat up the sea miles and maintain a reasonable speed in poor conditions are needed, allowing a safe home-run if the weather changes for the worse.

Napier manufacturer Senator Boats was set up in 1996, with owner Wayne McKinley having a boat-building history going back 23 years. Well known for their pontoon boats and large 'Offshore' range of monohulls, Senator complements these ranges with the 'Typhoon' series of monohulls ranging from the 550 up to a 920 model.

Dannevirke resident Steve Smith has taken a liking to Napier and the fishing in Hawkes Bay, so brings his family for a summer holiday each year, based at a local holiday park. To access the waters of Hawkes Bay, considering the conditions that can sometimes be encountered (outlined above), he has invested in a Senator Typhoon MH 820, fittingly called *Dannevegas*. On a trip to Hawkes Bay earlier in the summer, I took the opportunity to go for a run out of Napier with Steve and put the MH 820 through its paces.

Putting it together

Senator Boats are happy to customise to the client's requirements, even altering the cabin/wheelhouse height and length. With 6mm bottoms, 5mm sides and a 4mm tread-plate deck, this hull has substantial scantlings. The chines are fully seam-welded, inside and out. The keel assembly sees the bottom plates also seam-welded inside and out, with a flat plate welded cross-ways above the keel line forming a strong triangular section.



An Anchorlift S912 capstan was mounted on the bow of the big Senator.

The deadrise at the transom is a decent 18°. There are no strakes (so the hull is a softer rider), chines are downturned and run pretty much to the bow, aiding stability.

Under the deck there are four longitudinal supports running the length of the hull and four frames/bulkheads laterally, in addition to the transom. Reserve buoyancy is a massive 1750kg. The welding appears to be robust. Fuel capacity is 375 litres in an under-floor tank; a built-in surge/expansion chamber prevents any blow-back when filling or 'weeping' from a full tank on a hot day.

Tough times

In the event, test day was one of 'those' days. We launched at the Napier Sailing Club's facility in Port Ahuriri with a 15-knot west to northwest wind, which picked up to 25 knots during the morning. Although these are pretty-much offshore winds in the Bay, we did not have to go far away from the coast to encounter reasonably scruffy conditions, providing a good chance to see what the hull could do.

This hull is rated for 200-300hp outboard motors; *Dannevegas* is pushed by a Yamaha 300 V6 four-stroke outboard with a 17-inch pitch propeller. This engine

has a recommended top-end rev range of 5000-6000rpm, so the rig's fastest performance of 72kph (38.9 knots) at 5400rpm falls nicely in this range. A more useful cruise speed was 36kph (19.4 knots) at 3300rpm.

We headed across the bay to an area off Waipatiki. Travelling 'downhill' with the sea was nice and lured us out further than comfort would ordinarily dictate. After stopping for a bit of fishing, we faced a beat back to Napier through 1.5-2m seas, tight and capping. Conditions were pretty unpleasant and to travel in any degree of comfort dictated reducing our speed. We took a bit of a beating and a fair bit of spray, but were snug and dry in the wheelhouse, and the excellent stability and sea-keeping of the hull meant we were perfectly safe.

It was a good example of the conditions that motivated the Senator's design – in any lesser craft we would not have been there at all.

Parking

You would expect a boat of this size to be fitted with a windlass these days, and an Anchorlift S912 was mounted on the bow of the big Senator. This is a helm-controlled chain-and-warp model that feeds through the foredeck into an anchor locker in the bow. The locker can be accessed through a hatch in the forward bulkhead.

The foredeck can be accessed through a hatch in the fore-cabin roof, or you can climb around the sides of the wheelhouse, aided by non-skid panels, grabrails on the hardtop and a substantial bowrail. A Sarca anchor is permanently mounted on a bowsprit,



Despite the difficult conditions we came home with a decent feed; something we could not have achieved on that particular day from a lesser boat.

a crucifix bollard is welded to the foredeck, and a protective panel guards the foredeck from chain-flogging on the retrieve. When we stopped for a fish, the ground tackle held us well, despite the boat bucking hard in the difficult conditions.

Practicality and comfort

The forecabin is fully lined to deck level. A side-shelf and a shorter second level of shelving add to the stowage space under the berths. There is space for a toilet to be fitted, although the option had not been taken up on the test boat, the owner preferring

to carry a stowed portable chemical toilet. A hinged hatch gives access to the wiring and steering in the back of the helm console. The berths would sleep two adults; three with a berth infill added.

In the wheelhouse, vision is good through toughened glass 'screens and side-sliding windows. No wipers were fitted, as owner Steve prefers to use Rainex to shed any spray. The roof, wheelhouse sides, helm and dash are lined with grey marine carpet, helping reduce internal glare on the tinted 'screen, as well as reducing noise.

Instrumentation includes trim tabs, Yamaha digital engine gauges, a Raymarine C90W sounder/GPS, a Northstar Explorer 721 VHF and a Fusion MS-AV600 sound system. LED cabin lighting is fitted. Steering was handled by a Teleflex hydraulic system which, complemented by the Yamaha 'fly-by-wire' throttle/shift, made this boat a pleasure to helm.

Grabrails were fitted across the centre of the dash, under the wheelhouse roof and on the top of the helm seat. The seating consisted of a bench-type helm seat with footrest, which hinges forward to provide a decent worktop where owner Steve intends to fit a galley. Facing bench seats on the passenger side have a small dining table on a raised platform between them. There is side shelving throughout the wheelhouse, stowage under the rear passenger seat, and a hold with split hatch-access in the wheelhouse deck.

The cockpit features sealed chequerplate decks that drain to a sump under the transom locker, from where any water is pumped overboard by a 2000gph bilge pump. Grabrails are fitted across the hardtop and down the trailing sides. There is plenty of useful



The step-through transom gives easy access to two Tread Plate boarding platforms with rails.



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stowage in two levels of side shelving that run the full length of both sides of the cockpit.

The transom has twin step-through sections with drop-doors on each side of a raised transom locker. This last has two front hatches and features a locker for the dual battery system (up on a shelf), isolation switching, protection for the fuel line and expansion chamber, a storage level with a separate hatch and a bait station on top.

The step-through transom gives easy access to two Tread Plate boarding platforms with rails, and a fold-down 'T' boarding ladder on the port side. Separate mounting plates are fitted below the water line on the transom for the trim tabs and transducer. Heavy-duty bow, mid and stern mooring-cleats are fitted.

Overall, an excellent set up, leaving a large, open cockpit-workspace.

By fishermen for fishermen

Two of the basics required of a good fishing boat are good footing and stability at rest. The first is supplied by a Tread Plate deck, and the Senator has the second in spades. Despite the rough conditions, Steve and I had no problem standing and walking around the cockpit while fishing at anchor with the aid of flat gunwale faces to lean on, giving top-of-thigh support and toe recess space so we could stay upright and on balance. Wide, flat gunwale tops provided a useful place to perch while fishing.

The MH 820 is particularly well fitted for fishing, with three through-gunwale rod holders along each side, five more across the back of the bait station (these are useful to stow rods away from spray while travelling), and two more mounted on the rails of the boarding platforms, for a total of 13. In addition, there is a nine-position rocket-launcher on the hardtop.

The addition of heavy-duty railings and step-through access to each Tread Plate boarding platform, both sporting a rod-holder, makes them useful fishing positions in calmer weather. The bait station has a large cutting board, suitable for filleting a big snapper, medium hapuku or kingfish. Raised sides stop the bait or fish from sliding off astern, while a low front edge allows you to get down flat on the fillet while skinning, and gutters drain any gunk overboard.

Other fishing fittings include a ram-fed live-bait tank set into the starboard boarding platform, and outrigger mountings on the gunwales amidships. Bait and catch storage are catered for by a large aftermarket insulated fish bin, as is usual these days, allowing the whole catch to be removed and easier cleaning and reconfiguring of the cockpit etc.

As well as bottom bouncing, Steve enjoys a bit of



Above from left: facing bench seats on the passenger side have a small dining table on a raised platform between them.

A combination of Teleflex hydraulic steering and the Yamaha 'fly-by-wire' throttle/shift made this boat a pleasure to helm.

In the wheelhouse, vision is good through toughened glass 'screens and side-sliding windows.



game fishing. Despite Hawkes Bay being a marginal game-fishery, he had a couple of marlin 'shots' off Cape Kidnappers last season. With easy access from the water and plenty of space, this boat could just as easily be rigged for serious divers.

Steve and I had an hour or so of bottom bouncing, and despite the difficult conditions managed about a dozen of Hawkes Bay's gurnard and a similar number of fat kahawai, so we came home with a decent feed despite the circumstances – again something we could not have achieved on that particular day from a lesser boat.

On the road

The MH820 was carried on a DMW Premier trailer, a cradle A-frame design with tandem axles and heavy-

duty gusseting. It features zinc-protected leaf-spring suspension, Carlisle hydraulic braking, dual-ratio manual winch, parking brake, dual coupling, wind-down jockey wheel and submersible LED trailer lights. Twelve pairs of wobble rollers, an entry bay and three keel rollers make loading easy. Tow weight of the rig is approximately 2860kg.

All in all

The Senator MH820 is an excellent hard-core fish and dive boat, with good sea-keeping abilities and a comfortable wheelhouse and cabin arrangement that still leaves a heap of uncluttered working space in the cockpit. Its stability is excellent and the layout has clearly been designed for fishermen by fishermen. A top rig from Napier.

Specifications

Material:	aluminium
Configuration:	enclosed hardtop
LOA:	8.25m
Beam, external:	2.47m
Beam, internal:	1.97m
Bottom:	6mm
Sides:	5mm
Deck:	4mm
Deadrise:	18°
Rec. HP:	200-300hp
Test engine;	Yamaha 300hp V6 four-stroke
Prop:	17" pitch
Trailer:	DMW Premier
Tow weight:	2860kg
Price as tested:	\$166,000
Key-turn rigs from:	\$142,000 (same trailer and engine)

Test boat courtesy of Steve Smith.

The transom locker houses the dual battery system, isolation switching, fuel line expansion chamber, raised storage and a bait station.



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