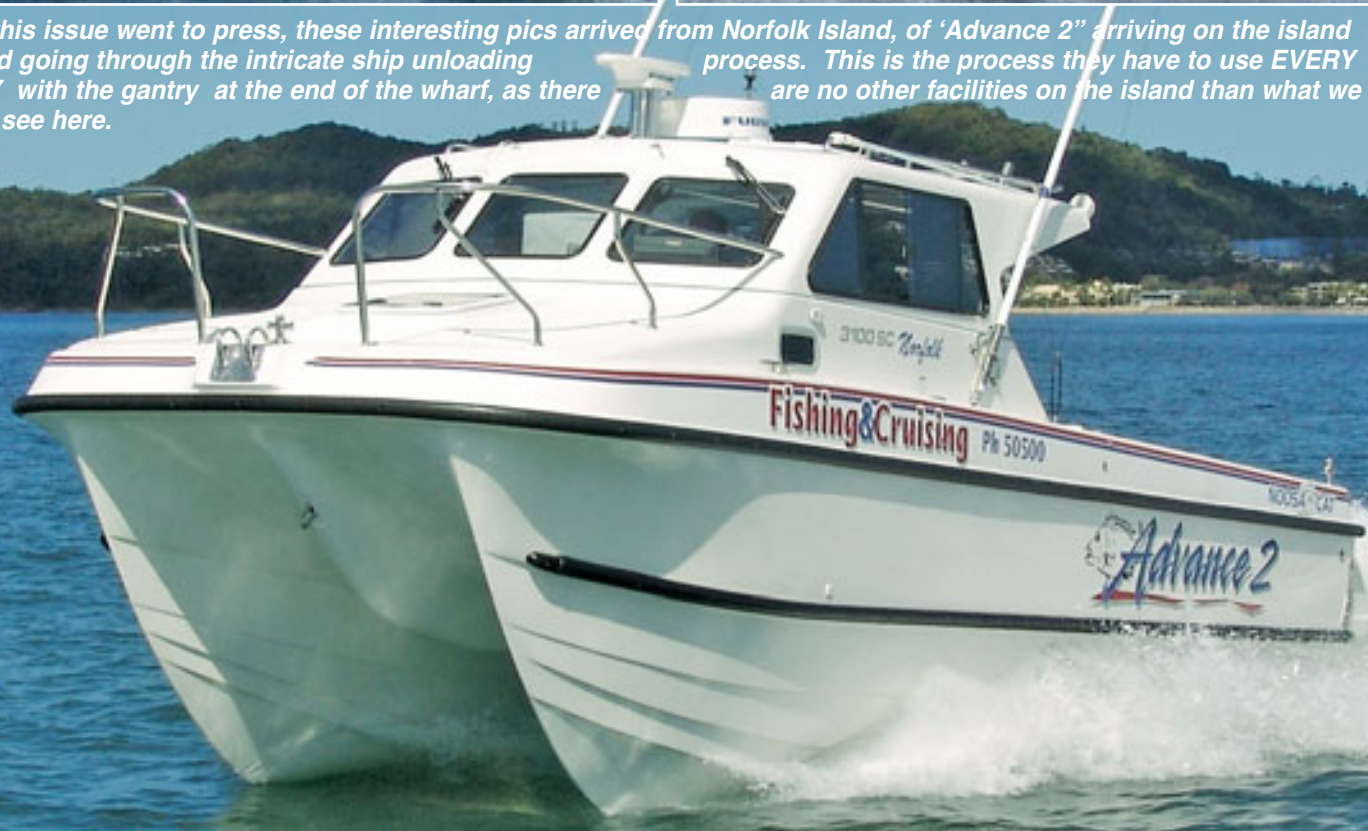




As this issue went to press, these interesting pics arrived from Norfolk Island, of 'Advance 2' arriving on the island - and going through the intricate ship unloading process. This is the process they have to use EVERY DAY with the gantry at the end of the wharf, as there are no other facilities on the island than what we can see here.



# Noosacat 3100 For N





Of all the boat yards in Australia that have coped with the recession brought on by the GFC, very few are doing as well as the Noosacat factory in southern Qld. Working with an almost recession proof range of boats widely used by many different government departments, Search & Rescue operations, and recreational boatowners who know better, the Noosacat factory has once again demonstrated that in the final analysis, there will always be demand for real boats. This month we look at one of the best in the Noosacat range as PW takes an unashamedly affectionate look at one of his favourite craft. . .



***Bound for Norfolk Island . . Darren & Shari Bates are deservedly proud of their new 3100 diesel Noosacat.***

team on a beautiful autumn day, glorious sunshine, practically no wind, a gorgeous boat and a terrific crew. There are no prizes for guessing which we preferred and that's not to denigrate the Sea Jay either, because as it transpired, it was also an excellent craft – despite the weather!

Nevertheless, a good day makes everybody feel better, and if you're going offshore it's the best recipe – especially if you're going out through the shallow Noosa bar which is always a challenge, especially if you are new

River now for the best part of 20 years, and in the writer's opinion, facilities today are significantly worse than they were 20 years ago. They are, frankly, a disgrace - and the various boating authorities in southern Qld should hang their heads in shame.

Nevertheless we clambered aboard the Noosacat 3100 we were there to test, as well as the Noosacat 2300 Walkaround that was rostered onto camera boat duties for the session. Launching and retrieving the boats, parking the trucks and trailers was a lesson in how to make boating difficult for the local people, let alone professionals such as the Noosacat factory team.

But it was a beautiful day and we weren't going to let State political issues spoil it, and our spirits lifted as we pulled away from the traffic jam and confusion around the launchramps and headed for the open space and clarity of the blue Pacific ocean beyond the bar.

## Background

I started out the day in the Walkaround, concentrating on photographing the much bigger 3100, as well as taking maximum advantage of being able to study the 3100 coming out through the bar and off into the ocean.

This is relevant to people contemplating buying a new or secondhand boat. It is the writer's contention that you can learn as much, if not a lot more about a boat by watching it perform from another craft, as you can from working it at the helm inside a cabin, wheelhouse or flybridge. Especially if you're not really familiar with the boat and/or starting out in somebody else's environment with a boat that is very different from those you have experienced before.

In this case, we knew the owner / skipper of the 3100, Darren Bates, was at the helm of his brand new diesel 3100, and he soon had it trimmed to perfection once he'd cleared the bar and settled the rig down to cruise offshore.

A professional charter boat operator from Norfolk Island (way off the Australian coast) Darren was taking delivery of the diesel cat just prior to it going onboard the regular freighter to Norfolk Island.

Watching it working in the bar was

# Norfolk Island

**R**eporting on boats is always a dicey business because of the weather. Today, for example, we had a miserable day on the Gold Coast to test the Sea Jay Preda-King 6.8m Centre Console tested elsewhere in this issue, with the wind blowing with a chilly winter flavour at 20 knots, grey scudding clouds blanketing the sky, and choppy water that just made you want to go home, ASAP.

On the other hand, last week we had to drive from the Gold Coast up to the Sunshine Coast to join the Noosacat

to the area.

In truth, it's not the bar I find particularly fearsome, as it's a reasonably sheltered and fairly obvious bar crossing, but it's Noosa's myriad waterways leading up to it, that is so dreadfully confusing for visitors.

This, aligned with Noosa's sadly decaying boating facilities reminds one that Noosa region residents are getting a very, very raw deal for their registration fees, petrol tax, boat licences etc from the Qld government.

We've been going back and forth to Noosaville, and boating on the Noosa

revealing, because it turned the water away superbly and we could see quite clearly how the tunnel spray was turning back and forming part of the 'cushion' or mattress effect, as the water creamed through the Noosacat's centre tunnel.

It's a pity monohull boatowners can't see this sort of thing in action for themselves, because most of them find it hard to believe, and few rarely get the chance to experience it first hand for themselves.

From the writer's point of view, it was a delight just to sit in the Walkaround, 40-50 feet in front of the 3100 as my skipper, (Wayne Hennig himself) positioned the Walkaround in such a way where he could study the bigger 3100 working, too!

This of course can be a bit unnerving (!) but nobody knows the Noosa bar quite like Wayne Hennig, and the fact that he's the original boy racer in the Bar is a mere detail – but it's always fun to go out with Wayne, especially on a good day when one or two of his steeds from the Noosacat fleet are on display. He knew I wanted to study the boat 'working' so he made sure I could . . . believe it!

Further offshore with some air between the boats, it was good to take the photo sets and watch Darren working the boat at different speeds as he will be doing in his charter business on Norfolk Island.

Darren and his family have been running a very old, original 20' SharkCat over there for no less than 29 years, and in that period, he notes with a grin, they've never come back without a feed – for themselves or the charter fisherman. Not a bad record, huh?

With Darren and his lovely wife Shari bringing back the new Noosacat 3100, this is a boat that has already created great local interest. Tourism and the fishing sector of this pretty Island community is the lifeblood today, and a brand new charter boat of this calibre will enhance both markets.

## Design

We tested the Noosacat 3100 back in F&B #115, in November 2005, as a substantially different model to the boat on test this month. In that test, it was powered by twin 225hp Verado supercharged outboards, and was quite an exciting craft which really captured the writer's imagination then as a craft

<b>Fisherman &amp; BOATOWNER Performance Graph</b>						
<b>Noosa Cat 3100 / 2 x 190 hp Volvo (Diesel) D-3's</b>						
	<b>Fuel - One Engine</b>		<b>Performance Using BOTH Engines</b>			
<b>R/Min</b>	<b>L/ph</b>	<b>G/PH</b>	<b>Nm/litre</b>	<b>Knots</b>	<b>Kms</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>1,000</b>	1.4	0.25	2.21	6.2	11.5	945
<b>1,500</b>	4.5	0.98	0.93	8.4	15.5	398
<b>2,000</b>	8.9	1.93	0.65	11.7	21.6	280
<b>2,500</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>2,750</b>	17.5	3.83	0.61	21.4	39.6	261
<b>3,000</b>	21.0	4.6	0.57	24.1	44.6	245
<b>3,500</b>	28.0	6.1	0.53	30.1	55.7	229
<b>4,000</b>	41.00	8.9	0.43	36.0	66.7	183
Propellers 3 Blade s.steel A-5's						
Range: Nautical Miles, Based on 95% of the 2 x 225L tanks ie 427 litres						

**As tested, the Noosacat 3100 with 190hp Volvo D-3s, and the charter boat fit-out packages up in the \$230-\$260K range (plus GST) but you can easily spend a lot less (with outboards) or a lot more, with trick electronics and gear.**



that crossed over between the traditional 23' Noosacat (nee SharkCat) and the bigger, more powerful Noosacat 4100 that won the Boat Of The Year Award in Australia in 2006. The 4100 is a big cruiser, and with Volvo's superb IPS drives, requires a substantial investment in something that is capable of going around Australia – and back again - on its ear.

The outboard powered 3100 was set up with a lock up cabin and a very practical sun awning and really appealed to the writer as an all round fishing/cruising/family fun boat where the only disadvantage was having to 'feed' twin 225hp Verado outboards.

Here, this Noosacat 3100 is the same boat in the big picture, but now it's powered by twin Volvo 190hp 5 cylinder D-3 sterndrives, and given these are such a light engine (373kg including the Duo-prop sterndrives) not surprisingly, the performance was very

similar to the Verado powered outboard model even allowing for the fact that this was in the lighter charterboat configuration.

As you see in the photographs, Darren and Shari have set-up the boat for half-day and full-day charters off Norfolk Island, and deliberately left the boat with a very open,

'Day Boat' feel, working around the big fish boxes, bait tanks etc, down the centre. This layout has stood the test of time by charter skippers right around Australia, as a very practical design for multiple fishermen.

In this case, it's also lighter by several hundred kilos than the enclosed cabin version we tested in 2005, so we weren't too surprised to get such an





outstanding level of performance from twin 190hp Volvo sterndrives.

As you can see in the performance tabulation accompanying this report, the economy and performance of this rig is truly outstanding.

It's been a long while since the writer has cracked 36 knots in a big boat, let alone done it so easily and comfortably, much less found a cruising speed of 21.5-22.0 knots for a total fuel consumption – with TWIN diesels, mind you - of 35L/ph.

For a boat this size, that is an amazingly good figure, especially as we're talking here about a rig having twin diesels for maximum security and reliability which, obviously enough, Darren and Shari have to have working by themselves out from Norfolk Island.

Given that Norfolk does not have a harbour of any kind, much less supportive rescue services, they have to be 100% self reliant and offer their customers total security and back-up of everything because there is simply no one else to help if things go wrong.

In this case, having twin Volvo diesels completely separated down each side of the boat, with different battery systems, wiring systems etc, the boat is as mechanically break-proof as we can possibly make it today. But essentially, the genius of the boat is that it can cruise all day or night with half a dozen blokes onboard for a wonderfully soft 22.5 knot cruising speed for 35L/ph of diesel – and guess



what's the other big criterion in Norfolk Island? Yep, it's the cost of fuel on the Island, where every litre is counted in the skipper's mind as he heads out to sea with his charter fishermen.

These are the issues that make Noosacat so applicable to so many charter situations. The factory has considerable experience in developing boats for the charter fishing fleets around Australia, and this of course becomes a self fulfilling prophesy, because the charter skippers gravitate to the factory with their ideas and thoughts, and as the years go by these

ideas and techniques are incorporated in subsequent craft.

With over a thousand Noosacats on the water now in Australia, that's a lot of experience that's gravitated to Noosaville!

### Internal Layout

But let me sum up the lay-out that is a bit hard to see in this craft – Darren and Shari have opted for a standing headroom shower and toilet down forward in the port side hull compartment, which is accessed from the wheelhouse. Over the door sill, down two stairs and you're in a

completely separate (and private) shower and toilet cubicle.

Back up again into the wheelhouse, take one step to the right and the door opens to reveal a cabin with a 3/4 berth.

I'm sure this could be developed a little more comfortably for family cruising, but of course in this boat, that was almost irrelevant because this forward cabin is essentially a storeroom for provisions, rods and gear (etc), and will rarely be used for overnight sleeping.

Similarly, abaft the helm and passenger seat, there are just a couple of moulded iceboxes and squabs to provide comfortable seating for upwards of 4-5 people on the side seats, plus the skipper and passenger.

It's very utilitarian, not to say plain, but if you work with a boat like this every day of the week and it has to be washed out and serviced on a daily basis, then the crew very quickly learns what materials work; what wears out almost straight away; what you need if you're going to hose the scales and gunk out of the boat, and so on, to prepare the rig quickly and efficiently for the following day's work.

## Performance & Handling

I won't reiterate what we went through on the Verado powered Noosacat 3100 – that full test is available to download from the Sea Library and we suggest interested readers look at that full report to get a comparative view of the different versions of the same craft.

Here, the diesel and Duo-prop combination was superb.



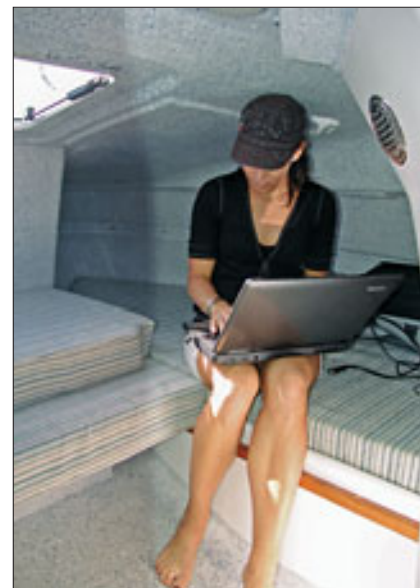
Pure and simple.

I was intrigued by the way the Duo-props held the boat on plane right down to 12-13 knots with a “get me home” speed and level of seakindliness that is probably the best the writer has ever experienced. Bunkered down in this 12-14 knot range, clearly, the Noosacat would go through just about anything – let alone the sort of seas that might spring up around Norfolk or the Australian coastline with only a couple of hours notice.

Coming up the range to 18-19 knots, it's easily capable of handling East Coast summer seas, and once it gets cracking, hell, it's more about how fast you want to go, how serious you are about fuel economy (and/or what you

can afford) and settling back to enjoy the ride. It is incredibly fast across the ground, make no mistake. Few boats would keep up with it and it will simply blow monohulls of a similar length to the weeds. On any point of the compass, too.

As I've noted before in these pages, it's always been one of my regrets that I can't take a bunch of readers out there with us because many readers just write these comments off as “PW's Cat passion” and whilst there's no doubt I'm very enthusiastic about craft of this calibre, the fact remains as a professional boating reporter, I've yet to experience anything in the monohulled league that comes onto the same parade ground.





And bear in mind we've had some very good monohulls, including our 8.2m *Dusty Rover* which I have said repeatedly is one of the best monohulls in Australia, and our existing *Far-Away* which if anything, is softer than *Dusty Rover* and nearly as soft as this bigger cat. So it's not a case of being totally one eyed in favour of cats because some of them are just not as good as this, and that applies to some of the more popular models in Australia, too.

The 3100 is a bit of a freak – and it will help to be a cat owner to understand this – because this is the last of the sizes where you still get that classic cat 'lift and lightness' that separates the cats from the monos back down in the 18-24' area.

This cat still has it – even with twin diesel sterndrives, it feels like a 23-24 footer when you're cruising, although it has the ride comfort and softness of a much bigger monohull ie, up around the 34-35' class.

So yes, it is a bit of a freak show, but who cares? For whatever reason ie, the combination of the beam width, hull shape, hull displacement, tunnel width, tunnel height, chine and strake shapes, it works.

There are dozens of factors in the hydrodynamic department that separate one boat from another – and in this case, it all comes together like the components of a symphony orchestra – and the music it plays with a good conductor at the helm is just pure magic.

Was I impressed? Believe it, it doesn't get much better than this taking onboard all of the factors one has to think about these days.



Capital investment. Fuel economy. Inherent safety. Seakindliness. Quality of construction. Safety at sea. Cockpit fishing space. Creature comforts.

Name it, it's in this boat.

## Conclusion

We enjoyed the run with Darren and Shari and thank them sincerely for letting us join them in their beautiful new boat. We wish them well in their future endeavours off Norfolk Island.

***Time Out:** Yes, we have discussed with them the possibility of working out some sort of competition for our readers, and we'll have more of that later, because I for one would like to sign up for a couple of days on Norfolk Island fishing in this craft; it would be a strain, but I reckon I could handle it! And I'm also pretty certain a lot of our readers could too, so we'll see what happens. It's certainly a good idea and Darren and Shari were obviously keen on the concept too. Watch this space.*

The writer is not going to apologise for being enthusiastic about this boat or any other. My job is to go from one boat to another and another and prepare a report about them that will, hopefully, put them into a reasonably accurate perspective.

It's so hard for people out in the bush, on the mine sites, in the Defence Forces (etc) to get a handle on how new boats work, so we spend a fair bit of our time trying to paint the picture about what it can achieve, what are its drawbacks, what are its advantages – all the sort of 'hands-on' stuff you can't get off the internet.



In this case, this is an exceptional craft albeit a very utilitarian and practical boat for a specific purpose – charter fishing off a remote island in the mid-Pacific.

Now this set-up is unlikely to suit somebody who lives in Middle Harbour who wants to go out fishing off Sydney Heads, or a Melbourne who wants to run out through The Rip at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, much less down the Gulfs of SA, or along the Indian Ocean in WA. But with the Noosacat factory, and a base model like this, a new owner can tailor the product to his particular area, family requirements, fishing application and come up with something that is absolutely out of the box.

Darren and Shari Bates have done this, and they've created a boat that is perfect for the job they have planned for it: charter fishing off Norfolk Island.

As it happens, the writer would happily order one of these boats too, right down to the Volvo D-3s - but I'd have a different cabin configuration and fit-out. But that's the whole Noosacat secret.

Wayne and Debbie Hennig, as co-principles of Noosacat don't care whether you want jet drives, stern drives, outboards, polka dotted paint or left-handed skyhooks – their job is to build the boat you want, for your purposes, in your world.

And that's why they remain one of the most successful production boat builders in Australia.

**F&B**

