

July 2010 Field & Stream Magazine Featuring NRS GigBob.

The Gun Nut Issue

FIELD & STREAM

JULY 2010 THE WORLD'S LEADING OUTDOOR MAGAZINE

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"This is a camping Cadillac."
—Jay Cassell on the Hillsberg Natio 4 GT tent, p. 76

Field Test

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Two for One
Remove the base pontoons, and the GigBob is a kick boat; keep them attached, and you have a raft.

Notable Floatables
WE TESTED FIVE ONE-MAN INFLATABLE BOATS FOR FISHABILITY AND DURABILITY
By Kirk Deeter

FIELD TEST // BUYER'S GUIDE F&S

A blow-up tube plus flippers, oars, and a little elbow grease has always been a good, low-impact, inexpensive option for floating a lake or a slow to medium-fast river. If you want to take things up a notch, however, there's now a wide range of one-person inflatable watercraft specifically built to meet different fishing conditions and budgets. We've paddled and fished many—some new, others newly tweaked—to land on the following best options.



NRS GigBob
(\$1,595) nrsweb.com

The Lowdown: The GigBob is frameless and fairly lightweight (67 pounds) but rigid and stable. The 8-foot-long base pontoons are wider and flatter than most, offering a shallow draft without compromising on oar responsiveness. Best, when you detach the pontoons, you have a lightweight kick boat; keep them attached, and you've got a beefy raft.

Hits: The GigBob is a fast, comfortable boat, even in bumpy water.

Misses: It's pricey for a one-man inflatable.

Who Should Buy: The angler who wants a durable, stable, versatile boat.

- BUCK'S BAGS BRONCO EXTREME 9 (\$1,350)** bucksbags.com
THE LOWDOWN A top-of-the-line boat, the Bronco Extreme 9 tracks sharply on lakes or in mild to moderate river currents. It's easy to cast from and land fish in. Weighing only 55 pounds with its frame, the Bronco has a rear cargo deck for a cooler and a carrying capacity of 375 pounds. You can pay \$100 less and get the Extreme 9 with single-chamber pontoons, but I'd opt for the dual chambers; if you puncture one, you won't experience a total blowout.
HITS The 9-foot model is particularly nimble.
MISSSES We're not sure about the stealth properties of yellow pontoons.
WHO SHOULD BUY Anglers who appreciate performance rowing machines.
- CREEK CO. ODC SPORT XR (\$400)** creekcompany.com
THE LOWDOWN This is a durable, few-frills pontoon boat at a decent price. The simple frame design requires no tools for assembly. Although the oars aren't as muscular as some others, they're capable of pulling a load of up to 375 pounds across flat water. The cargo pockets are easy to access and big enough to hold plenty of gear.
HITS If you want to just float and fish, it's hard to find a better budget value.
MISSSES It's 50 pounds, despite being only 8 feet long.
WHO SHOULD BUY The angler who wants an entry-level inflatable.
- NRS GIGBOB (\$1,595)** nrsweb.com
THE LOWDOWN The GigBob is frameless and fairly lightweight (67 pounds) but rigid and stable. The 8-foot-long base pontoons are wider and flatter than most, offering a shallow draft without compromising on oar responsiveness. Best, when you detach the pontoons, you have a lightweight kick boat; keep them attached, and you've got a beefy raft.
HITS The GigBob is a fast, comfortable boat, even in bumpy water.
MISSSES It's pricey for a one-man inflatable.
WHO SHOULD BUY The angler who wants a durable, stable, versatile boat.
- OUTCAST POWER DRIFTER (\$1,350)** outcastboats.com
THE LOWDOWN It's a cross-over that rows like a raft but tracks in currents like a fat kayak. It can carry up to 500 pounds and offers an anchor system, storage space, and a mount for a small motor. The ride is quirky, but once you get used to it, this 46-inch-long, 79-pound boat becomes a part of you.
HITS The seat is set high, ideal for fly casting.
MISSSES Your feet aren't in the water, so you can't wear kick fins to hold your position when you cast.
WHO SHOULD BUY The solo angler who wants a tough, versatile boat.
- SUPERCAT 60 (\$560)** supercat.us
THE LOWDOWN For the angler who wants a basic, affordable pontoon boat, the SuperCat 60 (with 60-inch pontoons) is a good choice. It's just 14 pounds, so you can strap it to your back and hike to remote waters. The seat height and foot bar can be adjusted. Though the weight capacity is only 300 pounds, this boat handles well on milder rivers and is well suited for most lakes.
HITS It floats a tad higher than most other pontoon craft, which helps in casting.
MISSSES The blunt ends of the pontoons, plus a blocky profile, make it a bit sluggish when rowing straight lines or in heavy winds.
WHO SHOULD BUY The adventure-bound (and cost-conscious) angler who wants easy portability and a reliable ride.

THE TEST
I rowed the Colorado and South Platte Rivers and asked guide buddies to do the same on the Colorado, Arkansas, and Roaring Fork, to assess the agility, durability, and fishability of the boats. We then considered the different styles and price points. —K.D.