

NEW BOATS



SOUL OF THE MACHINE: The Ellis 36 looks like a lobsterboat, but runs on cutting-edge jet drives.

Jet Ranger

Adding twin UltraJet water-jet drives to the traditional, Maine-built Ellis 36 Express Cruiser might have been a gamble, but instead, it has resulted in a beautifully designed vessel that can handle following seas, is highly maneuverable and tracks well at any speed.

Conventional wisdom holds that water jets are more efficient in deep-V hulls because the V offers lower drive placement and more lateral stability. By comparison, semidisplacement hulls like the Ellis 36's have little below the waterline, especially if rudders and keels are removed to accommodate the water jets. To solve that problem, Don Ellis—the owner of the company—redesigned his popular 36-foot propeller-driven boat for water jets by shaving 10 inches from its three-foot 10-inch rudder. As a result, the draft on the jet version is just three feet.

"This 27-plus-knot boat can run in reasonably shallow water without wrapping stray rope, crab pots or lobster

buoys around props," says Ellis. "And boaters in the South don't have to worry about injuring manatees or damaging other sea life."

Perfect marriage

To create this unique propulsion system, Ellis—who is the son of famed Downeast builder Ralph Ellis—married two 300-hp Yanmar diesels to Borg Warner transmissions with a 1 to 1 reduction ratio. (These transmissions are common in the marketplace.) He then called for two nine-foot shafts to run through the Evolution Quiet Drive system and spin the impellers on a pair of 305 low-profile UltraJet drives. To make the drives more efficient, Don added two wedge-shaped pods at the stern. These pods allow the water jets to be installed horizontally, which means the jets expel water straight out aft, not down into the sea at an angle. As a result, there's little rooster-tailing.

During our test, we found the boat to be extremely maneuverable, even without bow

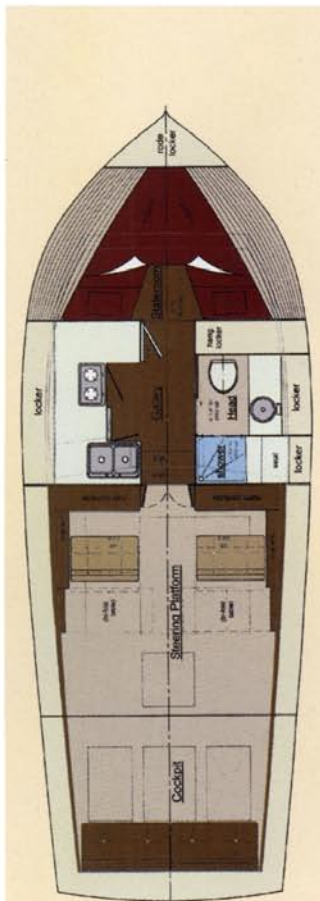
or stern thrusters, and it backs well, too. With a little practice, you can even learn to "hover" and to "walk" it in or out of the dock.

Ellis is a semicustom builder. While each hand laid-up hull is the same, each interior plan is customized to suit the owner's needs. Topsides can also be customized, but the Ellis never loses its lobsterboat looks. On our test boat, interesting features included the electric/hydraulic helm and passenger seats—which converted to a dining table and bunk—and the stern seats that converted to a sun lounge. The joiner work was exceptional, too (see our report on the original Ellis 36 in the July, 1998 issue for more details).

The Ellis comes complete with eight coats of varnish and a full electronics package. But it doesn't come cheap. As rigged, the test boat retails for \$478,000.

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—Dan Fales



ELLIS 36 ULTRAJET EXPRESS CRUISER

LOA: 36'10"

Beam: 13'2"

Draft: 3'0"

Weight: 15,000 lbs.

Water: 100 gals.

Fuel: 300 gals.

Power: (2) 300-hp

Yanmars with twin

UltraJet drives

Cruise: 25 mph/3400 rpm

Max: 32 mph/3800 rpm

Price (loaded): \$478,000

Standard items include:

- Windlass
- Hydraulic steering
- Electric/hydraulic seats
- Pressure water
- Teak package
- Electronics package