



The glistening ICAST Best of Show winner still looks good after this bass (perhaps the first caught from a C-135) blew duckweed and hydrilla all over its shiny decks.

Photos: Cheryl Little

# EDDYLINE C135 STRATOFISHER

SLEEK EXTENDS BEYOND APPEARANCES

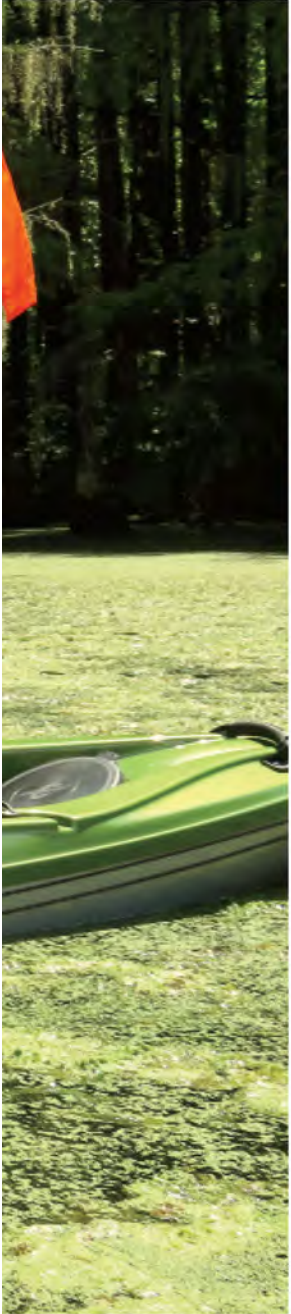
BY JERRY MCBRIDE

Paddling instructor Ron Pekrul helps me test kayaks. He doesn't fish. He intends to take up the sport someday, as long as it doesn't interfere with his white-water and distance paddling. When I think about Eddyline kayaks, I envision one of their blue and white Caribbean touring models atop Ron's SUV, anticipating a long, fast evening paddle after he gets done at the kayak shop.

That was yesterday's thinking. Eddyline jumped into the kayak fishing competition with both feet at Orlando's ICAST 2015, emerging with the overall Best of Show award. But let's be honest here: Voters—writers like me—are drawn to shiny objects, and the thermoformed, Eddyline C-135 Stratofisher YakAttack Edition was the biggest, brightest star within the ICAST New Product universe. We congratulated and videotaped the winners (see it at [KayakFishMag.com](http://KayakFishMag.com)) and moved on to the next aisle of new toys.

But viewing a product in an ICAST booth is far from a real-world exercise. How would it perform in actual water, with a little wind and maybe even a fish tossed into the mix?

We got lucky on a couple levels, although a little persistence helped. Videographer Cheryl Little and I managed to intercept that westbound



After testing a number of wide kayaks, the C-135 stunned us with its easy acceleration. Below: The twin front hatches feature lift-out gear buckets. Photos: Cheryl Little



Photos: Cheryl Little

showboat as it crossed the Florida panhandle, diverting it for a few hours of paddling and fishing on a lake just off I-10. When we got done, it was decked in mud, moss and even a little fish slime, but somehow emerged even brighter and shinier.

It's definitely a winner.

From the second I pulled away from the sand, it became apparent the Eddyline C-135 benefits from its legacy of performance. A few paddle strokes easily brought it up to speed. Gigantic grass carp slid beneath me in the crystal spring-fed lake as I pushed effortlessly down the cypress and Spanish moss-trimmed shoreline.

With limited time to play—the boat had appointments to keep—we moved among the cypress to test stability. The C-135 is equipped with a grab strap to aid in standing, but I didn't really need it. I generally feel a twinge of anxiety as I first get to my feet on a kayak. This boat didn't twitch when I planted my feet on the padded deck. Even when I purposely rocked the boat side to side, it gave no hint of flipping. I never gave standing a thought after that.

The 135 also works quietly. A largemouth bass with the worst timing on the planet picked that exact moment when we were testing the kayak's standup capability to blatantly chase minnows in the shadows on a nearby shoreline, totally oblivious to our presence within casting distance. A quick pitch resulted in a swing and a miss on my LiveTarget frog. On the

## EDDYLINE C135 STRATOFISHER:

L 13'5" W 34" Cap. 450 lbs. Weight 69 lbs.

C-135 Stratofisher \$2,199;

YakAttack Edition (tested) \$2,599

[www.eddyline.com](http://www.eddyline.com)





**EDDYLINE C-135  
STATOFISHER  
HIGHLIGHTS**

Exceptional performance, given the 34-inch beam

Cloud 10 Seating System offers outstanding comfort and adjustability

Rock solid standup stability

Easy handling at 69 pounds

Just plain pretty

follow-up cast, I could see the wake coming for five feet in the foot-deep shallows, but I managed to hold off on the hookset as the fish engulfed the fake amphibian.

That shiny ICAST showboat isn't so pristine anymore. The bass blasted it with hydrilla and duckweed from bow to stern. We shot pics and video and released the fish, kind of excited about landing the first fish recorded on the new hull. That left us pondering its potential if we actually took it fishing.

Thermoformed boats, of course, are immediately appealing to the eye. Aesthetically, the symmetry of the Eddyline is truly pleasing. The fit and finish are remarkable for a boat that's technically still a prototype. Twin black bow and console hatch covers open to reveal white, lift-out gear buckets. The console hatch is alternatively designed to accept up to a Group 24 battery to power electronics or even a trolling motor.

The heart of the cockpit is the cushy Cloud 10 Seating System, which offers high forward, high back, low and reclined positions, or can be folded out of the way for additional standup deck space. I didn't feel crowded with the seat in standard position, but fly anglers sensitive to open spaces might appreciate the extra room. I actually slid the adjustable foot pegs at least half a dozen notches rearward just to meet my feet in the big cockpit. The Cloud 10 features quick-dry, 1.5-inch-thick, marine-grade, anti-microbial foam inside a solar weave mesh fabric. It's comfortable.

As Eddyline rep Cliff Earle pointed out, the only item the designers are less than pleased with is the midpoint carrying handles; they're not precisely midpoint in weight distribution. But at just 69 pounds, solo loading and storing is still easily manageable.

Comfort and stability reflect the motivation behind the recent trend toward big, wide kayaks. But to attain them, manufacturers typically sacrifice speed and handling to some degree. So how did the Eddyline C135 perform in some very unofficial tests?

First, a disclaimer. I am not a technical paddler. I fish. I rarely even feather my paddle blades, as I'm more concerned with close-quarters maneuvering when positioning for a cast or fighting a fish. Given the 34-inch beam, I should have used a 240-centimeter paddle rather than the 230 I keep in the truck, but I didn't have time to round one up, given the impromptu opportunity to paddle the 135.

Given all that, we waited until the end of the day to do extremely unscientific speed tests. A thunderstorm cooled the air all the way into the upper 80's, but kicked up a 15-knot chop. Into the wind, the boat easily maintained 3.75 mph, pushing past 4.3 if I wanted to exert myself a bit. Downwind, an easy stroke produced 4.3 mph, and I hit 4.9 as I turned toward the boat ramp to conclude the day's activities. I have no doubt my technical advisor, Ron Pekrul, would have picked up half-knot in either direction. Quiet throughout, and I never had to take an extra stroke to maintain course. That's typical going into the wind, but extremely rare with a significant tailing breeze and chop.

The standard Eddyline C-135 YakAttack Edition is essentially an open design to allow exact customization. The YakAttack Edition we tested includes a grey BlackPak crate, a VisiCarbon Pro, Zooka Tube rodholder, paddle clips and strategically placed accessory tracks fore and aft. The

Eddyline C-135 is available in three colors, Yellow, Silver, or Seagrass.