

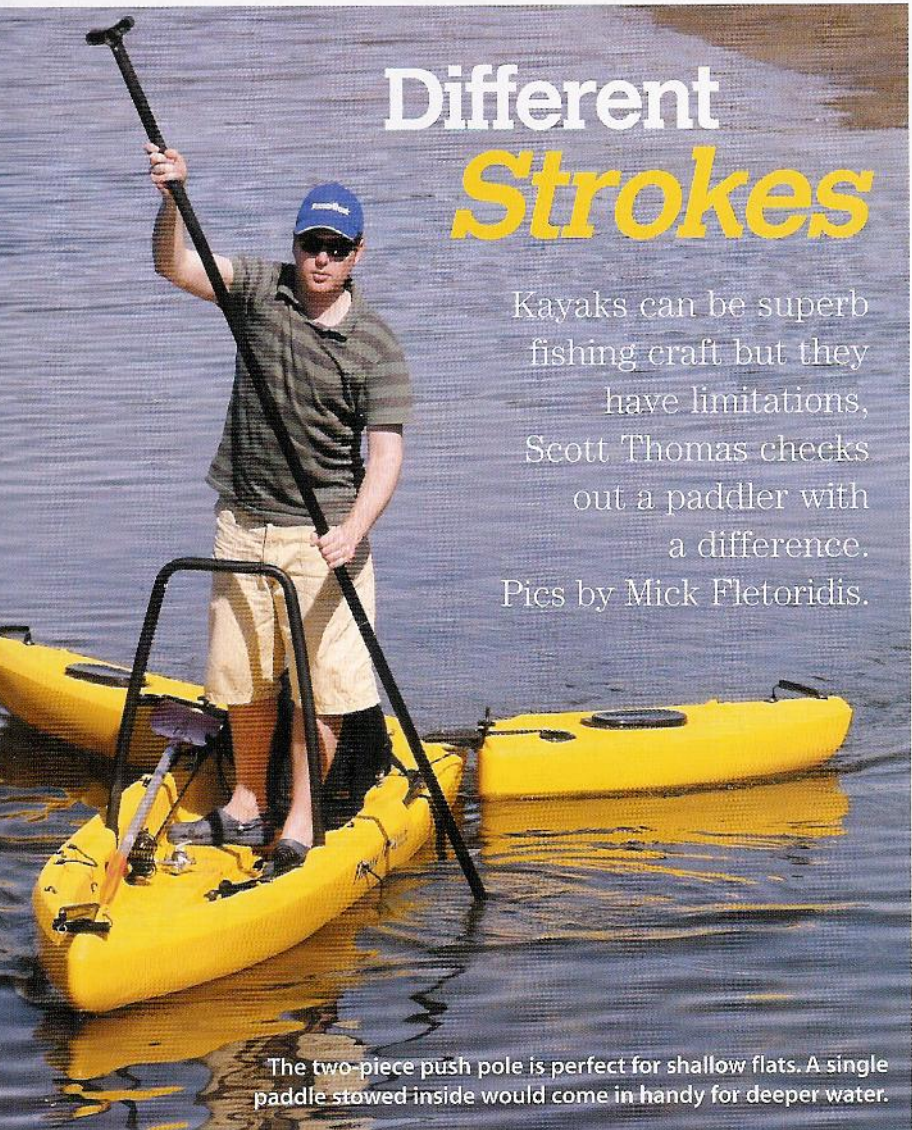
Different Strokes

Kayaks can be superb fishing craft but they have limitations, Scott Thomas checks out a paddler with a difference. Pics by Mick Fletoridis.

a matter of grabbing the rope and pulling yourself up to a standing position. Once you're standing, there's a handy grab rail to keep steady. With the pontoons deployed, it's almost impossible to capsize. That's a big call but I reckon you'd fall off the kayak well before it capsized. With the money tied up in most people's fishing tackle, this is a feature sure to raise a few eyebrows. An added bonus with the pontoons is the ability to deploy one at a time, making it easy to get in and out at wharves. And the pontoons are removable for ease of transport.

On the water

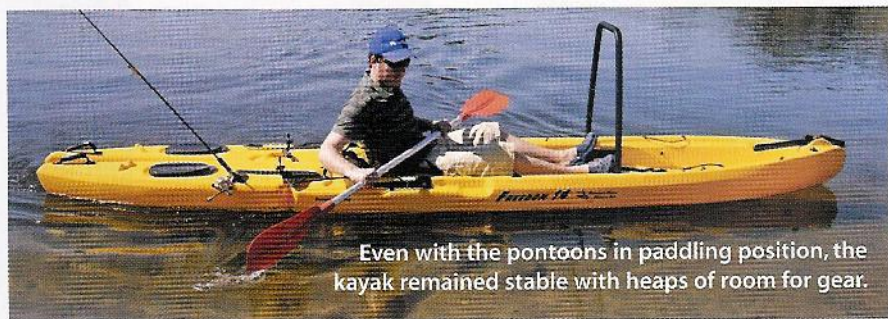
Roughly speaking, kayaks generally fall into two categories – “sit on” and “sit in”. As you'll see from the photos, the Freedom Hawk is a “sit on”; the trend in fishing and general fun use kayaks has gone this way in the past few years. With the ability to sit just that little bit higher, along with the better use of available space, it's not hard to see why sit ons are so popular. The amount of available space at the front of the kayak is more than enough. Watertight storage is available in the two pontoons



The two-piece push pole is perfect for shallow flats. A single paddle stowed inside would come in handy for deeper water.

LIKE all things from America – good and bad – it wasn't long before this unique kayak reached Australian shores. Peter Mcgrath and Daniel Kan from Flybridge are responsible for the Freedom Hawk's debut in this country and if the amount of interest generated already is anything to go by, they should really take off in a big way. Keen to see what all the fuss was about, I met Peter and Daniel on a warm winter's day at Bayview on Sydney's Pittwater.

Several factors usually decide one's motives for purchasing a kayak. Price and lack of storage are two main reasons, although now, with the introduction of specialist fishing yaks, many are by-passing boats altogether and sticking with the simplicity a kayak offers. Freshwater kayak fishing has been around for some time – bass, trout, cod and more – have all fallen victim to the kayak's stealthy virtues. A



Even with the pontoons in paddling position, the kayak remained stable with heaps of room for gear.

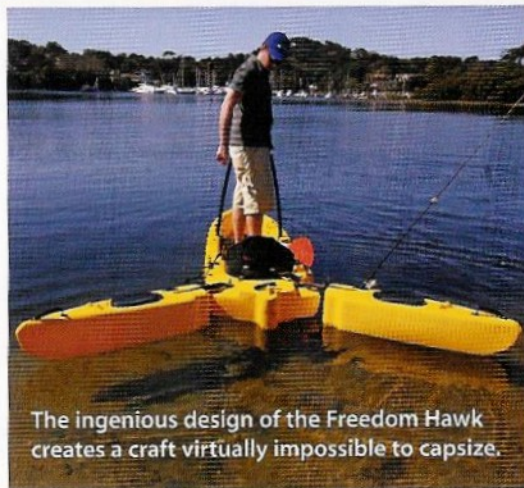
quick glance around many saltwater fishing haunts will reveal a definite move towards saltwater kayak fishing. And that's where the Freedom Hawk is in its element.

How is this 14 foot (4.3m) craft different from all the other purpose-built fishing kayaks? Two pontoons that sit directly behind the seat are swung outwards with the stroke of a lever, creating a T-shape kayak. Once the pontoons are deployed, it's

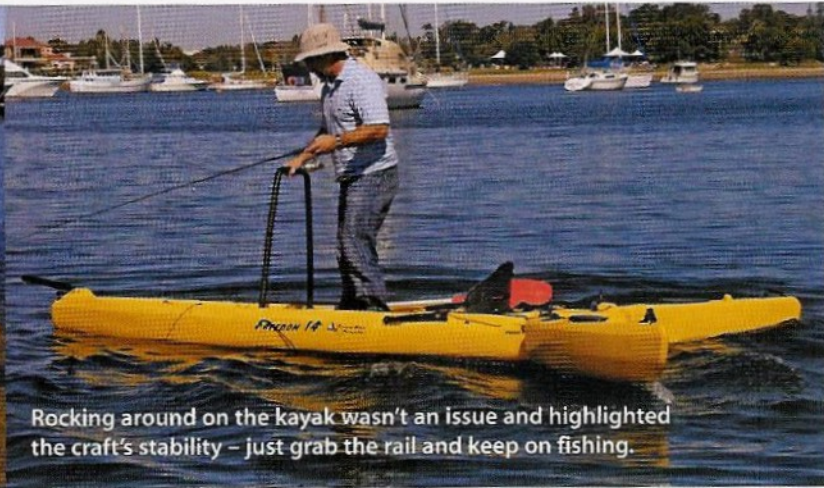
and rod holders sit behind the seat. Ideally you would fit an extra set of rod holders on the grab rail. I found it a little awkward finding a place to put the rod while standing up and sitting down.

The Freedom Hawk comes with its own push pole – flats style. The pole is of two-piece construction and proved easy enough to assemble on the water. Pushing the kayak around and casting in shallow water

KAYAK FISHING



The ingenious design of the Freedom Hawk creates a craft virtually impossible to capsize.



Rocking around on the kayak wasn't an issue and highlighted the craft's stability – just grab the rail and keep on fishing.

was easy – I could picture it being handy on an open sand flat casting flies and lures around the shallow water. As the kayak drifted into deeper water, it became more difficult to control. This could be overcome with the addition of a single paddle, which could be stowed until needed – there would be plenty of room for it.

A handy anchor mechanism allows the fisho to drop the anchor without moving from the seat – it's good to see a purpose built fishing yak with these features.

The shape and weight of the kayak meant paddling was slower than some other similar sit ons, although with stability as good as this, that's a compromise most people could live with. All up the Freedom Hawk is an impressive kayak. No other kayak I've ever paddled had the same excellent stability. Even without the pontoons deployed, it was more stable than most. If it's a serious fishing kayak you're after, take a look at the Freedom Hawk.

» FREEDOM HAWK KAYAK

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Length: | 4.22m |
| Beam: | 0.76m |
| Weight: | 38.5kgs |
| | (29.5kgs less pontoons) |
| Max Capacity: | 181kgs |
| Price: | \$2799 |

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