

The Silent Treatment

These ninja outboards allow you to jam to nature's soundtrack.

Torqeedo Cruise R

BY ALAN JONES

For becoming one with nature, nothing beats cruising down a small river, listening to the gentle lapping of the waves on your hull. The wading birds look up only briefly to assess the danger, then go back to their business. While four-stroke engines greatly reduce your noise footprint, if you truly want to achieve stealthy boating and fishing, electric is the way to go. Sometimes it's not only by choice, but by mandate, as we are seeing more waterways being restricted to electric-only or engines below 10 hp.

Everyone has seen electric trolling motors; they grace the bow of practically every bass boat in the country, but if you want to power your boat solely by electric power, you need a motor that's designed to be the primary power, not an auxiliary unit. You might be surprised to learn there is a wide variety of choices. Apex Marine, which produces Quest and Gill-Getter pontoon boats, is one of the largest providers of electric-mounted boats, and it ships approximately one-third of its pontoons without a combustion engine — and still gives owners a choice of four different power sources.

Torqeedo

→ One of the most popular builders is the new kid on the block, Germany's Torqeedo, which produces a line of lightweight, high-tech models that can crank out up to 8 hp. Using a brushless design and employing rare earth magnets, the two Cruise R models weigh just 40 pounds each. The 2.0 model is a 24v system that produces 5 hp and has the same thrust as a 6 hp gas engine, while the 4.0 — a 48v motor — cranks out 8 hp with thrust equivalent to a 9.9 hp gas outboard. The price for the 2.0 is \$3,100; the 4.0 is \$3,699.

Because of the Torqeedo models' high thrust, they can turn a huge 12-inch-diameter prop that has 10 inches of pitch and is similar in design to the props pushing container ships and submarines. Because the props are so large, they run at a slower rpm for better bite. There is also a high-speed prop for lighter boats that can reach planing speeds. The prop and skeg are made of inexpensive plastic, and the motor is designed to be locked in place when used in applications such as pontoons. So when the motor strikes an underwater object, the prop and skeg are sacrificed to save the rest of the motor. You can unlock the engine and it will kick up during a strike, but when you go into reverse, the lower unit will pop up out of the water.

The Cruise R includes a remote throttle that has a GPS-based information center, which displays speed, watt usage, charge and how many miles of range remain at the current speed. A 2.0 Torqeedo motor powered by two 12v 200 Ah gel batteries, run at half throttle, pushing a 40-foot, 2.6-ton Skerry Cruiser, can run at 2.7 knots for an impressive 16.5 hours, which takes it 44 miles. At a slower speed, range is quadrupled.

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