

DEEPER PRO+

THE GENUINELY USEFUL WI-FI SONAR

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Let's be honest: most first reactions to the prospect of owning and using a tennis-ball-sized floating Wi-Fi Sonar are "It's just a gadget, a gimmick; it can't really be a useful, accurate sonar - can it?"

That's exactly what I wanted to find out. I have some quite clever and complex sonar set-ups on my boats and I know how to get the best out of them, so I was never going to cut the Deeper PRO+ any slack when it came to an assessment of its capabilities. I did decide to start with an open mind though, and a plan for a fairly thorough evaluation.

The Deeper comes in three models, the Deeper 3.0, the Deeper PRO and the Deeper PRO+. The 3.0 sends data via a Bluetooth connection to a mobile device; the PRO sends the data via Wi-Fi and has a substantially increased range; while the PRO+ sends data via Wi-Fi, and has an inbuilt GPS. The model I put through its paces was the PRO+.

It arrived with an accessories package of a flexi holder, for mounting on a kayak or boat; a phone holder, for mounting the cell phone on a rod; and a bright orange night-fishing cover. The beauty of the Deeper is that almost everyone already owns what amounts to the screen component of the system, in the way of either a smart phone or a tablet. A

simple-to-download app installed on any such mobile device brings the whole system together in the hands of the operator.

I decided I would first use the Deeper in Bluff Harbour and around the coast from the boat and make some direct comparisons with the onboard sonar/fishfinder.

One of the first moments of unease to be overcome is when you tie the Deeper onto a line and, in effect, throw it away; but good knots, a careful cast and a boat to retrieve the floating Deeper at least minimised the risk of losing the unit. Once floating in the water the device automatically powers up and begins looking for the paired mobile device. The Deeper PRO+ had an easy range of at least 70 or 80 metres, and as long as the mobile device wasn't hidden in the bowels of the vessel reception wasn't an issue. A useful indicator on the screen of the mobile device indicated that connectivity was achieved and continuing.

I tried the Deeper using both an iPad and my cell phone as screens, but only one device can be used at a time; the other must be powered off or have

the Wi-Fi disabled. The Deeper was essentially tethered to the boat and, while alongside, its display indicating water depth, temperature, structure and fish were all very much in agreement with the more complex on-board installation. So now I was assured that it told the truth - or at least the same story as big brother. It was also easy to interpret the on-screen depictions of bottom, structure and fish; and both the basic and advanced display options, along with fish symbols and depth readouts, were easy to see - even on the small screen of a smart phone.

The unit and app display can also be set to send alarms for minimum and maximum depth, and for fish; plus messages and warnings such as loss of connectivity, battery power, not enough water, or out of the water (when in the water, the unit needs a depth of at least a metre to function). It was also fairly good at depicting the blue cod and dogfish that were being caught, both on cobbles and a sandy bottom.

The next outing was to the Fortrose Estuary where once again the Deeper was deployed

from the boat as sea run trout were targeted. It was here, in the modest depths of just a few metres, that the benefits of the broad and narrow beam sonar function came into their own. I was surprised to find that the sonar was sensitive enough (sensitivity can be controlled through the touchscreen of your mobile device) to distinguish between the layers of fresh and saltwater at the point in the estuary system where one overrides the other. As with other density/temperature layers the break is interpreted as a consistent line of returns or, with the fish icons on, as fish. Reducing the sensitivity removed the break from the screen but still indicated a few hunting sea-runners.

Next it was to Riverton to cast the Deeper into the flow of the incoming tide pushing up the estuary there. What the unit clearly displayed - other than bottom and structure - was that mullet were accumulating in an eddy along the shore. I know this because I talked a young fellow who was fishing there into trying some tiny baits until he began to catch them. ▶



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I also wanted to see what the Deeper unit would do in a river; I had been told that it might not cope with a fast rate of travel. I'll admit that fishing from a whitebait stand in tidal sections of the Aparima isn't exactly a *fast* rate of travel, but it was fun and productive. I let the Deeper float along the river's edge to a confluence with a drainage channel until it came to rest beside a submerged willow, in about seven feet of water.

Periodically a fish symbol would appear and disappear from the display; I interpreted this information as a brown trout on a beat. So after scratching around, a worm was located, a split shot sunken worm set-up was rigged - and within a few minutes I had that brown trout on the bank. The Deeper had easily spotted it for me, and what had otherwise been just a likely spot was confirmed as a location holding a fish. This is the real beauty of the Deeper: it does the job of a boat-mounted system without the boat, and in places you simply couldn't or wouldn't get a boat to.

The final outing to use the Deeper was also from the boat, on Lake Manapouri. I wanted to cast the Deeper onto submerged river deltas and let the flow carry it out over the drop-off. The idea was that I could locate holding trout within casting distance, but without coming too close with the boat.

There were several things the Deeper and app display on the iPad showed: the bottom and structure (logs in this case); the fish; and because there was a lot of snow about, a clearly indicated thermocline where colder water was flowing into and under warmer lake water. Backing off the sensitivity removed the clutter and showed individual fish again. I cast to the floating Deeper when it indicated a trout, and with a 3 inch softbait I landed several nice fish using the technique. The Deeper made fish-hunting possible without the disturbance of a boat nearby.

I also had a play with the bathymetric mapping capability of the unit; it creates a sub-surface map of the bottom with depth contours using data, GPS information and its history archive. You can even play it all back on your device when you get home! That's a lot of capability in a tennis-ball-size sonar unit paired with your mobile device and a free app.

There is however one cloud on the horizon of this review: although the Deeper PRO+ worked brilliantly with my Samsung smartphone the Deeper and my iPad simply did not get on together. Rather than providing a continuous and smooth real time display like the smart phone, the iPad tended to chunk the data it received and then display about 30 seconds of



data in one screen update. Deeper have a responsive customer support service online however, and by using that service they used my observations to uncover a bug in the app software for iPads and released a new software version within a week or two. This improved things markedly, but not entirely. The difficulty is that devices using the app need to concentrate single-mindedly on the Wi-Fi or Bluetooth data they're receiving; all other data services need to be disabled, so that your mobile device is only processing the Deeper data. My iPad could not be convinced to do this, so there were breaks in processing and updating the onscreen display.

Is the Deeper range of remote floating sonars a gimmick ... just another gadget? Possibly - but I used the PRO+ enough to establish its capabilities and its accuracy very clearly. The Deeper is not a toy. It is every bit as capable as the first basic fishfinders I had installed on my boat; no - actually *much better* than that. And I could never cast or drift those boat-mounted systems under a willow or into a hard to reach spot I didn't want disturbed. The Deeper PRO+, in the hands of someone who is determined to get the best out of it, will be a very productive fishing tool.

The Deeper range begins at a recommended retail price of \$399 and goes up to \$539 for the most sophisticated model.





deeper
Fishfinder

Wireless Fishfinder for smartphones



Deeper's Smart Imaging technology provides crystal clear images of fish targets and bottom structure with amazing detail, straight to your smartphone or tablet. Use it in places most others can't, like from a kayak, from the beach or wharf, or float it down the berley trail to see the action.

We know where the fish are hiding.

**Deeper Wins
Prestigious
Innovation
Award!**



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