



Dennis McFarlane

R/C Report

Snow Boat

The Aquacraft Mini Alligator Tours is designed to be a working boat on water, but running it in snow provides a whole new level of fun.

Radio control has moved into an age where there are more and more modelers exploring the world of electric propulsion. Often, the phrase “everything electric” is heard wherever and whenever modelers get together.

Originally reviewed in the December 2008 issue, the Alligator Tours airboat was powered by a Super Tiger .34 glow motor. At the end of the review, Jeff Troy remarked that it took a little getting used to, but he found the Alligator Tours airboat “really cool to drive.”

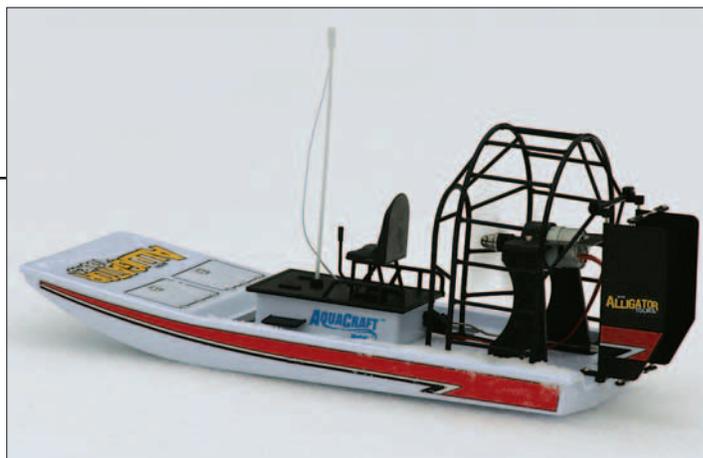
One way for a company to maximize its investment is to take an already proven design, such as the glow-powered Alligator Tours, adjust the size to fit current market trends and, as in this case, power it with an electric motor.



The radio compartment is compact and simple in layout. Included is a 1100 mAh NiMH battery that can be upgraded in capacity and voltage for enhanced performance.

The new Mini Alligator Tours is a 40% reduction of the original boat. Replacing the glow engine is a brushed electric “can” motor. In addition, an 1100 mAh NiMH 7.2-volt battery pack replaces the fuel tank, and an ESC is mounted where a throttle servo would normally take up space. The mini airboat is a very straight forward reduction of an already proven design.

Although the electric version of the boat is fun to drive, it isn’t what you would call a real performer.



Combinations of throttle and extreme rudder swing make for some interesting maneuvers, but the boat does not match a full-scale airboat in terms of all-out speed. This is something that could easily be changed through the addition of a brushless motor and lithium battery, but that is beyond the scope of the product as it comes in the box.

Although the boat is not fast, that doesn’t mean it isn’t useful. It was quickly found to be a practical retrieval boat. A hole was drilled in the lower rudder cross-member support and a standard Futaba servo wheel was mounted in place. This offers a handy location to tie a length of floating fly-fishing line and small bobber. The lack of an underwater propeller and submerged rudder makes this an ideal boat for getting in close to a flipped or partially submerged model. By using the airboat’s maneuverability, it is easy to tangle the fly-line around the hull of the boat in distress and slowly drag it back to shore. As a working boat, the Mini Alligator Tours has a home.



Although not a speed demon, the airboat performs adequately on water. Sudden application of throttle and extreme rudder throw makes for some interesting maneuvers.

For most of the country, the one thing that always comes with winter is snow. Desperately in need of a diversion during a typical winter day in Chicago, I charged up the Alligator Tours and set it on the snow. To say I was surprised at the result is an understatement. I had a ball. I don't know if it was the need for outdoor activity or if the boat actually performs that much better on snow, but what a riot. After a sizable snow storm, the temperature had risen to above freezing for only an hour or so, then dropped again, leaving behind a very thin layer of icy crust on top of the snow. This was just enough to prevent the airboat from tracking. It would zip across the surface, changing directions at a whim.

Obviously all sorts of crazy turns and instant heading



On snow the airboat really comes alive and is a blast to drive. The model continues to accelerate unheeded by drag and will suddenly change direction without warning.

changes were possible, but the challenge was simply keeping the boat pointed in a straight line. By the very nature of the beast, as the throttle is held open, airboats continue to pick up speed. On snow, the boat would go faster and faster until

it simply veered off to the right or left, completely unexpected, but fun to "catch" and correct.

This was an unplanned activity, but one that showed that this little boat can be fun in unusual circumstances. It occurred only when the idea of doing something different came to mind. The entertainment was well worth the little effort it took to charge a couple of battery packs. If you have a customer looking for an outside the box activity, suggest an airboat. They are economical and fun to drive all year round. **HM**

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