

# Serious Wheels

The challenge of getting a dinghy from one place to another over land has been met, with varying degrees of success, by rollers, dollies, light trailers, sheer muscle power, and the light-duty wheel sets meant for clamping on an upside-down transom. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, but there has been a capability gap when it comes to moving a heavier or heavier-laden small boat by hand, right-side up.

Gordon Heck has stepped in to fill that gap. His company, DaNard Marine Products, makes a set of wheels called Flip It Wheels, designed to roll heavier loads, especially in soft conditions like sand or grass.

The system consists of only a few elements—two tires mounted on short axles, bolted through 20" support legs of 1" x 3/4" solid aluminum bar, and two runners, machined from solid aluminum, that are bolted to the transom of the boat. The support legs have two sets of pins. The shorter, top set, slides down inside the runner channel; the longer, bottom set, rides down on the outside until the wheel is fully vertical, then locks into a groove in the bottom of the runners. There's a



*The Flip It Wheels are recommended for loads up to 350 pounds. We suspect they would deal with even more, but there's a limit to what one person can pull up an incline. Note that the wheels, when locked down, allow the engine to be left down, too—handy for approaching or launching from choppy beaches or boat ramps when you need to maneuver with the engine.*

set of stops mid-way down the runner to keep the inside pegs from sliding down too far, and the buoyancy of the tires keeps the lower pegs set in the groove. To use them, you simply set the top pegs in the runner and push the support leg and wheel down until the bottom pegs pop into the groove. To reverse, push down and lift out a little. Quite simple and clever.

The 16" tires are inflated to 30 psi and have aggressive treads for traction on sand. The wheels are recommended for loads up to 350 pounds, but

Heck has tested them up to 500.

The system appears quite robust. We've had a set of these wheels in the office for several months, and although we lacked a test dinghy heavy enough to challenge the system in a meaningful way, we have poked and prodded the elements and tried to mistreat them, for instance by putting the support leg in a vise and trying to wrench the wheel out of alignment—but without ill effect. There are only two elements that might be considered weak links—the lower pins in the support arms, and the wheel axle, which is actually just a stainless bolt (304 grade), easily replaceable. Heck has tested the pins to a breaking point of 1,400 pounds, so both aluminum pins and steel bolts are overstrong for the work they're intended to do.

Heck offers a one-year warranty, and will replace any part that breaks, no questions asked. You just pay for shipping. At \$210 for a set, including mounting hardware, these things could make life easier for anyone who puzzles over how to manhandle a good-sized dinghy in and out of the water by hand. ■

**DaNard Marine Products, 805/983-8285, [www.danardmarine.com](http://www.danardmarine.com).**



*The aluminum parts are beautifully machined, and nylon bushings separate dissimilar metals, including shoulder bushings to keep the stainless mounting hardware off the aluminum runners.*

