

Feature Feast: What Fits Your Tastes

A combination chartplotter-fishfinder offers several advantages over purchasing a separate plotter and sounder. You'll likely save a bundle of cash as you're only buying one display screen, one component chassis, and one case. You'll be simplifying the install and wiring job, too. Significant space savings and having all important data on one screen are also pluses to having a combo unit.

The drawback? Putting all your electronics eggs in one basket, so to speak. If a multi-function device dies, rather than losing one function as you would with a stand-alone unit, you lose the whole kit-and-kaboodle. Having backup navigation tools onboard is a must.

When shopping for a combination chartplotter-fishfinder, here are some features to consider:

- **Screen size/resolution:** Be sure the display screen will fit the space limitations of where it will be mounted, and be sure it has a high enough resolution to be readable from where ever you're most likely to be viewing it from.

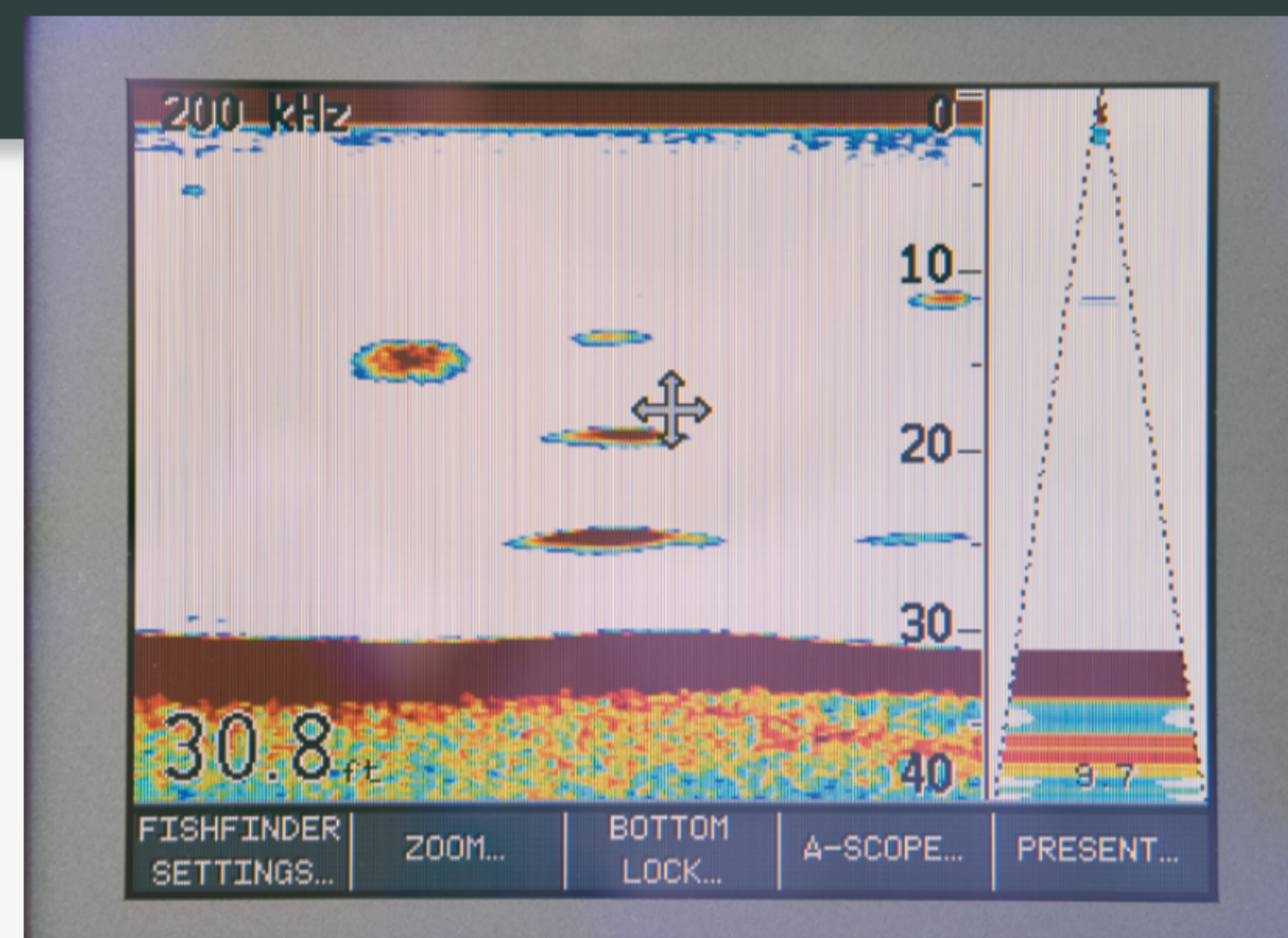
- **Cartography:** You may already own or be able to trade up on a certain brand of chart card. If so, it might be in your best interest to choose a plotter brand that uses your preferred cartography. However, sometimes it's cheaper and easier to start from scratch. Weigh your options.

- **Dual-frequency transducer:** Look for a unit with at least 500 watts of power and the ability to use a dual-frequency transducer, which allows you to optimize the system according to the conditions and your needs.

The high frequency, normally 200 kHz, offers a narrower beam with better bottom detail. The low frequency, typically 50 kHz, allows you to probe deep into the depths.

- **Water temperature:** Most all combo sounders have the ability to read water temperature. This can be valuable information when you're trying to follow current changes, as you would in the Gulf Stream.

- **A-scope:** A-scope shows the sonar's acoustic pulse downward and is the real-



At the right of the Raymarine A60 screen (above), you can see the A-scope function, one of three selectable A-scopes on the A60.

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time display of what the transducer is seeing. It can be useful in detecting and identifying objects—or fish—just above the seabed. It is often shown in its own column.

- **Shift:** This allows the user to manually expand a certain section of the water column for better onscreen interpretation.

- **Bottom Lock:** Usually displayed in a split-screen window, this shows the bottom and a small section of the water column, normally 10 to 30 feet. The view will stay locked on the bottom even as depth or bottom contours vary, allowing the user to better determine bottom composition.