

Nordhavn 64 Shearwater Takes Flight

By Jeff Merrill



[Jeff Merrill officially hands Shearwater over to her new owner](#)

Gliding silently miles from shore the graceful shearwater banked away from our bow and continued coasting inches over the wave tops hoping to chase a flying fish. We were on our second day of the maiden voyage for Shearwater, the latest Nordhavn 64 to be launched, and I had just started my morning watch when I saw the bird. Owner, Scott Marks, was in the wheelhouse when I pointed out the winged namesake and he smiled while commenting that this was the first sighting of a shearwater aboard Shearwater. Our maiden voyage shakedown cruise saw several more shearwaters, pods of porpoise and a fleet of shrimping trawlers on our way from Stuart, FL to Charleston, SC.

Scott and Pam Marks have had their Nordhavn 64 on order for nearly two years and the satisfaction of finally being underway after all of the months of building and the weeks of commissioning set a bright tone for the entire crew. She is a great boat, well thought out and we were humming along at 1500 rpm making a solid 9 – 10 knots underway (aided by a 2 knot northerly push from the Gulf Stream).

I had flown in from the west coast on Thursday with our original plan to depart Friday, but instead of rushing through our long checklists in order to stick to the itinerary, it seemed a good night's sleep on Friday and Saturday morning departure (aiming to clear the St. Lucie inlet by 10:30 am) would be a more sensible plan.

Every new Nordhavn is constructed with dozens of essential systems and the bigger boats border on being complicated at first glance – that's why we provide a week's worth of training for our new owners. There is nothing like living on the boat with her new owners for the first few days – sounds, switches, questions and developing new habits are all part of the experience. I believe a hands-on approach is the best way to provide proper initiation.

The Markses have hired a captain, Eric Berger, who has been overseeing the last couple of weeks of commissioning while also helping to acquire the hundreds of little items a yacht like this will absorb – tools, safety gear, groceries, cleaning supplies, etc. Eric used to work with Boat Owners Warehouse – a marine chandlery chain in Florida – so his expertise at knowing what to order and familiarity with the products and staff has been an invaluable resource.

When 6403 arrived at the beginning of summer Scott and I met to spend four days aboard reviewing the order, confirming installations, opening lockers and tracing systems while developing a “punch list” of action items that was integrated into the commissioning check list

by John Hoffman, our Florida commissioning manager. Electronics that had been installed at the yard in Taiwan were also being started up, dinghies were positioned for installation, canvas covers were measured and throughout this entire process Scott and I talked daily and updated our lists by email.

In early September I flew out for another visit and this time we had the Detroit Diesel /MTU agent aboard (the 64 comes standard with a Series 60 main engine) for the official engine start up and got our first chance to run outside in the Atlantic. Due to the shallow inlet we had to play the tide tables and our trip up north at sea enabled us to come in at the Ft. Pierce inlet and park at the local marina for some testing on flat calm waters before heading back home to Stuart, FL on the ICW.



[Eric and Scott diagnose an issue in the engine room](#)

Eric dutifully showed me around Shearwater primarily to point out where all of the safety equipment was located including his impressive assemblage of tools. His knowledge of where things are has made him indispensable. One new touch I learned from Eric was his “Emergency Muster” list. On the dash in the pilothouse lays his typed up list of all of our safety gear and where it was located – just the thing an experienced captain would prepare to help provide direction to whoever is at the helm in the event of an unexpected emergency (Eric has allowed me permission to email you a copy of his list to use as a guideline for your own boat – just send me a note if you’d like a copy).

After crossing off most of the work list and finishing up the remaining major projects we were finally cleared to take off – leaving Pirate’s Cove in Manatee Pocket at 9:40 and clearing St. Lucie at 10:19. Scott, Pam, captain Eric, myself and Pam’s cousin Sally Anne Sliney, who decorated Shearwater, were a happy crew of five as we headed northbound at 1500 rpm doing 8.3 knots. Within three hours we caught the Gulf Stream about 16 miles out and our speed over ground hopped up to 10.1. Pam served a tasty Asian chicken salad and we started settling in.

During this trip we also had as an important order of business: the legal closing of the sale of Shearwater via an offshore delivery and as PAE’s representative I was charged with the duty of captaining the yacht until we concluded our paperwork. We were about 25 miles off the Florida coast about half past 3 when Scott turned to me and said “Well Jeff, are you ready to sell me a boat?” We had a quick laugh, decided the time was right and after a few signatures and handshakes Scott took the helm for the first time as the owner of Shearwater.

Continuing up the coast all was well and I finally decided to head to the back porch cockpit bench to lie down for a snooze. A couple of hours earlier we had noted that our hydraulic oil reservoir had overtemped and we had shut down the active fins – our guess was a problem with the sea water pump impeller, but the ride wasn’t unpleasant and we decided to press on. I had discovered a closed valve on the seachest after we were underway, something I normally confirm using my pre-departure check list, but unfortunately we didn’t complete a proper walk through because we got interrupted by a problem with the Glendinning cablemaster when we got to the part in the list that reminds you to disconnect power from the dock. We spent about 20 minutes

trying to retrieve the shore power cords – and finally I turned to Scott and reminded him that if we pressed to resolve this inconvenience with the cords we would miss the narrow tide window. He agreed and so we pushed off. Confident that all was well since everything had been run almost daily for the entire week leading up to our departure we neglected to go back and finish the checklist ritual.

The excitement and emotion of preparing a Nordhavn to go out to sea coupled with the anticipation of the unknown that lay ahead wears on you a bit and with my official duty to complete the transaction behind me I was happy to be horizontal with someone else in charge. I had just fallen asleep when the main engine shut down...and 10 seconds later I was up in the wheelhouse with Eric trying to figure out what had happened. Scott arrived seconds after me and after Eric fired up the wing engine. I took the helm while Scott and Eric went down to the engine room – the times before when I have been on a boat that quit have always been fuel starvation related – I knew the brand new engine was fine, and I suggested we might have somehow run out of fuel, unlikely as that seemed. Sure enough, a fuel tank valve was closed during commissioning and the supply tank had been consumed (we had left the sight glass valves closed to prevent a spill from a leaky valve – but hadn't been checking the level during our hourly watches – an inexcusable oversight). Fortunately we had requested that the commissioning team install a fuel drain hose to the supply tank sump and after restoring the fuel flow to refill the tank Eric and Scott withdrew enough diesel to top off the main engine fuel filter and we were able to start right back up.

I was driving Shearwater off the wing alone and was pleasantly surprised that it only took about 7 degrees of rudder angle to keep us on a straight course. By standing at the helm I could also lean back into the innovative center console Scott had designed and installed between the Stidd helm chairs – this custom add-on is a perfect support and we continued at 5.2 knots at 2200 rpm powered by the wing. Running on the wing and without stabilization we identified the last couple of remaining places where we needed to improve the stowage of loose items – this is always the case on a new boat, you think you have everything tucked away until you hear the tell tale bang or slide that alerts you to one more thing.



[Scott Marks navigates past a tanker](#)

Back underway in less than twenty minutes with a couple of lessons learned to contemplate we also thought about our trip through the night and weighed in the fact that though we could tough it out to Charleston we weren't on a tight schedule. It was approaching 17:00 and if we were going to change plans now was the time. Another factor to add to the mix, Pam had succumbed to mal-de-mar: no doubt accelerated from the rolling around due to lack of stabilization and Scott made the correct decision to head for Cape Canaveral – we would arrive after sunset, but it is a well charted sea port and Eric had been there before.

One of the “rules” of safe boating is to not make a night entrance to an unfamiliar port...but Port Canaveral is a commercial harbor, it was a clear evening and we established a good line of communications. We had already tested the searchlight and had it ready if needed. I was at the

helm with Scott by my side and Eric was poised at the Portuguese bridge with the wheelhouse doors open and our free flow navigational dialog about red and green channel markers, lights on the shore, etc., reminded me of sailboat racing where one crew is calling the wind puffs, another trimming the sails and the driver responding to the input. We negotiated the channel with ease, with one of the local shrimpers following us in (next time I think I'd drag my feet a bit and follow in the local). We had hoped we could tie at the fuel dock, but someone else had already thought of that. So edging a bit deeper into the marinas we found an open end tie at the New Port Marina and Scott piloted us perfectly into position. By 22:07 we were tied up and plugged in. Our plan was to stay put and in the morning, after a good nights sleep, determine why we didn't have good cooling for our hydraulics reservoir before proceeding.

Eric is an early riser (he wakes up at 4:00 as part of his "normal" daily routine!) and Scott was up a little after that. With a cup of coffee in hand I checked on them in the engine room probably about 07:00 and they were well underway in their diagnosis. Digging right in and having the problem solving skills to address a setback like this is a self sufficient talent that will set the crew of Shearwater apart from many other trawler operators. It's pretty easy to make a few phone calls and get an "expert" on board, but Scott has a degree from MIT and having studied all of the systems layout and diagrams for the months leading up to this trip he rolled up his sleeves, put on his favorite MIT t-shirt and jumped right in (I think he honestly believes that the machinery will better respond when it knows it is being worked on by someone who knows a thing or two about engineering). What they discovered after pulling off hoses from the seachest and flow indicators, taking apart the hydraulics raw water pump to check the impeller (relocated for better access during commissioning, another fortuitous improvement like the supply tank sump hose) was that we had lost prime on the raw water cooling pump. After recharging with fresh water from our engine room hose bib we did a start up around 11:30 and saw good flow from the cooling discharge through hull. Success without making a phone call. We later theorized that the impeller lost prime last week during a haul-out – something to check before and after lifting out next time. Sally and Pam prepared a great lunch and after eating and completing a thorough pre-departure check list Shearwater left Port Canaveral at 13:30 bound for Charleston.

I have never worked on a Nordhavn project with a captain before and I must complement both Eric and Scott for their teamwork in solving this problem. Usually I would be the one turning tools and troubleshooting with the owner, but I was able to stay on the sidelines and offer an occasional opinion while leaving the two of them alone to create their own success. Every tool we needed was aboard and after fixing this problem the purchase of a proper impeller puller and a few other helpful items have been added to the to buy list for Shearwater. Reporting a problem on board may seem counterproductive from a marketing sense, but the reality is that things happen and I think there is more to gain by sharing problems and solutions than to pretend everything is always perfect. Another thing to add to this little episode is that not once was a finger pointed or a disparaging word uttered. It was a nuisance, sure, but with the resolution came a satisfying achievement and a confidence builder as well.

Refreshed and ready to continue on after a shower and lunch break Scott piloted us out to the Atlantic and the three males fell into our scheduled watches as the sun set and Sunday night rolled into Monday morning. The familiarity of sounds and smells let us know all was normal – and by already running up about 70 miles to Canaveral we would have a simple 260 mile (as the

shearwater flies) overnight hop to Charleston. All was well and we saw lots of sea life – porpoise, flying fish and a sea turtle - cruised through a shrimp boat fleet and our position averaged about 35 miles off shore with the AIS collision avoidance system only occasionally alerting us to a passing freighter.

Pam is a talented chef and she and Sally Anne enjoyed time in the galley while underway. The 64 galley is easy for two people to work in and the ladies had fun preparing while the men were happy to indulge in making sure all was consumed. The ladies also spent a lot of time outside in the back deck – lounging in the comfortable seats, talking and reading – surrounded by miles of deep blue sea and sun splintered cumulus clouds being chased by the wind.



[Sally Anne and Pam whip up a meal in Shearwater's gourmet galley](#)



[Pam, Scott, Sally Anne and Eric enjoy lunch in the cockpit](#)

It was a pretty casual afternoon with only one glitch – the watermaker didn't start up. Fortunately Eric had the foresight to take on some shore water when we were in Canaveral – Shearwater uses freshwater toilets – and we would have probably been fine without adding to the tanks, but Eric had made a smart move. Scott and Eric had been given a walk through by the Village Marine tech and after discussing what might be the problem Eric went down to try Scott's theory and – voila! – our vital freshwater replenishment system was working perfectly! I hate to repeat myself, but there are a lot of new systems and equipment to

keep track of and learn to operate and the best course of action I can recommend for new boat owners is to get out and use the boat. Don't be afraid to learn from your mistakes and don't expect you will remember everything you've been told the first time. Have a little patience and get familiar with your boat one step at a time.

As dusk approached I did a pre-sunset deck tour to make sure everything was snug looking to find and correct any annoying deck noises that seem to get louder at night and get you wondering... My 20:00 shift had the best possible start – warm “turtle supreme” cookies freshly baked by Pam. (Hey, I could get used to this!) Our overnight trip had the watches divided into 2-hour shifts and I had the 2am – 4am gig. The stars were stunning, we were out in the middle of nowhere, purring along with purpose (and the occasional porpoise!)

Charleston is a fun place to arrive. Scott was at the helm with Eric at his side and they easily navigated us up the correct river (two rivers feed into the Atlantic) and by 18:00 we were tied up at the Charleston City Marina Mega dock. Eric immediately started washing down the boat, Pam and Sally Ann got back into decorating mode leaving Scott and me to work through some systems, finish up some training and enjoy Shearwater. Spending a week aboard makes for a smooth transition.

Our trip statistics included:

- Trip log 423 miles (including detour in and out of Cape Canaveral)
- 49.75 hours on the main engine
- Total fuel used 440 gallons.
- Changes in latitude just over two degrees 28.24 to 32.46
- Average speed over ground at 1500 rpms was 9.0 knots
- Fuel consumption pegged in at an average of 8.8 gallons an hour on the main with an additional 1.1 gph for generator operation (hey, we used the air conditioning non-stop, wouldn't you?)



[Shearwater ties up in Charleston, SC.](#)

Living aboard and trying everything, from operating the trash compactor and dishwasher to sleeping and showering, are all new experiences. Test driving things for the first time – simple things like operating the microwave and loading the new coffee pot – was all met with a sense of wonder by the crew; it was just plain fun to be aboard and explore. Running at night showed us a couple of locations that could use extra floor mounted courtesy lights. We also determined that the loaded chart drawers could benefit from roller glides. As much planning as you try to do to get everything right out of the box these realizations are typical of getting to know your new boat

and we were actually quite pleased that there were only a handful of minor improvements we could make. It's a great design, built by a great yard and Scott definitely put a lot of time and effort into this (including three separate trips to the Ta Shing factory in Taiwan to check on the progress of his production).

We took on fuel and checked the sight glass calibration. For the record, the bulk discounted rate was \$2.26 a gallon so we filled up the tanks. Scott and I visited a local notary and FedExed the important documents we had signed as part of the official sale of Shearwater. In fact, after doing this we hit a local restaurant for lunch – I enjoyed chicken fried steak and grits. Cleared off my plate. Love that southern cuisine!

Back aboard we played with the anchor and launched the dinghy. In fact, I made an appointment to visit the Nordhavn 40 Pilgrim which is available for sale and moored in Charleston. Scott and I took off in the 14' Caribe and I did a preview of Pilgrimza gtv and also admired a nice Nordhavn 46 tied up a few slips away. Nordhavns have the ability to go anywhere and it seems like they do turn up just about everywhere.

Full days aboard melted into casual evening dinners with friends of Scott and Pam. The Sidburys who have a Nordhavn 68 on order visited us on the second night and they took us out to the Fleet Landing restaurant for a fun get together. The Nordhavn 64 and 68 owners have developed a strong bond. At last year's Miami show Scott organized a 64/68 owners get-together which was well-attended and is when the Marksies met the Sidburys. David Sidbury was quite keen to get the full tour so Eric, Scott, David and I went room-by-room and part by part while the ladies relaxed in the saloon.

The next day Scott assembled the folding bicycles while Pam and Sally Anne went out shopping (using an SUV loaned by the Sidburys) to provision for the next leg. I realized my time was running out and it would soon be time to fly home but I knew the crew aboard Shearwater was in good shape. In fact another Nordhavn 64 owner to be – John Henrichs (6407) was flying in to take over my watch and get some time underway himself as he prepares for his new yacht. The Nordhavn community is well-connected and opening up their boats and sharing ideas is a powerful collaboration that I think is unique to our brand. The adventuresome folks who own Nordhavns are strongly independent, but also enjoy and appreciate the camaraderie that is always reciprocated by their fellow Nordhavnites. This bond emanates throughout our company and nourishes a trend to make each boat better than the last.

Shearwater has completed her maiden voyage, worked through a couple of new boat teething issues and is now getting ready to spend a winter down in Ft. Lauderdale and points south. I have every confidence in the world that the crew aboard Shearwater will do just fine. We had a great time on the four-day cruise up the east coast, but more importantly, we had an educational time. It was exactly what a shakedown/training session needs to be. And nothing will confirm its validity more than the fun they'll have this winter and for cruising seasons to come.



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