



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

38-Foot DUKW Amphibian

Number: 31300 through 31327
Completed: 1944 and 1948
Remarks: Also bore numbers in T-4000, T-5000, and T-13000 series; T-4000 and T-5000 were acquired in 1944 and stationed at lifeboat stations between Long Island, NY and Cape Hatteras, NC; T-13000 was acquired in 1948 and stationed on East and West Coasts; all units were disposed of by 30 September 1970.

Cost: \$8,460/unit (1947)

Hull

Displacement (lbs): 16,380
Length: 38'
Beam: 8' 4"
Draft: 3' 10" max

Machinery

Main Engines: gasoline, 6-cylinder
BHP: 90
Propellers: Single

Performance

Max Sustained: 55 mph (on land)
12 mph (across beach)
8 mph (on water)

Logistics

Fuel Oil (95%): N/A
Complement: 2

Electronics

Radar: N/A

Design

The 38-foot DUKW was designed for the U.S. Army to carry men and supplies from offshore ships and across a beach. The term "DUKW" is a manufacturer's code designation. It translates to "D" for 1942, "U" for utility vehicle, "K" for front-wheel drive, and "W" for two rear-drive axles. The nickname "Duck" grew out of this code and the amphibious capability of the craft.

The DUKWs acquired from the U.S. Army were constructed of sheet steel. The following modifications were made by the Coast Guard: installation of an aluminum alloy cover over the driver's area and extending aft over the forward part of the cargo space; a self-bailing cockpit in the after part of the cargo space; a walkway along each side of the cover; towing bitts and tow rail; and navigational lights. In 1948 the Coast Guard constructed additional units at the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, MD. These had aluminum bodies and incorporated the experience learned from using the Army model.

DUKWs were most useful in flood relief. However, the craft suffered from high maintenance costs, rapid deterioration due to salt water, and a lack of watertight subdivisions. All of the vehicles had been disposed of by 30 September 1970.

Images



DUKW through the surf



DUKW emerging onto the beach



DUKW on the beach

Sources

Boat Files, U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

Wilkinson, William D., and Timothy R. Dring. *American Coastal Rescue Craft: A Design History of Coastal Rescue Craft Used by the United States Life-Saving Service and the United States Coast Guard*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.

