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Fraser Allen  
wiring an  
estimated 750lb  
Black Marlin on a  
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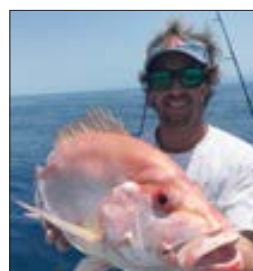
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# Beach Breakthrough

By 'Sharky' Shane Down

As we enter the New Year it has been a positive sign that we saw a bit of precipitation in the area as things were getting a bit hot and stale prior to Christmas. This was certainly the case along our local Four Mile Beach but as soon as we got that rain it transformed literally overnight.

A few good inches of rain turned a desert like stretch of water into a blossoming flower. Bait by the truck load started to turn up in the form of mainly mullet and garfish. At the moment you would have no issue cast netting as much live bait as you'd want. This in turn has seen some good predators turn up and I'm happy to report there's blue salmon, trevally and also my arch nemesis the 'big kahuna' giant trevally is back patrolling these waters. You can see his massive bow wave running parallel to the beach stalking his prey. On the odd occasion you'll see the back of it just out of the water and it's in excess of 1.2m and I'm guessing up to around 50lb or more. He is the king predator and every now and then you'll see a little way offshore a mass of bait going flying in all directions and you can be almost certain it is him. For the past 8 years he's always turned up around this time and one day I'm hoping to go toe to toe with him.

With the rain it has meant all our small creeks, which remain dormant for most of the year have broken through the sand banks and flowing freely. This is another food source flowing into the ocean and a great spot to fish. With barra season due to start on the 1st February these are prime areas to

concentrate around. If you can spot a patch of weed or even a sunken palm frond, the barra will congregate close to these in front of a run off. From my experience there may be two or three or even up to half a dozen, and often there's a really big one amongst them. My preferred method is to send out an unweighted garfish or mullet around this structure and wait for the 'big boof' of a barra inhaling it from the surface. Not long after this if you connect, they'll instantly come flying out of the shallows and carry on with gusto.

Other than with a bit of rain around a good chance of catching a mud crab at the moment is out the front of the mangrove flats along the coast. They are in search of salty water having been flushed out from the inundation of fresh water in the mangroves. Just a heed of advice, don't be caught raiding someone else's pot. With the cheap technology nowadays anglers are setting up trail cameras tied to a mangrove near their pots. If you are filmed doing the wrong thing and passed on, this is enough for the authorities to come down on you like a ton of bricks.

Lastly there's been a 2.5m Lizard patrolling the southern end of the beach and he likes the dusk and after dark period. I've seen at first light where he's been sitting on the beach over night before sliding back into the water before the sun gets up. Oh, and one more piece of advice, it's mango season. Don't park your vehicle underneath one. I have one in my driveway and the photo will show what damage they can do when they drop. ■



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## Exceed Sportfishing

By Jake Wyatt

As our tropical summer continues it can be a finicky period to fish our local waters. The water heats up, the fish can drop off the bite and the weather can be all over the place. This month we have been travelling far and wide to find new grounds and I'm glad to say most days have paid off. Some days saw us travel extraordinary miles in search of the bite. I'm not going to lie and say that we found huge amounts of fish each day as this simply is not the case. However we always managed to a good feed of big fish for our clients and found a decent fight somewhere on the reef.

The 'Red' fishing was very hard for us but the ones we did find were absolute horses. This is often the case at this time of year when it's about quality and not necessarily quantity. Surprisingly I generally noted they were found at unusual grounds and in shallower water than other months. During these warmer days you sometimes have to explore that bit further till you find the fish. The coral trout seem to be on the bite in most places and we also found some cracking new ground in deep water that produced many XL trout on plastics. All the good trout came from the deeper water as opposed to the bigger 'reds and nanny's' which were caught up in skinnier water.

The mackerel were biting pretty consistently on the troll using 'rigger gars' on the pressure points of the reef, with most days seeing us getting a good half a dozen bites and landing a few good ones in the process.

The Gt's seemed to be biting every week even on the average tides when you wouldn't expect much action. In particular

we had a cracking little session one afternoon on the way home of all things. Steaming along we stumbled across a soccer pitch size of bait nervously twitching on the surface. This we had to stop at and make an enquiry. As soon as the stick baits hit the water it was literally on. They Gt's ranging between 12 - 20kg were super hungry and also amongst the mix were the spanish mackerel to which we donated a couple of lures to. The mid air strikes from the 'mackies' were insane launching up to 10 feet in the air. The speed at which they attack in a vertical manoeuvre must be at least 80km an hour to launch that far above the water line. It was awesome to watch despite losing a few expensive lures on occasions. For around 20 minutes we loaded up on awesome fish and you weren't sure whether it was going to be a Gt or a mack.

Our jigging efforts provided some good fun with plenty of bludger trevally around and also some quality golden trevally in the mix. Once again these things go super hard on the light jig rods. 2-3 or three good fish per angler lasting anywhere from 10-20 minutes per fight will see the majority of them exhausted asking for a change of scenery.

As I am writing this I am sitting in Brisbane airport about to jump on a flight over to the Solomon Islands for 3 weeks to guide on a vessel called Spirit. I have never fished over there so I'm really looking forward to checking the place out. I've read and heard it can be nothing short of spectacular so stay tuned for pictures on our Facebook in the coming days. ■



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# The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

Since we last spoke we were awaiting with baited breath as to what was going to unfold over the Christmas and New Year period in light of a disastrous time last year. Well as I write I can say I have a big smile on my face having just gone through a healthy run of charters with good numbers of tourists around and the weather has been absolutely compliable. We have been very fortunate in recent times and I am very grateful. This last burst of activity should see us through the quieter times ahead in the next couple of months, unlike last year when things were very grim at moments during the quiet season.

Now down to the fishing side of things which I'm sure why you are reading this. I am satisfied to report we have faired quite well as the days warmed up considering there were some associated challenges when it came to wind and current directions on some days. Naturally the variable winds were a touch tougher but we still had plenty of settled days when everything remained consistent on anchor.

For us the coral and bar cheek trout were by far our most impressive fish for the majority of times. We found them up to 4-6kg in deeper water on a regular basis. They were what you would call as thumper sized trout. Many would often associate trout species up in shallower water for most of the year but not when the temperatures are peaking. They were in really good knick being plump quality sized fish. If I had to pick our next consistent species that would be the cobia having nailed quite some goliaths over the festive period. I have spoken about this



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prior but they have had a bumper 12 months or more now and you'll pick them up from the bottom or on the surface. Often they'll be snared in pairs or sometimes more on some days. 10-15kg cobia on the end of the line certainly create a few headaches when trying to manage a deck of clients all eager to see what's coming up.

Other than this we've seen some hard pulling nannygai (but not a whole heap), big chinaman fish which never give up the ghost, trevally varieties mostly around 5-7kg which also create havoc and good numbers of quality spangled emperor.

Catch of the month goes to a very young girl onboard which had a bit of angling nouse and with the assistance of Caleb our deckie plucked up a super impressive Barramundi Cod. They are like no other fish on the reef in appearance having it's own very unique colour formation and body shape. Being a highly protective species and also quite rare, it was handled with the utmost care with some pics taken before being let go in good health. From my understanding they only mate with the one partner for life often found or seen swimming in pairs, so it is imperative they are reunited. They don't like being out of the water at all and even slightly mishandled. So a very delicate touch and timing is important. It was a special moment for a couple of reasons, the first being a little one pulled him up amongst all the so-called expert clients and also because we'd be lucky to see one or two per year at most. This we'll take as our good omen into 2020 where we hope you'll join us.

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## Dreams Do Come True - Part 1

By Fraser Allen

Its been one of the biggest dreams of my life to be able to work on a game boat and do a marlin season. This dream was just about to become a reality and the greatest opportunity of my life would present itself! After getting a call from Amanda (Zulu manager) if I wanted to do the season with their Levante game boat, I didn't take any chances! I just knew I had to do this. I have waited for something like this my whole life and I was never going to let this great opportunity slip. So here's my story of the greatest time of my life.

On my first day working aboard Levante luxury charters, it all started with the preparation for the marlin season I was about to experience. As this is my first time doing a whole season I had a lot to learn in a small amount of time. To start off I was just learning the basics like; tying a platted knot, cutting leaders to length, snelling 20/0 hooks to 300 - 550lb line and many more things in 3 days before I had my first charter. After 3 days we were prepped and ready for our first heavy tackle charter for the year. While having to learn all these new tricks

and habits I also still had to get to know my crew more. Along side my team I had Jason Gray as Captain and Lockie Warner as the lead deckhand, but it didn't take long to get into the swing of things.

Getting to the boat at 6:30am on my first charter I was trying to hold in my excitement. Our first charter for the marlin season was a live aboard charter with 4 guys that were all very keen to get out and get amongst the big fish. By the time we headed out of the harbour I was already jumping out of my skin knowing that I will be out on the big blue for 5 days.

We leave Port Douglas with all the anticipation not knowing what could happen in the next couple of days. We started our mornings off with a light tackle troll for baits. And yes, when I say "baits" I mean good sized Mackerel, Tuna and Rainbow Runners. These we use for our big baits which we stitch up with dacron and wax thread to hold the bait to the hook. These baits will skip on top of the water making a splash and loud noises to attract a big fish.

At other times we would collect a few swim baits and the two hot baits we targeted were Scad and Oceanic Queenfish. To catch these fish we would use what is called a scad line with 4-6 hooks with little plastic squids on them. The only difference with these guys with stitching them up is we had 2 ball sinkers inside where the gills would be to make a bait fish swim again undertow. Having collecting heaps of bait before lunch we moved out to the marlin grounds to a place called Linden Banks, normally a bit of a hot spot for the big girls. I say girls because the 800-1000lb marlin is generally a female. Also another incredible thing is that these fish grow so fast! A black marlin at 1000lb (450kg) is roughly around 10-12 years old and grow to extreme lengths of 2.7m long. So after towing these baits around for the rest of the day we had to call it quits for day one without seeing much interest. Anchoring behind the reef for the night, the cleaning of the boat is meticulous and then we chilled out and had loads of Trevally to muck around with at the back of the boat to end our day.



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For the next 3 days it was very quiet with not seeing a fish and that's marlin fishing. But it was all about day 5, when starting off the session with a small shark. Straight away Lockie got me to put the gloves on so I can start to practice wiring for the marlin when we get one!

Just when things started to get busy there was a distinctive "CLICK" as the line snapped out of the clip on the rigger. "RIGHT RIGGER!", was echoed loudly by Jason the skipper in the fly bridge and before you knew it we were hooking up onto a nice 500lb marlin! With the angler in the chair we were on and I was amazed at how everything happened so quickly. Lockie was just so drilled at his trade and he guided me through everything at lightening speed through this initial flurry. At this point it hit me between the eyes that I had to be switched on and ready for anything at anytime.

After fighting it for 8 or 10 minutes Lockie finally got a hold of the leader to this fish and watching this big marlin, right at the back of the boat, leap out into the air really got the juices flowing! I had so much adrenaline pumping through me with so much excitement to get another look at this beast. It didn't disappoint as it jumped around like crazy several times before it took off down to the deep. From this point of the fight things went hard with no line coming back on the reel as the fish dug in deep. It was unfortunately lost awhile later. It was a disappointing way to end such a great fight but it did put on a spectacular show. Finishing off the charter with 1-1-1 strike rate it was just what the boys wanted to see. A big black marlin. It was also a great introductory for me learning a heap of new things, getting familiar with the boat

and forming a bond with the crew.

Coming back into Port Douglas we had a big clean up and a massive prep up for a few mothership trips coming up with the super impressive 35m Beluga super yacht. The other sister boat, a 57ft Assegai, Zulu would be part of the detail. This now became a huge operation with the finest of craft all combined together. My excitement went to a whole new level knowing I'll be part of this for the remainder of the marlin season.

Having the first trip with the owners come out we had an in-house competition call the 'Slippers Cup' with both Levante and Zulu fighting for the honours of champion boat. This would be a fun trip with many other awards as well to be won. Over a few days it was an ever changing leader board with several marlin caught between the two boats. Right at the end of the trip with the score level, it was us, Levante catching a 200lb tagged marlin and we sealed off the trip as the champion boat!! On the last night there were a heap of awards spread amongst the clients and crew and I being the rookie got the 'Most Stuff Ups' trophy, all in good fun. It mainly derived from a moment when one of guests was hooked up to a marlin and I created a massive birds nest of line on the Tiagra 130. Luckily Lochie was at hand to assist and we sorted out the horrible mess to complete the tag.

Having a few more successful charters go through as a big operation it was time to venture north and it was the last trip of the season that rang the dinner bell for the big fish. Making our way up north towards Lizard Island we found ourselves fishing off Ribbon Reef Number 10 !! And this is where the real fun began. Stay tuned next month for Part 2 of my dream experience. ■



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## Best of the Best FNQ

By Damian Collete - Saltaire & Allure Charters

In December I had three very special clients come up for Melbourne and for reasons remaining private we'll call them Bill and Bob & Son. We had them on our 47ft Allure game boat scheduled for 14 days of travel. There was the hope to travel to PNG and back but the weather forecast further north was a bit dubious to travel in open seas. So I was asked to come up with a custom made trip of my liking to experience the best of Far North Queensland. I have had over 20 years in the Far North on the water so I came up with a plan which would whet the appetite of any angler's dream. It would entail a lot of fishing but also importantly a lot of magical sightseeing which many few ever get to experience.

**Day 1** Bill and Bob flew into Cairns and as we had the boat at the Yorkey's Knob marina, it was a very quick exercise to pick them up from the airport and have them on Allure within 10 minutes. Already fully provisioned we immediately threw the ropes and away we went.

We fished our way north for several hours mainly trolling light tackle and nailed some quality spanish mackerel along the way. There was enough activity on the reels to give them a taste of what was to come in future days. Passing several sand cays along the way on the footstep of stunning Daintree ranges was to them an amazing start to the trip and they described it as 'God's Place in paradise'. With the initial thumbs up we motored our way to the historical and picturesque Hope Islands (which I recently wrote about). The weather was idyllic and the fringing reefs and the island itself was post card material as we came in for safe anchorage right on the




beach. Where else in the world !!

With the use of the tender it was a 10m trip to land on the golden sands of this tiny island. We did the relatively short scenic tour by foot around the island which Bill and Bob amazed by. Returning back to the starting point the boys were keen to do some fishing. So with the latest and best popper fishing outfits we hit a corner of the island from the beach where we noticed there was a bit of current pushing. For a good hour or so the boys threw some good lures attracting the attention of several reasonable Gt's ranging from 12-15kg's which gave them a good run for their money. Catching Gt's from a boat is one thing but to watch a huge bow wave follow a big blooming surface lure right to the beach before attacking it then screaming off into setting sunset if another league. Some of the attacks sprayed the boys with water right in the skinniest of crystal clear water - Amazing !!

With their arms fully stretched and the sun dipping in the sky we set up a campfire on the island and let them soak in a few coldies to reflect on the day. My son and I cooked up a lamb roast in the camp oven to die for as the night settled in with a million stars in the sky sparkling bright. We were the only souls there as if we were marooned on a deserted island on what is truly one of the most magical places you could ever visit.

**Day 2** Bill and Bob were keen to stay another day on Hope island so we took the game boat and fished the literally untouched reefs which surround it. You don't need to travel far to tap into to some unbelievable fishing. We trolled up numerous spanish mackerel and on the pick we bottom fished for as many coral trout and large mouth nannygai you could poke a stick at, amongst many others species. We had plenty of days left and only filleted the ultimate premium fish.

In stunning conditions we returned to the island for a refreshing swim off the beach, more Gt fishing before another memorable campfire and dinner under the stars. It was going to be a hard place to depart the next day.



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**Day 3** With a perfect start to the trip and a whole heap more to explore we departed Hope Island at sparrows and trolled our way to Cooktown catching a heap of mackerel both spanish and sharky varieties. Within a couple of hours at a leisurely pace we moored up at the Cooktown wharf, another location steeped in rich history. My plan this day was show the boys what one of the sleepest hollows in Australia was all about.

We visited the Cook Museum which is an amazing historical building to visit with so much to see with artifacts which showcase a lot of this countries past. It would be un-Australian to go to Cooktown and not visit this place. We had lunch at the famous Top Pub and dined at the RSL Club that evening. The boys enjoyed the very laid back style of the town.

**Day 4** Back on the water we fished our way to Ribbon Reef No 9 catching plenty of mackerel along the way and also nailed some ripper Gt's on the popper. Here the waters on the edge of the shelf are the most pristine and clearest you'll find on the entire Great Barrier Reef. We did a bit more nannygai and coral trout fishing as well before nestling in behind the reef for the night in absolute sublime conditions. Life doesn't get any better than this.

**Day 5** On this day we motored up to Ribbon reef No 10 and tried our hand at some heavy tackle on the open water for the morning. We didn't raise a marlin but on the light tackle got into some wahoo and yellowfin tuna which was something different for the guys.

In the afternoon we steamed across to famous Cod Hole not overly far from Lizard island. Here we all snorkelled at one of the most iconic locations in the world with these

massive prehistoric looking fish. It had been sometime since I had been back here and it was a timely reminder as to why people from all over the world come here to dive and snorkel. It is simply an amazing experience. After as much snorkelling as we could muster we motored into the bay at Lizard Island for a night of dining and drinks on the boat. Another day in paradise got the thumbs up!

**Day 6** On this day the guys were keen to chill out, plenty of swimming in the bay for the most. In the late afternoon we took the tender across to the island and checked out newly rebuilt resort. Only the rich and famous can afford to stay at a place like this. We bumped into the General Manager who I've known for sometime and we strolled together up along the beach just on dark to the Marlin Bar. It is world known as the best watering hole by game fishermen around the globe. You may think of some big fine establishment but it's quite to the contrary. It is basically a tin shed which does high quality pub style meals only a couple of nights of the week and catered for by the resort. **Continued Next Page ...**




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**Best of FNQ cont ...**

It's appeal is its simplicity and exotic location and where some of the wealthiest big game fishermen in the world rub shoulders every year around the October to December period.

Here we had the best steaks you could desire and the boys thought this was just the ultimate dining experience.

**Day 7** Leaving Lizard Island we motored further north fishing along the way and ended up at the Pison Islets just past Cape Melville. Naturally we fished along the way snaring copious amounts of trout, nannygai and mackerel. The fishing just gets more insane the further up the coast you travel. One fish we caught was a thumping perch of some sort pictured below which I'm not sure as to what it actually is. The scenery in the part of the world is uniquely different and very picturesque. Here we dropped pick for the night.

**Day 8** This day I was really looking forward to as I took the boys up to Stanley Island, basically in the Princess Charlotte Bay area. We took the tender across to the beach and made the trek into the foothills. Here I showed them ancient Aboriginal art on the walls of caves painted in red and white ocre which dates back as far back as possibly the 14th century. Just to stand in front the artwork sends a tingle up your spine. The island is of international importance with several caves or rock shelters of the aboriginal artwork, some also depicting early European visits by ship considered to be Portuguese, long before the arrival of Cook on our shores in 1770. We all felt something really special this day. Here we sheltered for

the night in the bay.

**Day 9** We made the short trip across to Bathurst Heads this day and utilised the tender for flicking lures around the headland and setting some crab pots. Here we caught a few barramundi on the lures, best 91cm, and our crab pots across the flats provided some stonking sized mud crabs. With such a quarry we had no choice but to set up a campfire on the beach that late afternoon watching the sun set in the west, one of the very few places to watch this on this east coast of Australia. The views are just breathtaking. Here we ate like kings feasting on camp fire mud crab, quintessentially Australian tucker through and through. It was just a completely different day to the previous ones which our clients just thought was the 'bees knees'.

**Day 10** On this day we did the run from The Heads straight out to the continental shelf fishing the literally untouched waters of Davey and Tydeman Reefs. **Cont. Page 12**



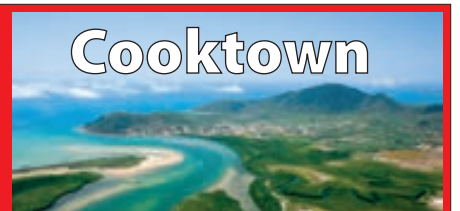
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# Reel Cooking with Heff this editon



## My Christmas Experience with Seafood

This Christmas I ventured back to family and homeland to Rye on the Mornington Peninsula, on the eastern side of Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne. It in itself is a stunning part of the world with the beautiful, calm waters of the bay on one side and the wild surf of Bass Strait on the other, literally just a few miles apart. I spent 6 great days with the folks, Pam & Maurie plus Uncle Gerry. Us guys always have associated Christmas with a feed of seafood. So over 5 different meals we thought we'd do crustacean seafood 5 different ways and each was just mouth watering.

Keeping in mind we are firm believers for not messing around with any seafood or any fancy associated recipes, this is what we came up with. The only southern crayfish we could source at the time from Sorrento was \$160 per kilo and this would of cost a small fortune if we went down this road. So sourcing some quality product we would not have exceeded over \$250 over 5 meals for three hungry appetites. We did take a break but for only traditional Christmas Turkey lunch.

Meal 1: I wanted to show the boys the different taste of banana prawns, smaller in size, but pack a succulent sweet taste unlike any other prawn. These the Old Man did simply on a hot grill BBQ. He's the cook in the house and would be the head chef for all servings. The smoky flavour gave them and bit of extra dimension and were simply sweet and delicious!

Meal 2: We sourced some Canadian Rock Lobster, roughly around the size of a big fresh water Murray River Cray. Already pre-cooked we woofed down without speaking, a couple of these each. Silence is always a great sign when eating and they were something different. Slightly varied in taste to what I've had before but you could tell immediately the cold water influence on your palate. I'm a big one when it comes to crustacean, the colder the water they come from, the better. To have something considered exotic or from another part of the world was a culinary experience. Extremely tasty, and my lips are still whetting as I write !!

Meal 3: Uncle Jerry insisted we eat the mid sized pre cooked Black Tiger Prawns next. Moist, tender and packed full of flavour, they went down like a treat. Again another subtle taste on seafood but I think we devoured a couple of kilo in the one setting. Just one more we said, and before you knew it they were all gone. That says it all!

Meal 4: Western Australian Cray tails. Already prepped, but requiring cooking in their shell, we opted for the BBQ grill. The only difference this time is the Old Man with the assistance of good old Mum, coated them in a mixture of fresh herbs, straight the garden - a coriander and thyme butter coat. That little adjustment would be a game changer. Wow wee, the flavour of the cray tail and the subtle hint of smoked herbs and butter was something completely new. To be honest, it was the dish that rocked above the others which was a tall order. It left you with the most amazing after taste which lasted for ages after eating.



Meal 5: Out of seafood supplies and still keen to keep the theme going on the last night of my stay, I hit the beat late evening with Mum to the closest seafood outlet on the Peninsula. After the Christmas rush the pickings were slim but we found some massive King Tiger Prawns, the biggest you'll get and pre-cooked. Perfect!! So on that Last Supper with crusty bread we enjoyed ourselves till we were cooked. They were just as flavoursome as the Black Tigers but a bit more 'sinewy or slightly tougher'. Still awesome and they were that big you only needed 5-6 before your eyes popped out. That was my Christmas Treat !!

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### Best of FNQ cont ...

On the edge of these reefs the water drops away into oblivion and the water colour is amazing. It didn't take us long to spot the mass of birds hitting the water in all directions. Out went the light tackle gear rigged with skirted lures and trolled into one of the most outrageous storms of fish I've ever encountered. Yellowfin tuna blanketed the surface as far as the eye could see, crashing and bashing into bait schools like you there was no tomorrow. It was a surreal feeling as we approached the war zone. You don't need to be Einstein as to what happened next. Double and triple hookups to 15-20kg tuna followed one after the other. It was simply out of control and we could not believe the bite we came across. Within moments of catching fish, dealing with them and putting the lures back out, fish were on again within moving 50m. With some fish kept for the keep, the others were released but for an hour or so we caught yellowfin by the dozens. It was far the most intense session of fishing we had encountered for the trip. The guys were pretty knackered by the time we called it quits. That night we sheltered back at the reef and the finest of Sashimi was enjoyed as the main course that evening.

**Day 11** Upon waking the winds came up over night and was a little uncomfortable, the very first untoward weather of the trip. So we leisurely cruised for most of the day trolling lures back to more suitable waters catching some cracking spanish mackerel along the way. By days end we retired in the sheltered waters of Cape Melville which was on the way back home.

**Day 12** With an early start on my behalf I had the boat on the move back to Lizard island that day. The guys were keen to spend the day there. By mid morning a fresh swim was enjoyed in the bay, before making the hike up

to Cook's Lookout on the island. This is the spot at its highest point where he found a way out of the great Barrier Reef after months of trials and tribulations trying to navigate his way through on the MV Endeavour. The views from this vantage are just panoramic and you can see the land to the west and the expansive reef systems to the east with clarity. It's a bit of a hike but a must do effort.

Back down to the flat ground I took the lads to the Fisheries Research Station on the island. Here they have a facility which is full of tanks monitoring all manner of fish species from the reef studying them. It is a major player when it comes to reporting on the state of the reef.

With our timing, that night it was a 'no brainer' we returned for a big night of celebrations back at the Marlin Bar. Such a magical place, particularly if you are a fisherman.

**Day 13** The next day we travelled back down to Hope Islands. By mid afternoon the boys had a fish off the beach nailing some premium Gt's on popper from off the beach. What a great set of fish to end the trip. We finished off the night with another campfire on the island, finishing off as we started with a scrumptious lamb roast done in the camp oven. Drinks and lifetime memories lasted into the early hours.

**Day 14** The long steam home arriving back at base around lunch time in time for flights out of Cairns.

The feedback from the crew was mind blowing, and to be honest it went from my point of view how I exactly wished. It was a trip with a new exciting adventure everyday, the next day different from the previous. The array of fish we caught was only secondary to the incredible places we visited. If you ever want to experience a once in a lifetime trip, even if it's part of this experience contact us via [saltairecharters.com.au](http://saltairecharters.com.au)



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## Late Season Tilt at the Elusive Jungle Perch

By Dylan Case - Nautical Marine Sales

The jungle perch is a charismatic and captivating little species. What it lacks in size, it more than makes up for with aggression, tenacity and supreme predatory ability. Couple this with the remote and wild rainforest streams the better fish tend to inhabit and you have a challenging and rewarding target species that is incomparable to any others.

As we neared the end of 2019 and the onset of the big wet approached, the decision was made to go after jungle perch one final time before the inevitable rain and associated flooding locked us out of the better JP water for a few months. We eyed a set of creeks we have been meaning to fish for a while. These creeks fall into what we would describe as "big fish country". While there are a lot of factors that led us to this judgement, the biggest factor to consider when targeting large JPs is the remoteness of the water you are fishing. In general, the more remote the water, the more chance of larger fish. Of course, there are many other variables in play, and exceptionally large jungle perch don't exist in every remote rainforest stream, but this hard to access water is a great starting point. While this is all well and good in theory, remote water means a lot of walking, and some creeks can be exceptionally tough and often dangerous. A personal EPIRB or

similar safety precaution should be considered in this difficult country.

We headed off early Saturday morning to allow ourselves maximum daylight to access the top section of at least one of the creeks in a day. We had rough estimates of where the fish would stop from Google Earth imagery, and knew we had a lot of water to cover in the first creek. As better fish tend to be higher up in the systems, we barely cast a lure for the first couple kilometres of walking, allowing us to get up into the upper country quickly.

Soon after we got into a section of the creek we were happy with, Darryl spotted a large fish cruising the shallow end of its pool. It quickly saw and raced to his 5" soft plastic, spectacularly crunching it on the water's edge with most of its body exposed. We gave it a quick measure to make sure our size estimates were accurate and released a nice fish of 41cm. After this fish, we managed a few more out of consecutive holes, including another of 40cm.

**Continued Next Page ...**



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**Jungle Perch Tilt cont ...**

Over the next hour, the fish seemed to thin out a little and we pushed through into high boulder country. This is very challenging to navigate having to get around, up and over boulders the size of a house or more. We were right up in the mountain tops. In saying this you know you are in a place very, very few have ever been and is just spectacular to be amongst such pristine beauty.

Nonetheless, we managed a nice pair of 42cm perch near the end, before getting dealt a surprisingly barren top hole, which we didn't pull a fish from. Being destination final it is always disappointing to hit an empty top hole, particularly given the quality of the fish in this creek. Despite this, we had made really good time in this long creek, turning around at lunchtime.

This gave us time in the afternoon for a quick shot at a smaller creek. We saw potential in this second creek early on and ended up with a couple more 40cms from it, including a 43cm fish for Darryl. Returning to the car well and truly battered from a long day, we cooked a quick feed and headed to our base camp to try recover as much as we can for the following day.

The second day of a two-day JP mission is always tough. Your body doesn't really come close to recovering overnight, and it definitely takes some warming up in the chilly morning of a rainforest. We pressed through a few sore muscles to knock over a side creek early before 9am, landing a single good fish of 41cm near the top.

As soon as we finished, we rushed to get to the next creek, one we knew was going to be a hellishly long mission after a day and a bit in the bush. Again, we kept our lures hooked up to our rods for the first couple of kilometres so we knew we could get into the proper water and hopefully towards a nice top hole. This particular creek was a strange one, leading us through wildly variable sections. Once we started fishing, we saw plenty of fish and we both landed a 40cm fish each. The consistency in size wasn't quite there yet but we pressed deeper and deeper into the creek like it is a bottomless pit. There is sometimes a point when you feel the creek is just never going to end, but we kept pushing on with that top hole fever well and truly niggling away at us.

After countless kilometres through some extremely challenging country, we finally started to see a light at the end of the tunnel, with the rock canyon sides closing in on us. We were approaching the Holy Grail of Jungle Perch fishing. This is always an exciting time, and we started to put some really nice fish on the brag mat, including one just short of 44cm. Hearts were now racing at a frantic rate.

Turning a final corner, we saw waterfall, marking a clear end of the

jungle perch's plight up this creek. Darryl was nice enough to let me have first cast in this hole, and we were both treated to an awesome visual eat right in front of us by a big jungle perch. Knowing this fish was a 45+ model, we coaxed it into shallow water where we got a quick few photos and a measure. At 46cm, this fish was the undisputed king of his river, and we were relieved more than anything to land a fish of his calibre after a long two days. We enjoyed our moment for a bit as he swam away, before the dreaded walk back to the car begun. It was a not only painful on the weary body but going back down steep country presents far more challenges in my opinion. After a seemingly never ending trek we finally made it back with darkness approaching and storms looming overhead. Our timing couldn't have been better. Overall for our tally, we landed 14 fish over the 40cm mark, which is absolutely top notch Jungle Perch fishing. The 46cm fish was more than rewarding being the icing on an adventure filled weekend on the jungle perch.

If you want to learn more about the stealth art of Jungle Perch fishing, pop into Nautical Marine Sales and I'll be more than happy to set you up with a very rewarding and stunningly different form of fishing in the tropics. We have all the best gear and a very selective range of lures which have been proven winners in catching this elusive fish.



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## Belcher's to the Rescue with Bruce Belcher



In the last week of November, one of the river guides broadcasted a message on the CB radio network that a bullock or cow was stuck in the river, opposite Pig Island. Upon closer observation, I found it on a muddy ledge, adjacent to a vertical wall where it had fallen about one and a half metres. It wasn't easy to see as it was obscured by a native hibiscus tree. As I was on tour at that time I could not help it but later contacted a grazier who identified its owner and said he would pass the information on.

By the day's end, my son Griff and I headed off downstream with the intention of encouraging the animal out. By then the tide had risen and the cow was floating. Obviously, our concerns were with the cow as it was potential food for a croc. We had to poke the boat's bow into and under the hibiscus branches to reach the cow, which didn't want to be reached! Fortunately, its breed had

short and horizontal horns, enabling us to slip an eye-rope around the horns. This was after many attempts to get into that position. It was a beautiful and healthy young cow with a shining black coat and weighed about 400 kgs.

We had already identified a suitably sloping bank about 300 metres upstream at the entrance of a small creek's mouth, which opened out onto grazing land. We dragged the cow slowly while moving backwards, being careful to keep the cow's nostrils above water, as it seemed exhausted. We don't know how long it had been struggling in that position, trying to get out.

We managed to get it into the correct position and removed the rope from around its horns. It wasn't resisting at that point. The look in its big oily looking eyes suggested that it was resigned to being safe. We waited for it to reach the sloping bank. By reaching ground and trying to stand it reminded me of someone being drunk and trying to stand up! It was almost like nightmares I had as a child!

Just then, the grazier arrived having had some difficulty getting there in the first place. We stuck around together and waited for the young cow to regain some confidence as we chatted about the situation when just then it casually started eating grass!

Within the next 24 hours we'd learned that it was a young cow and had become separated from its calf. Where we'd released it, was fenced off from where it fell. Apparently, it was pacing back and forth in search of its calf.

This effort earned Griff and I two cartons of beer from the Jacks. Everyone had won, more so the cow and calf!

A similar incident happened 23 years prior, at the same place. Only this time a beast was swimming. We notified the owner who then came along and continued the rescue, as I was out on tour.

The next day, 23 years ago, the senior Mrs. Jack visited me and gave me a gift of a lottery ticket. Had that ticket been a success we'd all have been winners!

See you next month.



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# Local Bragging Board



Big Bar Cheek remained the best and most consistent fish on Dragon Lady over the holidays



Fancy a Swim ! Photo taken by Damian Collete on the Allure Charter up north featured this month



Exceed Sportfishing put their anglers under the pump jiggging up hard pulling Trevally on light gear



Jake Collete of Saltaire Charters with a prime 91cm saltwater Barra caught at Bathurst Heads

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