

LINEBURNER

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JAN 22

Features

Latest Fisheries Meeting
14 Day Adventure North
GBR Fishing at its Best
Daintree River Dazzles



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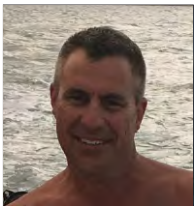
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Contact us if you'd like to
Contribute - Most Welcome

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Front Cover:
Dragon Lady Charters caught a real mixed bag in recent times including vibrant coloured, strawberry Coral Trout



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QLD Fisheries Dec Meet

By Heff

Mid December the Reef Line Fishery Advisory Board met online which included myself representing the Recreational Charter Industry on the Great Barrier Reef. Below is the official document released to the public.

Communique 14-15 December 2021

The Reef Line Working Group met on 14-15 December 2021 online. The purpose of the working group meeting was to review and provide advice on progress in meeting the wildlife trade operation (WTO) conditions for the fishery, research updates and to review the recent state-wide recreational fishing survey and fisheries economic and social indicators methods and results.

Fisheries Queensland provided an update on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy (SFS), the release of the commercial fishing reporting application 'eCatch', noted stakeholder concerns with quota liquidity and increased catch of deep-water species.

Commercial members cited concerns with coral trout quota availability and cost. Also, that the SFS reforms coupled with increased compliance, increased shark depredation, crewing issues and COVID-19 impacts, and rising fuel costs have made it a very difficult period for Industry. Volatility in export markets, competition from other international fisheries and aquaculture has remained a challenge. It was noted that there has been significant work and progress in developing a domestic fresh fish market. Members held divergent views on the challenging market for coral trout quota, including availability and prices, and the effect this is having on the operation and competitiveness of the industry more broadly.

Members noted that Australian Marine Conservation Society are currently updating their 'GoodFish' sustainable seafood guide and that the recent reforms and harvest strategy implementation are positive and result in additional reef line species being included in the updated guide. An update on research on the effects of climate change on the fishery was noted and there is a push to better understand effects of target species on crown-of-thorns starfish.

The charter member (myself) noted significant issues with shark depredation and is collaborating with researchers to quantify depredation in the charter sector and to trial mitigation options. Otherwise, the charter sector is looking forward to an increase in business demand with the opening of Queensland's borders.

The recreational fishing member advised that recreational fishers are eager to consider more scientific information about stock for which there are sustainability concerns. Generally recreational effort and fishing power is understood to be increasing, and recreational fishers are prepared to shoulder their share of the burden of future management changes to ensure ongoing sustainability of these stocks.

GBRMPA provided an update on compliance and offences in the fishery including zoning non-compliance by commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

The working group received a presentation from PhD candidate Kyle Hillcoat (JCU) on research on reproduction, barotrauma and size at maturity for saddletail snapper, finding regional variation across Queensland and inconsistency between the current minimum legal size and size at first maturity. An update was also provided on three ongoing shark depredation research projects including cooperation with some commercial and charter operators, as well as testing of two separate mobile apps for voluntary recording of shark depredation events.

The working group discussed the range of conditions attached to the current WTO accreditation for the line fishery (reef). The conditions include requirements to review

management arrangements and complete stock assessments for some 'OS' category species, collect additional data on non-retained species (including no-take/protected fish species) and an updated level 2 ecological risk assessment (ERA) for the Queensland Line Fishery (Reef). The working group considered results of the updated 2021/22 ERA which will be released this year. Members provided advice in relation to these matters, including general support for application of the reef line fishery harvest strategy and other management changes such as to possession, size and catch limits, to pursue the objectives of the harvest strategy and SFS. Further stakeholder input, including from the working group, may be sought prior to any potential management changes for these species. Stock assessments have been undertaken for saddletail and crimson snapper and these will be considered through the harvest strategy process at the next working group meeting. Measures to mitigate high risk species identified in the ERA will also be discussed at the next meeting.

The working group noted the release of reports on fisheries economic and social indicators for the commercial, charter and recreational fishing sectors. Members noted the next available data will be for the 2020 financial year and will include investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparing indicators between the different fishing sectors and updating the interactive dashboard will also be a priority. Members were also presented methodology and results of the state-wide recreational fishing survey 2019-20 and boat ramp surveys, including answering frequently asked questions regarding concerns about bias and participation.

As part of general business:

Membership on the working group was discussed, in particular challenges in recruiting new members and achieving representation across different sectors of the fishery, commercial members reiterated the cumulative impacts of reforms and other changes (e.g. EPBC Act, WTO conditions, market access, marine park constraints) in the commercial fishery and the significant challenges are driving changes in the industry and affecting mental health and wellbeing, and the working group further discussed current challenges and competition within the reef line quota market, particularly coral trout. Some working group members requested consideration by Government on whether the current market is adequately providing competitive and fair access to quota and in pursuing the objectives of the fishery. Fisheries Queensland will provide the working group information that is available on quota trading, including some analysis of historical trends.

The next meeting will be held in February/March 2022 to include reviews of new stock assessments for coral trout, red emperor, crimson snapper and saddletail snapper and consideration of decision rules in line with the harvest strategy for these species.



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Big Adventure North

By **Damian Colette**



At the start of January we took the Shaka 60ft game boat on it's second major journey north over a couple of weeks. We did a Princess Charlotte Bay trip last year but this time we pressed on further to end up at the Lockhart River as our furthest northern destination before returning. It was approximately a 680 nautical mile round trip by the time we got home.

When you have time on your hands and serious long range capabilities with fuel, water and storage, this boat can be the ultimate extended vessel. To make it even more impressive you won't find a more luxurious boat with fishing capabilities like no other.

As mentioned we took our time taking in all the best the eastern Cape York had to offer. We had the tender to assist gaining access to many places very, very few ever get to experience. We fished a couple of reefs on the way up but basically went straight to Lockhart River travelling at night as well. Here we spent a couple of days fishing the river and then fished the associated reefs out wide including Bligh and Mog Reefs. We then skirted back down the outside over several days fishing an array of reefs and Davey Reef in particular let rip for an abundance of reds and pelagics. Basically any reef we pulled up to had something something amazing to offer. When it came to angling time, the fishing goes to a new level when you are that far north. Everything seems to be bigger and far more plentiful. Sometimes you have to take time out to recover from the onslaught

of fish that just seem to pile on one after the other. Just to mention a few it was full on for big spanish mackerel, bruising giant trevally, plump coral trout, as many nannygai as you wanted and also some great mangrove jack fishing the Lockhart. We came across quite a few Maori Wrasse which were released on the reefs and you rarely see them anymore further down the GBR.

Once we got around the corner of Princess Charlotte Bay we went and spent time at Lizard Island including a traditional visit to the Marlin Bar in Watson's Bay. This is always a must visit. We even shot across to the Cooktown for lunch one day at the Pub which the guys really enjoyed. Stopping at various reefs south of Cooktown and also spending a night at Hope Is we eventually made it back to Yorkey's Knob after a highly successful trip.

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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

It's been an interesting period for us, keeping well and truly busy for which I'm happy about. How the Covid thing ran through town when the borders re-opened certainly affected some operators and businesses in town, particularly restaurants and pubs. Luckily for us we basically escaped the whole ordeal and kept on truckin' along. Our smaller numbers and being outdoors certainly kept us in the game. From what I can gather if you feel a bit off, stay home for a few days and treat it like a normal influenza. It's taken a long time for authorities to work this out and I think the vast majority have as well.

We scored some really nice weather over the Christmas and New Year period barring a low pressure system which postponed a couple of days work just prior to reaching the 2022 mark. Days were mostly like 'Ground Hog Day', continuously warm, calm and around 35 celcius. Some days reached around 38 degrees and that is very warm for our part of the tropics. Rehydration and keeping out of the direct sunlight was very important. Our big canopy on the back deck plays a big part and with air-con running in the wheelhouse it goes a long way.

Okay onto some fishing and it was for the best part really good, with a real mixed bag of fish caught on most days. Your typical encounters of nannygai, coral trout, spangled emperor and trevally species kept us entertained. We had a few days of bumper numbers of coral trout which were of handsome size which was quite rewarding. Throw in quite a few red emperor, along with some spanish mackerel, thumping cobia and some tomato cod trout it was a solid return. The tomato cod trout we caught are most often caught along the more outer edges of the reef but for some reason we came across a patch which had ventured closer inside. They visually on the eye are probably one of the most



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prettiest and edible fish we don't often come across to legal size. Another day we had a massive run of quality sized honeycombe cod all around the 45cm range. They at this size are beautiful white flesh and seriously tasty. Again it was just another day you wouldn't predict if you could. That's life fishing on the Great Barrier Reef and nothing ever ceases to amaze me on occasions.

Water temperatures remain around 30 degrees plus which is hard if we have variable winds blowing us around on the anchor. But as soon as we have a bit of south easterly that increases the odds of a good catch rate on that particular day. With water temperatures still warm in the Coral Sea we have to keep an eye on any low pressure systems in the area. We caught a dose of this a few weeks ago, but for the moment there's nothing too bad in the foreseeable future.

We are literally going to put the boat to bed for the first 2 weeks of February to update a few parts on the engine. We think we have it all mapped out but with freight and supply issues across the country this may slightly extend. We had planned not to do much in February so it is part of the contingency. Best thing is to give us a bell and we can give you an immediate update on our progress.

Word on the street is that February in town will be a little flat which is typical, however March onwards looks to be very positive. Fingers crossed for all us! ■

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Breathing in the Saltaire

By Jake Colette



Since pre-Christmas we were kept quite busy right up to the middle of January. Then bookings dried up as did the tourists visiting the area. At least we got a good block of work in and we covered a lot of ground on the GBR. We had a lot of great weather to assist us with our endeavours.

Most of our work entailed family days with a combination of reef fishing and a lot of snorkelling. We have found our own piece of paradise for snorkelling where no one else visits. The water clarity is crystal, the coral is beautiful and there's heaps of fish life to enjoy. With the weather being warm a lot more time was spent in the water than normal.

Our bottom fishing efforts were mostly rewarded in spades with some quality reef fish boated for the clients to take home. At the top of the list were big red emperor, large mouth nannygai and coral trout. Others to hit the deck included spangled emperor, big cod and also gold band snapper. I've found some ground which has regularly produced the Gold Band over a couple of months and you don't hear of anyone else doing this. I'll keep this one to myself because they are a different catch and really nice to eat. You'll only find them in really deep water as a tip.

Other charters involved the more serious fisherman and we popper fished the top of the reefs for Gt's to around 15kg, some days were busy and others they wouldn't play the game. From memory the quieter days were around the full moon which is not surprising. The better days were prior to the

moons with a good bit of current around the reefs.

Light tackle lure trolling picked up enough spanish mackerel to turn the reels over and notable there were a lot more sharky mackerel around in recent weeks. Still good fun but we then convert and stockpile them for marlin baits later in the year.

Looking ahead it is planned to put the boat up on the slip sometime in February to do the annual program, plus we wouldn't mind doing a few 'familis' with tourist stakeholders who will direct more traffic our way in the busier periods. From what I'm hearing the FNQ is going to get quite busy from mid March this year and continue right through.

Our program of fishing will be fairly stock standard for the next couple of months encouraging a mixed day of surface lure fishing, trolling and reef fishing to cover all bases. It can be a bit tougher fishing during the wet season but you never underestimate what the GBR can deliver on any given day. ■



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On the Daintree Charters

By Jamie Beitzel - The Local Huckleberry Finn



I've just been lucky enough to come up for a breath of air to get this report done this month. Since pre-Christmas I've had less than a handful of days off and the very few I had were appreciated but also involved doing some jobs on the boat. So it's been no rest for the wicked but I'm not complaining as I expect the next month or so to be a lot quieter.

Early in the piece we had a day or so of some really heavy tropical rain which put the river into a minor flood. I'm guessing around 15 inches over a couple days, so it was a good drop. It was the best thing for the Daintree, landscape and river wise as things were getting a bit dry and dormant. It certainly lit the firecracker we needed to bring the fishing back to life with plenty of new bait and a new lease very evident on the water.

With what I thought was going to be a tough couple of days with lure enthusiasts just following the big downpour, it turned out to be quite productive. These guys had a lot of experience fishing in different parts of the country and I was pleased with raising over a dozen barra as well as other species. Sometimes you cringe when the expectations are up there, but this ended up with a happy story. They were very apt at casting lures and knew what they were really doing. My recently acquired electric motor in the last 14 months I'd say paid for itself ten times over.

Once the weather settled into a calm period the temperature went through the roof. We typically expect to hover around

that 34 degrees but some days spiked up to 38. The mornings were pleasant enough but the even the old fella myself, along with the clients felt the pinch in the afternoons. The old rainforest creek running through my property over the river got a proper work out at the end of each day. You got no idea how therapeutic pure, cool water can be on a tired body.

Anyway back to the serious stuff and the river fished superbly following the flush out. Big javelin fish, proper sized fingermark and quality mangrove jack kept us busy amongst others that came along. Every year the river makes me re-think tactics at times and that's why I never tire of it after 30yrs. There's nothing better than pulling the trailer out at the end of the day and giving yourself a deserved pat on the back and enjoying a coldie once home.



We did do a few charters along the coast with some really nice conditions on offer and sourced some good island coastal trout. Some trevally encounters were often part of the outcome but there were no complaints with a good spread of bait thrown around from the heavier rains.

Currently we are seeing a drop of rain here and there without showing any impact and keeping temperatures down a tad. Things will become more comfortable moving forward I anticipate.

I don't expect to be overly as busy in the immediate future but the whisper is come mid March we will be extremely busy probably right to the end of 2022 if everything goes to plan. ■




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Reel Cooking with Heff The Absolute Ultimate



Over the festive season I visited family back in Melbourne. On the Eve of Christmas we traditionally enjoy a meal of seafood. This year courtesy of my brother Hayes, things went to a completely new level and between 7 of us we experienced the best spread of seafood I've ever had the pleasure to enjoy. I doubt even the most affluent of people would have done it better. All the seafood was sourced from the South Melbourne Market. It was a feast of Australia's finest !

2 x King Island Rock Lobster 5kg each - the fore legs were the biggest I've seen, all the meat was to die for and my favourite food ever.

12 Sydney Rock Oysters - tasty, tasty

12 Tassie Oysters - the best and biggest oyster I've ever eaten, buttery in texture and packed full of flavour. The beautiful salty taste lingered in your mouth for minutes. I'll never forget this aspect. You'll never touch another oyster after having these puppies

1kg WA Tiger Prawns - naturally high end

1kg Moreton Bay Bugs - always delicious

1kg WA Scampi - a type of prawn I've never eaten but they pack a very unique and different flavour, quite yummy !

We indulged for as long as we could and didn't near finish the serving. All was kept aside to enjoy for the following days after Christmas. 'Wow wee' is all I can say, the best single serving of seafood you could ever want.



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