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VOLUME 255 PRICELESS

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Features
GBR Fishing
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Saltwater Creek
Daintree River Report

FEB 22



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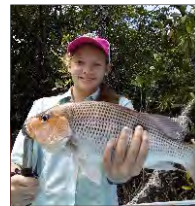
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Contact Us if you'd like to
Contribute - Most Welcome

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Front Cover:
Richie Howie with a 90cm Queenfish caught at the mouth of Saltwater Creek on an outgoing tide late afternoon



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PORT DOUGLAS COAST GUARD

VMR 410 Channel 16, 72, 81

FNQ Ready to Fire Up

By Heff

The Queensland government has announced that it will commit \$100 million towards an aviation attraction package. This dollar figure will combine with an additional \$100 million contributed by the state's four international airports.

The \$200 million aviation attraction package will ensure that Queensland can step up its competitive position on the global tourism stage, secure more flights and additional routes to increase our state's aviation capacity over the next few years.

As international borders reopen on 21 February, Australia will be entering an extremely competitive market. As one of the last nations to reinstate travel for international tourists, Australia will be competing with established holiday destinations vying for visitors in an urgent struggle to rebuild economies. Today, Tourism Research Australia released its latest report, confirming that cumulative losses for Australia in international tourism since the start of COVID have amounted to \$68.6 billion. A staggering impact on businesses and communities, not least in Queensland's internationally-focused destinations.

Queensland has excellent visitor experiences and products to offer, and the attributes of space, clean environments and uncrowded destinations are likely to be even more attractive in a post-COVID consumer market. However, we must be conveniently accessible and connected with the world, and we must be ready and resourced to compete in this global space if we want to reactivate a thriving visitor economy in a timely way.

QTIC has consistently urged the Queensland government to invest in a committed and well-funded aviation attraction partnership with industry and the announcement today is certainly welcome news and will help restore industry confidence. The fact that the four airports are supporting this initiative in such a substantial way is testimony to the strong collaboration and spirit of industry-



government partnerships that have been demonstrated throughout the crisis. The multimillion-dollar aviation package will help ensure that Queensland is ready to welcome the world to our sunshine state once more. The multimillion-dollar aviation package will help ensure that Queensland is ready to welcome the world to our sunshine state once more.

We now need to ensure that our international border will indeed remain open and travel restrictions will ease without unnecessary uncertainty introduced to rattle international traveller confidence. National Cabinet, state and territory governments, ATAGI and Health Departments all must play a role in guiding the nation with a steady hand towards a predictable and practical future, including for international travel.

The state government's commitment recently to the launching of a domestic and international marketing campaign, will further help in re-establishing our tourism brand and destination identity as one of the best in the world.

Word on the street in Port Douglas is that forward accommodation bookings are very positive from the domestic scene. The international market is still yet to be tested. Australians this year it seems will travel within the country as a majority which has already seen us hang in there despite the horrific border closures within house over the past two years. For those which have managed to hang on, there are better days ahead including the recreational charter industry. We'll see if the international market can value add back into the local economy in 2022. ■



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Saltwater Creek Surprise

By Heff



It had been years and years since I had fished Saltwater Creek which is located just north of Newell Beach, which in turn is about 20 minutes drive from Port Douglas. My longest term mate, Richard Howie had just purchased a beach cottage on the beach esplanade in Newell Beach. We went through university together over 30yrs ago. We every now and then caught up over the years but it seems like there will be a bit more of that with his second home FNQ. Newell Beach is a sleepy hollow beach side small community with a lot of appeal.

Recently I caught up and fishing was definitely on the cards. We had a couple of choices at Newell Beach - fish the mouth of the Mossman River, fish the beach itself or have a go at the Saltwater Creek Mouth. I opted for Saltwater not having laid eyes on it for a long time.

Saltwater originates from a few mountain streams up on the Daintree Rainforest canopy and runs down through Miallo where the fresh water is the purest going around. These feeder creeks are legendary for chasing jungle perch. The main creek begins roughly around Bamboo, a tiny township at the back of the cane fields. Here it forms into a deep section of water teeming with barra and mangrove jack and always retains water coming from the mountains. Approximately 6km from the mouth it becomes tidal.

On the day in question we made our way to the river mouth only a kilometre from Richie's cottage around late afternoon. The plan was simple, have a few beers and wet a line. Our rigs were simple running set ups with some choice 4 inch pilchards I had picked up. Sinker on the main line, swivel with 30lb leader around 45cm long. This way the small pilchards would lift of the bottom and drift in the current.

We had the stunning river mouth to ourselves, not a hint of anyone. In such a hustling and bustling world it's a rarity to find such a place all to yourself. With the Daintree ranges to the west and the ocean to the east it is a serene setting for sure.

We started fishing at the mouth around the first hour of the outgoing tide. We plonked ourselves on the sandy bank over a couple of beers and caught up on old times for about

an hour. At this point I mentioned things were a bit quiet on the fishing front. Well that was the unexpected prompt to kick things into gear. Both rods almost simultaneously buckled over and line started peeling with gusto. By the weight of the rod and tempo of the initial fight I first thought it was a good school of Gt's passing by. We both had our hands full with a hot shoe shuffle going on to avoid each others lines. We were both presented with the challenge that these fish were heading out to sea through the mouth with the aid of a decent current. Luckily they turned back into the creek where a good old fashioned slug feast took place. Both battles lasted for about 20 minutes as we were using relatively light gear. It took ages to finally see a flash of silver colour as they came towards the deep bank. Gees, they were big queenfish which was an extra bonus. Surprisingly neither jumped out of the water at the start of the fight. Anyway we banked two beauties around 90cm, let one go and bled the other for dinner that night. If you bleed them properly there's nothing wrong with a bit of fresh queenfish (no good to freeze). With a batch a chips from the renowned Newell Beach Takeaway it was an awesome feed.

It was a great catch up with an old mate and a good fish tale to boot. I look forward to catching up more regularly just being up the road and I've got no doubt there will be more fishing and beers conducted at Saltwater Creek - a hidden gem of FNQ. ■



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

As I put pen to paper there's a bit of mixed emotion, do I cry or do I take on the positive approach? Well I can say I've adopted the positive approach but if you wind back the clock to the start of the month you may have caught me in a brief moment of depression. I'll explain the turn of events.

It was always planned at the start of February to block the books and do some maintenance on the engines. The idea was to replace certain important parts of the 750hp Yanmar engine. Nothing too drastic but a few things needed upgrading. This part of the plan appeared to be going smoothly with parts ordered in accordance with the time frame we had allocated. As the old parts were removed whilst we waited for the new parts things quickly took an ugly turn for the worst.

I'll try and keep it in Laymen's terms best I can but you'll get the drift. It all started with replacing the injectors which then in turn found another problem which again turned into another problem, and so on.

As one thing escalated to another it was apparent the engine would have to come out of the boat and worked on by land. What a shit fight and basically it was adding up to an engine rebuild. Estimates were adding up rapidly to about 50K. It was going to be an expensive exercise and it still left us with reconditioned engine which could see us laying idle for possibly a couple of months. This was the low point of the ordeal.

Chris our mechanic from Port Douglas Marine diesel services came up with an idea being an actual Yanmar dealer. He sourced a brand new engine from Melbourne at the cost of 65K which when installed would come with a 2yr charter warranty. There are other a few other associated costs involved but it was a 'no brainer'. The new engine was ordered immediately and it was a matter of waiting for it to get freighted up. This surprisingly took just over three



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weeks considering all the freight issues you hear about.

Whilst we waited we had to dismantle the old engine, cut up the hatch area and remove a section of the back deck canopy in readiness for the crane to take the old engine out and drop in the new one. I also had time to repaint the back deck whilst we prepped the boat.

As I write we are installing the new engine which requires the services of a crane. All things going well I anticipate we'll be operating by the second week of March. Despite all the drama the timing couldn't have been better and we didn't miss out on too much work. It was better now to find the issues as apposed to an engine issue when we really got busy. As things look with bookings, by mid March we'll be inundated with work. So in saying all this it's time to book well ahead to avoid disappointment.

Sorry for the lack of fishing reports this month but as you see we've had a bit on our plate. I'm actually looking really forward to getting back to what we do best and that's catching fish on the Great Barrier Reef.

Actually hang on a moment, whilst working on the deck we put a line over the side and caught ourselves a 40cm juvenile Qld Groper. It was a pretty little thing which I'm sure will grow into a monster down the track. That was our fishing fix for the month of February. ■

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Breathing in the Saltaire

By Jake Colette



As February panned out it was a good month for us both on the booking front and fishing wise. February is normally a dead month but we knocked out 10 charters and nearly all of them were conducted on absolute glamour days. A lot of reef fishing and quite a bit of snorkelling was the charter of choice by all. It was a great choice because the bottom fishing was really handy and the snorkelling on the reef was amplified by sensational water clarity.

With calm conditions we were able to fish as deep as we liked. We did have to work for our fish but when they decided to bite it was all quality. Nothing that came overboard was small and we found ourselves tussling with 8kg large mouth nannygai, 5kg coral trout and legal sized red emperor 60cm plus. Half a dozen of these beauties combined and you've had a great day on the water at this time of year. Everyone gets excited when you see a big flash of the right colour coming up from the depths. With the water clarity we experienced you could see down 15-20m easily. Lucky for us the toothy critters weren't around and I can't remember losing any fish to the sharks which just love the red coloured fish. Bonus fish on the side included 5kg spangled emperor and more gold band snapper which have decided to extend their stay on certain deep hangs.

As mentioned we spent a fair bit of time snorkelling on private reefs with no crowds and it was truly welcomed with the mercury level still quite warm. As we promote why

don't you combine a fish and snorkel trip together. Most people can handle up to around 1hr of snorkelling and some a lot less. Why waste a full day on a separate snorkel trip when you can get your worth on our boat and then top it up with some outstanding fishing. It is an action packed day and to be honest you can save a lot of money as well, particularly if you have a bigger group.

During the month we did see an anomaly on the water. We were fishing out at near Chinaman Reef, miles away from any land form. Bugger me dead here swims past a jenny mud crab laid with eggs swimming around in the middle of nowhere. The closest place that would resemble a suitable habitat is Low Woody, part of the Low Isles group. That however is approximately 15 miles away from where she was swimming around. My gut feel is that this little creature was destined to become a tasty snack for some unsuspecting shark lucky enough to stumble across it. I've spoken to a few people about it and no one can ever recall such an incident. It goes to show you never know what you'll see when you are fishing on the Great Barrier Reef.

The beginning of March looks super positive with more bookings and it looks like by the end of the coming month things will go to a new level. I'm encouraging people to pre-book well ahead if you are coming up this way because the calendar is filling up by the day. ■



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On the Daintree Charters

By Jamie Beitzel - The Local Huckleberry Finn



For me on the Daintree River I must admit my February trade ended up being better than expected. Some years you are lucky to even see a tourist up this way but this time I ticked along nicely mainly doing a lot of half day trips which suited me. It gave me the afternoons to service a few things on the boat plus keep back the jungle of the Daintree from overtaking my property. A bit of rain and sunshine combined sees everything grow before your eyes. At least the weather cooled down to a certain degree making things a lot more comfortable on the water and on the land.

Most of my trips were done on the river mainly concentrating downstream with a bit of salt around. My fingermark haunts produced dividends as I would expect with the odd barra showing up as well. For me however was a burst of mangrove jack which went full tilt at times. No matter their size they are a serious handful hitting the line at supersonic speed. They then know where to run and that's back towards the brickwork of the mangroves. Drags have to be lock up and there's little room for error. I was hoping to pluck a few more barra from these spots but the mangrove jack were way superior. They will work in small packs and out bully any other competitors. Their colours were also really vibrant for some reason. Often they are a dark copper colour but these fish had wonderful combinations of red and white, very pretty looking fish.

Other than this we picked other species and often when there was a bit of fresh in the river. Even over the last couple of years

I've learnt a few new tricks and quite confident I'll provide a valued trip even with more challenging conditions. On these days we secured some really handy grunter along with some hard fighting shovel nose rays. Visitors love catching the shovel nose because they are a major contender on the end of the line and to them they've never caught anything as mighty. My philosophy is that there's never a bad fish to catch and it's all about what the client thinks.


I did complete a couple of coastal trips which was a bonus for this time of year with some really flat seas on offer. I'm pleased to say they proved to be productive catching some sizeable island bar cheek trout and a couple of big fingermark which pack some serious punch. It's very rewarding to produce such quality fish like these when it is not their ideal time of the year.

Looking ahead it's a hard one to predict and as we speak we have our first cyclone watch which I think won't be much of a headache. We may see a good puff of wind and some associated rain but it should pass by fairly quickly without too much interruption.

Forward bookings certainly go up a notch in the coming month and I highly suspect it will be like a peak tourist season as early as April. After that us operators will be kept super busy till the end of the year. So there will be no booking of holidays from our end. After all we need a big year to make up for the last two years and looking forward to it seeing the region return to its former glory.





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Top 6 Ranking

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Our 563 photos posted got 41,125 total views in the last month



Reel Cooking with Heff Simple Stupid & Easy



I'm always a big one not to mess with seafood including fish. This easy one, two, three recipe only takes a handful of minutes to prepare and cook. Perfect for any day of the week. Healthy and fresh but also yummy !

Ingredients

- 4 x 200gm of Large Mouth Nannygai (flavoursome fish)
- Olive Oil
- Old Bay Seasoning (try it because it is awesome with fish)
- Paprika to add a bit of colour to the dish
- Lemon wedge to squeeze over fish if you wish
- Parsley finely chopped and a great garnish on top
- Salt and Pepper

Method

Preheat pan or grill on medium heat with a drizzle of olive oil
Coat fish one side with olive oil by brush, sprinkle Old Bay, Paprika and salt & pepper and rub in with the brush.
Cook for a few minutes till brown. In the meantime re-coat the other side of the fillet whilst it's cooking on the first side.
Cook the other side of the fillet till brown.
Add Parsley for garnish and lemon juice over the top if you desire on the plate.
Serve on the side with a fresh batch of steamed vegies of your choice.



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