

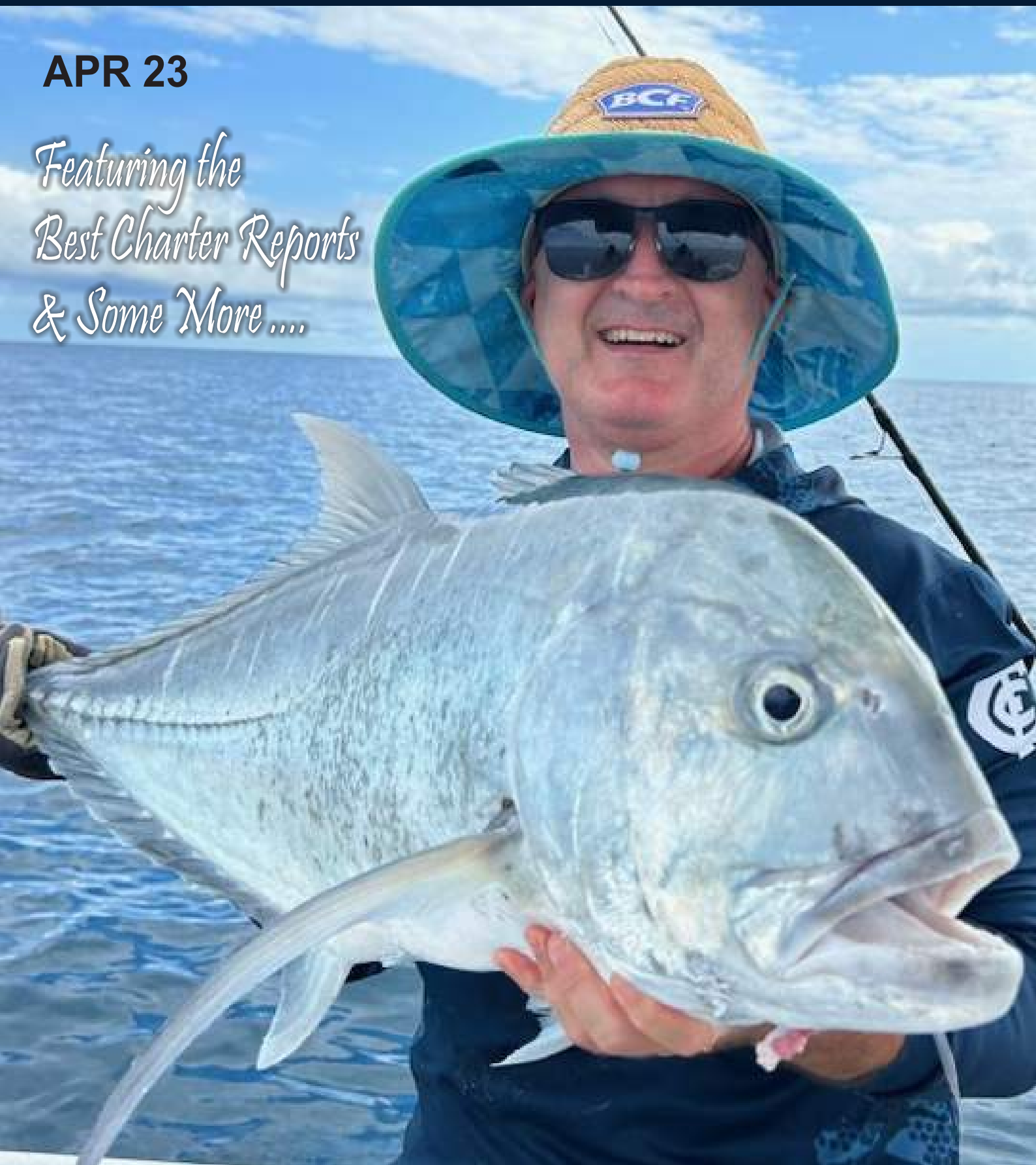
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VOLUME 268 PRICELESS

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Fishing Port Douglas News



with Heff

For the first time in recent memory we saw a brilliant weather pattern over the Easter and school holiday period. There's an old theory amongst locals - never go camping over Easter as it will be crap weather. Well not this year and I know there was a lot of last minute re-adjusting from a local point of view to change plans and get out amongst the outdoors. For example the local boat ramp in Port Douglas remained a constant barrage of trailer boats coming and going at all times of the day with a lot of overnight stays on the water panning out.

On the charter scene those that did go were treated to magical conditions offshore and the fishing was quite fair. The word on the ground is that trade was less than anticipated especially with the awesome weather at hand. It wasn't a bad outcome but it seems we are now back into a typical tourist season which won't get really busy till June onwards. We'll have to wait and see what the high cost of living and increased interest rates will have on our tourism sector as well. From what I'm reading between the lines is that family holidays to various destinations will be put down the list until there is some reprieve.

Shark Deterrent Research Update

In order to reduce depredation different shark repellents are being tested including a magnetic Sharkbanz deterrents by Zeppelin, an electric FISH01 Shark Shield by Ocean Guardian and an acoustic shark repellent by Shark Stopper. Testing of shark deterrents has been carried out onboard Dragon Lady Fishing Charters in Port Douglas while undertaking charter fishing trips. These shark repellents are being deployed while fishing is being undertaken to see if more fish can be successfully landed while fishing in areas where depredation is occurring.

Total days testing repellents: 22 days

Total fishing sessions: 176

Shark repellents tested: Shark Shield, Sharkbanz, Shark Stopper

Total fishing sessions with depredation occurring: 40

Preliminary research findings

Using shark repellents does successfully allow more fish to be landed

No shark repellent tested can stop depredation all together.

Effectiveness of shark repellents is limited by range of deterrent.

The deeper the water, the less effective shark repellents become.

Electric deterrents are working well in testing, with sharks not depredating fish within electric field.

In order to understand what shark species are depredating catches the remains of depredated fish are being swabbed to genetically analyse a depredating species. These samples are being provided by willing commercial, charter and recreational fishers across Queensland.

155 swab samples collected from a variety of different areas across the east coast of Queensland. Swab samples have been collected off the remains of 46 different fish species around Queensland

Top four depredated fish species include:

- o coral trout
- o spanish mackerel
- o amberjack
- o pink snapper

Top 3 depredating species

- o bull shark
- o pigeye shark
- o sandbar shark

Continued research across the fishing sector will continue for the next 12 months.



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Fishing On the Daintree

with Jamie Beitzel



I was hearing around the traps that things were a bit quieter just south of us in Port Douglas this year for the Easter period. Well I'm happy to report I've been flat out and it appears to be the way moving forward.

To be honest I was wrapped to show as many people as possible as to how good the fishing on the Daintree River can be. I typically earmark April as a good month to fish on the calendar and the old system didn't let me down. For the bulk of charters it was bloody hot work with above average temperatures and clear sunny days. In saying that there's always plenty of spots to capture some breeze to take the edge off things.

Down to the fishing and catching quality live sardines was relatively easy this month. With some solid bait averaging around 7-9cm in length it was always the plan to hit the prime locations to entice some big fish.

The barramundi came out to play this past month and we had some great sessions landing fish around the 75-80cm mark which is a decent barra for our system. It was pretty tight fishing where we caught them so I had to be selective who I took there. Basically it was people who had some fishing prowess or experience. The old barra don't give you a second chance if you miss one. Naturally we dropped our fair share but at least people could see and say that they'd hooked up to a highly iconic fish.



For the most the fingermark were really buzzing for me all month and gee we caught some ripping fish. Fish ranging from 50-82cm were quite common and the biggest one was a dinosaur of a fish. Obviously it had returned from the coast back to the river to live out its days and was a beautiful thing. She was a bit worn and torn but she was full of zest on the line. All the fingermark actually fought harder this month and were the most challenging fish to keep out of the structure. The same again a few of them proved to good for our anglers. When fishing the snags in the main channel I always have a rod or two out wide across the flats or in the mainstream. This set up delivered beautifully with javelin fish or grunter fish caught to 55cm. They fight superbly at this size and probably one of the tastiest fish you'll wrap your lips around.

Outside of this there were good golden trevally up to 4kg on the move and the steady stream of mid sized giant trevally to 2kg have returned to system and provided a heap of fun on the light gear. Back to the snags we caught a few mangrove jack and estuary cod to value add over the course of the month.

Water temperatures still remain around the 29-30 degree mark so the fishing in the coming weeks will continue to pack some 'reel' punch with all the above mentioned species on the table. With a hint of south easterly winds coming up you've always got good with us.



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Dragon Lady Charters

with Derek Brown



What an unpredictable month it is has been aboard our vessel. For the first two weeks we were flying with some of the best Easter weather in years and the numbers of people were healthy enough. Flip to the other side of the coin and we had little or no chance of venturing out of the harbour due to some fairly ordinary conditions with rain squalls and high trade winds. It's the nature of the game but we'll stick to the positive aspects of what we achieved.

There was a mixed bag of fish for our punters and generally there was plenty of them. Depending on where we fished we claimed plenty of high quality coral trout, small mouth nannygai, trevally and always seemed to snare a few big spanish mackerel on the floating rig at the back of the boat. In lesser numbers we caught red emperor, cod, baldy bream and sweetlip to add a bit of variety to each trip. We did have one day where the sharks were a bit frisky and a bit frustrating but again that's fishing.

I'm really looking forward to the next period where the reef takes on a transformation



A promotional graphic for Dragon Lady Port Douglas. It features the text "DRAGON LADY" in large, stylized white letters with a blue outline, and "PORT DOUGLAS" below it. The background shows three fish: a red coral trout, a yellow snapper, and a silver spanish mackerel. A "Certificate of Excellence 2019 WINNER" badge is in the top right corner. The phone number "0429372466" is displayed in large white digits at the bottom.

with the switching of the currents due to come from the south. This will bring on the large mouth nannygai, one of our favourite fish to target and everything else will also go to the next level. If you get the opportunity to join us it's a ripping time to be on the water.

A new concept we've introduced to our new look website is a live calendar update with availability and if you wish you can make an immediate booking on-line. As per usual we are always available to talk on the phone or answer any emails if you prefer. Make sure you follow our Dragon Lady Facebook and you'll see what we've catching on a daily basis.

In the next month or so forward our bookings start to ramp up in May, with June already looking very solid.

Saltaire Charters



with Craig Newbold

For us the beginning of April was reasonable with bookings but a far stretch from the previous year. Last year was a bit of a false economy with everyone coming out of Covid, keen for a holiday and cashed up. Wind the clock forward and people are hit with high inflation on all fronts and mortgages through the roof for many. It was predicted to be a soft Easter trade period and it panned out this way.

For those that were fortunate to join us, they were treated to some of the best weather and the fishing was exceptional. All trips entailed a combination charter with a mixture of light tackle game fishing and bottom fishing for reef species. The surface fishing produced some cracking spanish mackerel up to 20kg and off the bottom coral trout dominated as the main species. At there end of the trip there was plenty of fish to go around.

The good weather lasted till around mid April before it turned pear shaped for the rest of the month. We saw the last of the wet season rains and

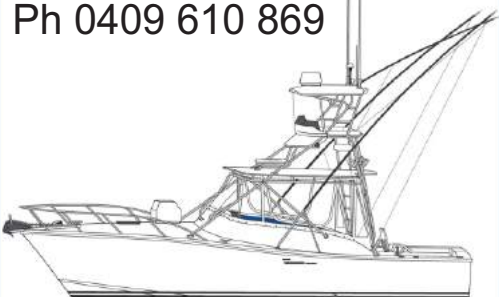
the south east trade winds made their first decent appearance for the year.

Looking ahead our next venture is just around the corner with a 13 day trip on our sister mothership Escapade. It is with researchers from James Cook University where we will take them up the Turtle Island Group west of Lizard Island. They will be diving making analysis as to the state of the reef systems there in regards to coral bleaching and overall health. It will a change of tune compared to what we normally do but a very exciting one as well.

We are also glad to announce that Escapade is now open for business for extended reef trips up to 8 pax. We have a range of options from the boat itself to combining it with our 35ft Saltaire game boat and a 6m Ocean Whaler for fishing across the top of reefs. The pricing is fantastic value so give us a call to obtain a quote or go to www.fishingportdouglas.com.au - Reef Fishing Escapade for a run down.



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