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Front Cover: 'Sharky' Shane Down with a big Karumba Barra

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By Adam Boone

Welcome to our April report, and let me start by saying I hope everyone had a great and safe Easter holiday period. We've had some great periods of sunshine in the last month, unfortunately accompanying those periods of sunshine have been the relentless winds from the south east which has made it hard work for us smaller boat brigade to even get out of the leads! The couple of times we did manage to get out and have a look around the southern reefs we found the mackerel to be on the bite, not just the Spanish, it looks like the doggies have moved in too and are more than happy to hit a jig or metal slice put down through the water column. On the bottom we found good numbers of coral trout and nannygai with the odd cobia keeping things interesting.. Thankfully with this bad run of wind we found the fishing up the local rivers and



creeks to be pretty productive. Good numbers of fingermark were caught on the lead up to the full moon with the 'jacks' active as well around the mangrove roots. We found live baiting to be the best method and with the abundance of bait in the estuary systems at the moment it is no work at all to get yourself a mornings worth of bait in 1 or 2 casts of the net. The mud crabs have also seemed to appear in greater numbers this month, especially around the bigger tides and it wasn't uncommon to get 1 big buck per pot. Even on the neap tides we still managed a couple here and there.

There isn't a week that goes by where something totally out of the bag happens out on one of our charters. More recently I had a family of four on the boat and we were fishing the far upper reaches of the Dickson Inlet, we had landed a few good bream and estuary cod to go along with a nice 42cm Mangrove Jack, when the father hooked up to another nice little mangrove jack jack. With the net ready to go he brought it up to the side of the boat. Just as he lifted it to about 10cm from the surface, WHACK! A solid barracuda came up from underneath it and nailed it. Not just a run of the mill 'cuda' either, this thing would have been 5ft easily with a head like a horse and a set of massive pick like teeth. With the poor 'jack' worse for wear and shredded to pieces resting in the water, the 'cuda' wasn't finished. **Cont page 10**

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By Jake Wyatt

What a windy start to the season it has been. Surely we are due for a break in the weather soon, even if it's just for a few days more in a row. Bookings were quite solid over the Easter break with the winds just dropping enough to get out to the reef most days, although there were many days we had to fish inshore. There was no consistency with the forecasts and we had to take each day one step at a time.

On the days we did manage to travel wide to the outer reef it was awesome and the trout were certainly hungry in the past month. XL model bar cheeks were coming over the side in really good numbers and were all caught on plastics. Ana jigs, 7 inch jerk shads and a new model called King Shrimp from Berkley we're doing all the damage.

Cobia and Golden Trevally were also playing the game and once again they all were caught on the same jigs. We did have a few drifts across the local wrecks which resulted in multiple double hook ups but often only to lose the fish to hungry cod which don't even know they are hooked. We thought we would try and catch one of these cod on one particular day so we followed it around after it had engulfed out on a couple of 'nannies' we had hooked up on but after a hour the line parted way. I still think the thing didn't know it was even hooked and it was towing a boat around the ocean.

The mackerel trolling was a bit slow this past month with only small Spanish landed

and a few 'scaleys' thrown in the mix. The positive I guess is that there are a lot of small Spanish about and will be good fun on the light spin gear moving forward.

With the wind up at times it gave us a good chance to fish across the reef flats, throwing small stick baits, poppers and any other little surface lures. We managed to land some quality Passionfruit trout which you don't see that often, red bass and a mixed bag of tevally species. We missed some absolute monster trout which made for great visual fishing. I really enjoy this style of angling watching quality fish ambush its potential prey in really skinny water.

As mentioned we spent a bit of time up the local estuary mainly families catching grunter, bream, cod, fingermark and mangrove jack. Recently I added estuary night fishing to our program and our first night trip was a ripper. Using big mullet as live bait we caught a few monster mangrove jack in the deep holes. It was a whole heap of fun and I look forward to future night trips which offer far better results fishing under the cover of darkness. The croc spotting with a big flash light was also far more productive.

Carnivale is not far away and we are starting to get some good bookings. Hopefully the weather gods give us a little break and we can start our light tackle Marlin program. If you would like to chase these little powerful bill fish then get in contact and we can tailor a trip to suit your needs. Tight lines till next time. ■



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

The month of April was to be honest a welcomed relief as we saw an influx of tourists hit the region, especially in the second half of the month. A combination of school holidays and the Easter break meant there were plenty of visitors around, many of them eager to experience a day of fishing on the outer reef. The Easter period in the past has proven to be a bit of hit and miss but this year was probably the best I've seen in quite some time. The weather behaved itself enough so we didn't have to cancel any trips and the fishing was simply sensational.

As we have been reporting for awhile now, the reef fishing never took a backward step over the summer and now that the seasons are changing it has only got better. With winds and currents now running in the same direction it has only made our job easier. Looking back through the diary we had some thumping days on the fish and each trip was never the same with a real spread of species being caught.

Just to give you a sample of consecutive days, the first day we registered 40 large mouth nannygai, 4 spangled emperor, 6 coral trout, 2 red emperor and a big cobia. Certainly a big day in anyone's books. The very next day it was 14 coral trout, 20 small mouth nannygai and 3 spanish mackerel. The following was a dozen large mouth, similar numbers of trout, a few reef mangrove jack, a big fingermark and several oceanic catfish which were around 4-5kg in size and something you don't often get to catch. And lastly to finish off the final day in this short passage, it saw us with 8 coral trout, 1 cobia, 1 green jobfish, 12 large mouth, a host of trevally, including a few stonking giant trevally from off the bottom and a couple of mackerel. There was not a day for the month which made us really scratch around to catch a fish.

With school holidays on there were a lot of families joining us for private charters, some of them several times. These days became a mixed program of fishing and snorkelling and one day was even devoted to diving which was a bit of a novelty for us. We had the team from Blue Dive join us for the day and they took control of the diving aspect for us. They came down to the boat armed with a truck load of dive gear and looked after our French clients brilliantly visiting a couple of different dive sites. This day saw us travel wide to the well known Opal Reef for its amazing coral and fish life. It was a nice break from the fishing and the cleaning of the boat was a much easier process.



Looking ahead we've already started to see the tell tale signs of the south easterly trade winds taking hold. This will be the only deterrent moving forward in regards to the fishing. This coming month I'll predict the nannygai will power on even further, the coral trout which have been really consistent will be caught further up in the shallows and the mackerel will get better and better. Bonus species will include a stronger showing of reef mangrove jack, the spangled and red emperor will further shine, and on the brink of this there will be a positive showing from our bread and butter species which include the sweetlip, stripies and moses perch. Basically it will be a lottery draw as to what will come up but weather providing we'll be nattering away at a good rate of knots. Come join us if you can!



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The Karumba Pilgrimage

Part 2 - By 'Sharky' Shane Down

In last month's edition we read about Sharky's and Reg's first week efforts fishing the waters of the Karumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The fishing was gradually improving with good barra for the taking amongst others. Let's see how the remainder of the trip fared for the boys.

With the passing of Cyclone Trevor we had a clear passage of weather ahead of us. The next couple of sessions were hard work with little to write about mainly the because the tides were massive in the river and everything seemed to go in hiding. So on the Wednesday afternoon we decided to keep out of the river and headed up the beach about a kilometre to escape the raging water flow. We chose a section of beach which was littered with pop-eye mullet and they were as thick as hairs on the back of a dog. They were everywhere darting around and jumping nervously. I had already caught some mullet before

arriving so I left the pop-eye alone but we would cast our baits in amongst them. We received a couple of early good hits on the 'livies' but couldn't convert. The signs were encouraging having gone through a slow patch of fishing.

The first fish to stay connected ended up being a big shovel ray which fought with plenty of gusto. At least we were on the scoreboard once again. Not long after Reg smacked into something substantial and soon found himself chasing it up and down the beach. There's nothing better than waltzing the golden sands of the beach. After about 5 minutes of hard hitting runs I made out some golden fins on the surface and initially thought he'd hooked a big catfish. But as it came in closer to the shore I could see it was a massive King Threadfin Salmon. This is what we had been hoping for. I was able to secure the leader and then grabbed it under the gills. Heaving it up onto the beach this fish had some serious size about it. There were cheers all round and the highlight of the trip to date. Dispatching the fish I was eager to put the tape across it guessing it was over a metre. Well it went better than that and at 111cm it was what you would call a trophy fish.



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As soon as lines were back in the water it wasn't long before Reg found himself in a similar predicament. Could it be ??? Yep it was another trophy Threadfin and after a spirited fight another beauty was dragged up onto the beach. Wow wee .. you couldn't have written a better script. This classic stretched 107cm on the tape. Back at the van park later the word spread quickly and we were very popular that evening with people popping around to see for themselves. What a choice to leave the raging currents of the river ...

Thursday morning we tried a different section of the river and found the fishing to be just okay. We hooked up to an undersize threadfin and black jewfish and tangled with a series of catfish. One of the catfish would have been easily 20kg and was a ball busting effort.

In the afternoon it was an easy decision to head back to the beach at the same place as the day before. The bait was scarce this day and after managing enough in the cast net we settled in. This day was different and the wind picked up considerably making the fishing tough. All we could muster was a couple of big spikey tail flounder (stingrays) and big shovel nose ray. Definitely not what we were hoping for, but that's fishing.

The next day on Friday there was a bit of backlash from Cyclone Trevor which was still present in the Gulf and the fish seemed to shutdown. Fishing off the bank near the airport was a bit disappointing managing but we did tussle with another colossal catfish of about 30kg and did manage a nice jewel fish which was served up fresh for dinner. We had experienced a couple of lean days and hoped things would pick back tomorrow.

Saturday we started early with a positive frame of mind. We took the dingy across the river to the mangroves armed with some nice pop-eye mullet. It proved to be a bit quiet and our best fish was a 55cm king threadfin which was released.

At 9am we decided on a change of location and moved upstream to the 'Jewie Hole' which we hadn't spent much time at this trip. The tides had eased and made it fishable. This little session showed more promise with 3 jewel fish caught, the best at 63cm and a good king threadfin which measured 80cm. It was my first 'Kingy' for the trip and I was chuffed. Also we tangled with another gut wrenching golden catfish

which would have been a decent 15kg in size. We didn't do a late afternoon fish this time as the residue of Cyclone Trevor lashed the area with strong winds and rain squalls.

On Sunday with the weather already trying to clear I tried a section of river which was basically a mud bank 100m long with no mangroves lining it. There was also plenty of bait to collect here as well. With 'livies' out in place we enjoyed a good little stint catching two 'kingy's', the best at 75cm, and a blue salmon about 48cm in length. When the bait stopped getting bashed I headed to a small creek not far away which I named 'Croc Creek' a couple of years ago when a 16ft reptile paid us a very personal visit coming right up to our small tinny. Here our bait was eagerly gobbled up by 4 queenfish of decent size which we gladly converted into yummy Numus. That afternoon the northerly winds really kicked in so we decided to give fishing a miss.

On Monday the weather looked like a morning fish was achievable so at the boat ramp I collected around 20 pop-eye mullet and we scooted up to 'Croc Creek'. Our first hook-up was about 15 minutes into fishing when Reg slammed into a bar of silver and a good barra came flying out of the water. At 73cm it was a good boat to get into the boat. He quickly followed up with another one soon after but at 58.5cm we decided this fella could go back in the water. To finish off this session I caught a decent steelback salmon which looks like a cross between a salmon and a trevally and it ended up on the dinner plate that night. The afternoon tides and wind weren't favourable so that was it for the day.

Tuesday morning it was at the boat ramp nice and early. I had worked out by this stage it is best to get there before anyone else as the mullet are easier to catch before anyone else can get their mits on them. ➡



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We headed back to 'Croc Creek' and soaked our baits. Reg dropped a good barra quite early in the piece which was a bummer. I then hooked into a behemoth and soon realised it was the mother of all catfish or 'golden jew' as i had started to call them. It was 15 minutes of pain curbing this bugger and having it at the side of the boat it was easily 30kg, if not more and was the size of a barrel. Once I had recovered my next adversary was a ripping 64cm jewel fish and these guys are just sensational on the plate. From this point on the bites came frequently and a further 8 quality jewel fish found their way into the esky within 30 minutes. It was a whole heap of fun.

The next encounter not long after felt different from the get go. It had grunt and serious pulling power and I had to do some fancy footwork around the deck. The welcome sign of a golden 'kingy' came to the boat had my heart racing and for good reason as it eventually measured 89cm. This is living ! I then asked Reg to check his bait as we had been losing a few not necessarily feeling a bite. As he was

Winding the line the rod buckled over and it was on again. Another 75cm 'kingy' found its way to the net and our esky was looking more than healthy, in fact it was looking fit for a king. We fished till 11.30am without further incident but we were more than content by this point. We were scheduled to leave the following day but decided there and then to stay on for a couple more days as the fishing was definitely picking up. With that decision made we gave ourselves the afternoon off and chilled out around the campsite that afternoon.

By this stage it was Wednesday 27th March and it was bright and early down at the boat ramp to round up some pop-eye mullet. The tide was really low so these crafty little buggers were hard to round up. I did however manage to cast net some conventional mullet. We went straight to 'Croc Creek' where it was a bit slow so we shifted to the muddy bank on the river. The tide began to pick up momentum and the fish came on the chew. By this stage Reg was proving to be the Threadfin expert and boated two more rippers at 75 & 78cm a piece - really nice going. I was able to stop in their tracks three nice jewel fish which added to what you would say was a fulfilling session.



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With the mornings catch cleaned and filleted back at the van park it was time for a bite of lunch. I must say at this point the processing facilities for cleaning fish at the Karumba Point Van Park are just sensational. It is also a focal point where the clans often converge to see who's caught with a t .


At around 1pm we thought we would give the beach a go where Reg caught those big Threadfin. The bait was scarce but I had some leftover live bait churning away with the aerator in the bucket from the morning. I opted for a 'livie' on one outfit and a strip of mullet on the other. We opened this campaign with a catfish and Reg turned the odds our way by then landing a beautiful 76cm king threadfin salmon. A bit later my line went slack and I suspected a shark may have bitten me off so I began winding it in. I was totally fooled because the line went suddenly taught and an almighty barra came launching into orbit and then danced all over the beach waters. Far Out!! It was just out there showing off in all its glory. Big silver chrome flanks lit up the show in a violent but majestic moment. I was using 80lb leader and was praying its gill rakers stayed well clear. It pushed, shoved, bounded and barreled around like wild horse. I eventually got it into the shallows and like a tiger I grabbed it around the throat for dear life. I then dragged my captive onto the beach where I just looked in amazement at my achievement. The hook was buried deep in her throat and she wasn't going anywhere. I eagerly ran the tape over her and it went 95.5cm and became my personal PB date. I was keen to release her but the hook showed signs of damage and I was dubious of her recovery it let loose. She really put some emphasis at the anchor point which was not intended on my behalf. Back at the van park she weighed 7.2kg just shy short of Reg's earlier in the trip 8.5kg despite his being just shorter in length.




We didn't finish there either as Reg followed up 20 minutes later with another classic Karumba Threadfin at 82cm. This stretch of beach ended up being our 'king pin' location for the trip on the right tides and weather and goes to show you don't need a boat to necessarily require a boat to enjoy the spoils of this mecca fishing destination. That late afternoon I felt a bit somber knowing we had one day left to go. You get so attached to a certain place sometimes but the reality of life says otherwise and you have to go home.


The last day of fishing on Thursday allowed only a morning of fishing and we launched the boat in the river doing the stock standard mission of catching live bait. Once achieved we tried the 'Jewie Hole' and 'Croc Creek'. It wasn't too bad at all with half a dozen jewel fish boated which were released and tangled with some resident big catfish, which the last fish of the trip would have surpassed the previous giants going in excess of 40kg. It was just a burning reminder that I had been fishing at Karumba. By 11.30am it was back to camp to dismantle the boat and start the agonising process of packing up camp for an early departure in the morning. The evening was spent having a coldie or two with our local friends and by 9.30am the next day we sadly departed Karumba arriving home by 7.15pm in the evening back in Port Douglas, which by the way is no disappointment to come back to - just another Piece of Paradise!!

In summary what a trip ... The King Threadfin Salmon were mind blowing, the Barra were awesome and the little known Jewel fish were really handy. The monster Catfish never missed a beat too and the queenfish were admirable. Not to be forgotten the amazing bird life in this part of the world is something to be seen. The only real downside was the lack of big Jewfish this year but we'll get them next year as we're already booked in!!!




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By Keith Graham

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Weigh in Winners

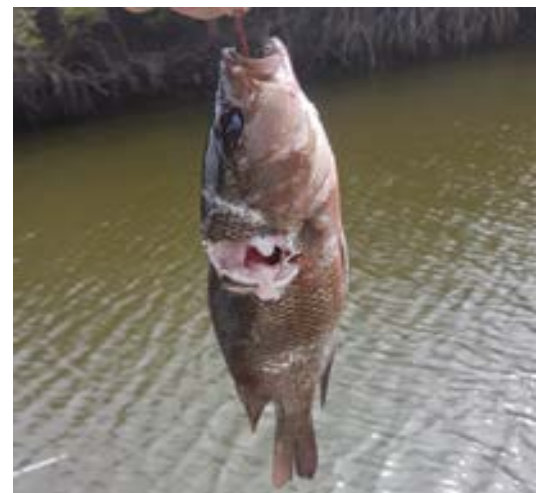
Tyrone Lane - Abu 5600C4 Combo
Tyson Lundry - Abu Revo Como
Mylene Heidke - Abu Revo Combo

Fishing Port Douglas Continued

I managed to grab a quick photo lifting it out of the water before placing it back on top of the surface to deal with the sad situation. Not expecting anything further, this barracuda came out of nowhere again to finish off the job. This hapless jack was smashed and I nearly lost a couple of fingers in the process as I was attempting to de-hook it. 50m of line then peeled out the back of the boat on the 5kg outfit at frightening speed. After the initial run the fish was lost – I suspect the 'cuda' never hooked up as we were only using 2/0 hooks

on the 'jack' and it was still in its mouth. Consequently we never saw the 'jack' again and the leader gave up or got cut. None the less a little extra excitement to our trip and something I had never seen with a 'cuda' of that size that far up the river. We have some exciting news with our Website for the boat launching in the next few weeks. Stay tuned for the next report and issue of Lineburner for the link and in the meantime you can keep checking out our Facebook and Instagram pages

@fishingportdouglascharters to keep up to date with all our latest charters and news.



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Reel Cooking

with Mick Hart



Tiger Prawn & Chorizo

Ingredients

- 1/2 kg green tiger prawns
- 1 chorizo sliced thin
- 4 cloves of garlic smashed
- 1 long red chilli sliced thin
- 2 tbsp of olive oil
- 4 tbsp of butter
- handful of fresh coriander
- Sea salt/ black pepper

Method

Peel and de-ven the prawns.

Heat a splash of oil in a pan and cook chorizo for 30 sec.

Add garlic, chilli and prawns.

Sauté and stir so that garlic doesn't burn. Once prawns are looking cooked add butter and coriander, toss and remove from the heat.

Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve with garlic bread.

This is your lazy afternoon perfect meal or entree' on a weekend and is really tasty.



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By Dylan Case - Nautical Marine



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With our long wet season finally drawing to a close, numerous fishing opportunities are presenting themselves. Most of our local species rely somewhat on the wet season as part of their life cycle, including the incredible jungle perch. As our recently flooded freshwater creeks recede, jungle perch use the clear, but higher than average water levels to their advantage. This time of year, JPs are especially active in their feeding, making it probably the best time to target these fish. Jungle perch are voracious predators that will take almost anything that fits in their mouths, from small fish and yabbies through to terrestrial prey such as large insects and frogs. Targeting jungle perch in their most active state can certainly be rewarding, with large numbers of fish a common sight in the right sections of creeks.

Ask your average fisho and you'll usually be told that small poppers are the most effective option for jungle perch. Of course, there is certainly more to lure selection than this. In fact, there probably aren't many lures in your tackle box that won't draw the attention of an aggressive JP. Because these fish are so opportunistic, it can actually be more important to focus on conversion and efficiency than just getting the bite. For example, while smaller poppers may get plenty of bites, their trebles can actually result in more lost fish. Comparatively, the single hook of a soft plastic, spinnerbait or something similar provides a much more secure hook up and lessens the chance of losing that trophy fish. In my opinion, these options are far superior when targeting exceptionally large JP (>45cm). As this class of fish is so few and far between, it definitely pays to fish smart when targeting these true giants. Because JPs inhabit almost every freshwater habitat in suitable areas, lure selection should also be based on the piece of creek you are fishing. As you would expect, smaller creeks are usually best fished with smaller profiles, while wide and fast flowing sections of a river lend themselves to larger presentations that can be fished faster. In the skinny water

creeks, surface frogs such as the Zman Finesse Frogz are perfect, and the bites are visual and spectacular at times. Weightless paddletail soft plastics in the 3" range will produce similar results. Moving towards the bigger and faster flowing stretches of a river, it pays to change tactics a little. Conventionally rigged soft plastics are killer in this more turbulent environment, as they allow you to fish faster and more efficiently.

When fishing soft plastics for jungle perch, jig head weight is an often-overlooked factor. Anglers are seemingly afraid of throwing heavier jig heads in the fresh but increasing weight can be key to catching more fish. Weight selection is not always black and white, as different plastics have different buoyancies. However, I like to use at least 1/4oz for 3-4" baits, and at least 3/8oz for 5" and so on. In general, your lure should be well below the surface of the water on very fast retrieves. It is not always necessary to wind as fast as possible, but moderate to fast retrieves will produce better hook ups, which is the overall goal of fishing these heavier jig heads.

In this faster water, I have been having recent success with the new Real Thing Shad from Molix in both 3.5" and 4.5" sizes. This RT Shads swim awesome on both fast and slow retrieves, making them an ideal perch weapon. I rigged the 3.5" model with a 1/4oz 2/0 jig head, and the 4.5" with a 3/8oz 5/0. For these and anything else you need for JP fishing, drop into the shop for a chat with the boys. Get out there and give the mighty jungle perch a crack! ■



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Powering on Through the Big Pour

By Fraser Allen

In the early stages of April the Far Nth was still experiencing considerable rainfall, it was pre-school holidays and work was a little quiet on the Dragon Lady boat. Despite the bad weather I was determined to get out and about and enjoy myself before the workload picked up in a week or two.

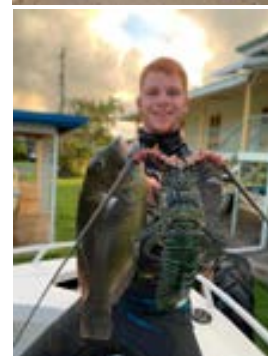
First little excursion was just up the local inlet with my mate, Conrad flicking Zerek Prawn lures amongst the mangroves. The rain was literally pelting down and we were the only one's silly enough to be up the creek. Over a couple of hours of fishing the run out tide we managed to land several legal sized mangrove jack and pulled off two nice barra. All fish fought really hard and we had the bonus of the barra leaping out of the water in fine fashion. The pitch level on the boat always hits full volume when a barra is on the end of the line. The Zerek Prawns cast deep into the mangrove roots and left to sink before retrieving in a slow twitching fashion was too much to resist for these fish. Getting completely soaked to the bone was well worth the effort.

Our next expedition was a couple of days later and again in very soggy conditions we decided to drive the coastal road up through Bloomfield and come back via the inland road just before Cooktown. It was raining cats and dogs and the dirt road was a little treacherous with numerous washouts along the way to avoid. Getting across the Bloomfield River causeway was certainly an experience. With water rushing down the mountain at a furious rate we had water coming up over the bull bar and up onto the bonnet. Without a snorkel on the 4WD you wouldn't even attempt the crossing. We stopped at the local jetty and had a flick of the lures. With the river raging it was almost pointless but we did manage to snag a couple of frisky tarpon. The rest of the inland trip was fun with slippery roads to contend with. Slipping and sliding and getting the rig nice and dirty was all part and parcel.

We eventually hit solid ground and headed back south on the bitumen inland road. With several hours of daylight left we took a right hand turn to the Cooktown Crossing to go for a look. Upon arriving the Macleod River was flowing strongly over the causeway. We went for a bit of an explore by foot with rods in hand but the river was basically in minor flood. I did come across a massive emu print on a sandy bank and it looked like it was left by a dinosaur it was that big. That was a pretty cool way to wrap up the adventures of this day, again in the pouring rain.

The last leg of this damp story was a weekend spent down at Kurrimine Beach past Innisfail at a family friend's beach house. Once you get past Cairns there are many turn offs to

various little beachside communities including Bramston Beach, Flying Fish Point, ETTY Bay, Mouriliyan Harbour, Kurrimine Beach, Bingil Bay then finally Mission Beach. None of which I had been too so I was generally keen to check out this little piece of paradise. We stayed in a house right on the beach so this was pretty cool. There are a couple of neighbouring National Parks including the Barnard Island group just offshore. With a permanent population of around 700 people it is not a big place but I imagine the tourist numbers would make it quite busy. It has one pub, a couple of small cafes, one servo, a caravan park, a fish and chip joint and a couple of resort style places. Interestingly without a boat ramp the locals pull their boats in and out of the beach with tractors. There's an actual yard nearby just full of old tractors obviously owned by locals. We were lucky to have access to one of these tractors and put the boat in for a few hours. We went for a spearfish out near King Reef. Conditions weren't overly kind and as you guessed it the rain was relentless. I did manage to spear a ripping tuskfish and good crayfish so it was a positive result. I enjoyed visiting this sleepy hollow beachside town and would love to go back when the weather is better. They say the mackerel fishing is dynamite when they are running down there.



Fish of the Month
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Piscatorial Bits and Pieces

Eye on the Reef Program

26th April 2019 Summary Points

Flood plumes

Reduced salinity levels continue to persist in inshore regions of the Great Barrier Reef between Lockhart River and Cardwell, particularly around Princess Charlotte Bay. Salinity levels for these waterways are returning to more normal levels.

Seagrass

The JCU Seagrass Ecology team has completed aerial surveys of intertidal seagrass in the Townsville region. Seagrass was present in areas it occurred before the floods, suggesting there has been no major impact to intertidal seagrasses in the region.

El Niño

An El Niño ALERT remains, with models predicting a 70 per cent chance of El Niño developing by mid-2019. However, if it does develop, it is likely to be relatively weak and short-lived.

Fishing & Weather Apps

At Fishing Port Douglas and our associated boats we are always keeping a close eye on conditions, tides and in particular the weather. Here are some of the apps we use to check and double check the weather plus other various relative information and they are available to download on your phone to have easy access at the press of a finger.

Weather

The absolute Bible is BOM and from an

industry point of view is the only site which is recognised for insurance purposes. If they issue a strong wind warning and you leave the harbour leads then you can be liable.

However, Seabreeze is a good one for a quick look, especially if you are looking at doing a trip a few days ahead. It's a basic guideline and very convenient.

A lot of us now take a good look at Windy and it gets quite specific about each location along the coast in regards to wind speeds. For example it can tell you what the wind speed is at any given time during the day from say Four Mile Beach to Low Isles to Batt Reef. Their futures forecasts are quite accurate and very important when you decide to head offshore with a specific location in mind. The wind differential between going to Rudder Reef or either say to even Batt Reef can be sometimes chalk and cheese. Even closer along the coast you'll soon establish where the potential wind tunnels are and to avoid them if necessary. In this case it is invaluable for our trailer boat operations.

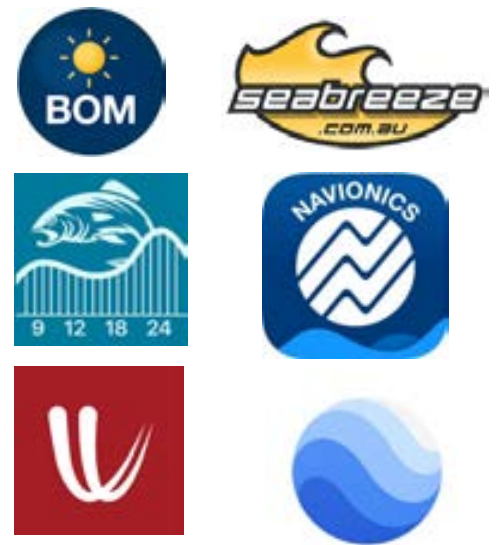
Navigation

Us operators just love Navionics. It also becomes a back up if you lose the electronics on the boat. You can save fishing marks as well plus when overlaid with Google Earth it becomes a very comprehensive tool which can be used on the phone. It is brilliant for really detailing a section of reef or even a river entrance which may have a tricky entrance, and all from a bird's eye view.

Tides and Fishing Predictions

Most Apps supply a tide table for your area with moon phases, wave heights, air temperatures and wind directions etc...

When it comes to predicting a good bite time for fishing I've found an App called Fishing & Hunting Solutions. It gets very specific by the hour when the fishing should be at its best or slowest. This is handy so you are at your 'honey pot' location when it matters. It also rates the coming days ahead in %'s meaning Tuesday might rate at a very good 95% and the following Saturday might rate at a poor 23%. It just helps in the decision making moving forward.



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Cook's Feral Idea with Bruce Belcher



What a wet season it was! Generally, floods don't occur until about March. By then, crocs' nests will have produced hatchlings but with this summer's early floods, all the nests throughout the river would've been destroyed. By April, we would normally see hatchlings as they've left the creche but up to now we still haven't seen any, which is further proof of the damage to nests.

As the picture shows, there was major damage to the banks to the outer curves of the river. Just upstream and opposite my place there were trees that had been ripped out for about 100 metres from the bank. I've never seen such damage, although the floods from cyclone Ita a few years ago were close. According to the media, this was the biggest flood in 118 years,

The closest thing to a mangrove is the Native Hibiscus, just above the high tide mark. A tree with heart shaped leaves and a large yellow flower and is found along water courses and beaches in tropical regions. Among the twisted and damaged vegetation these hibiscus branches are already sprouting new

leaves. If you break off a hibiscus and stick it into the ground it will reshoot. So, I expect that in a few months the hibiscus will cover everything, and the dead wood will decompose and there will be little evidence of the damage. Such is nature.

Because the floods stuck around for several days, many of the smaller mangroves on the edge had perished. Normally, a mangrove can store air in their air roots, at low tide, which can sustain them for a few days but with this longer period, coupled with the torrent, this caused many to die.

As there are cattle properties well up into the river valley, many of the beasts were washed away. We saw in the media where some had swum back to the beach and wandered into urban areas. Some were stranded on small islands in the river and are still being cared for by farmers who are taking bales of hay for them. I wish the farmers well in their efforts to retrieve them.

I had a call from one of the radio stations asking, "with all this water over the countryside, does this pose a threat to people with crocs?" I replied that this is unlikely to happen. They seem to be able to navigate their usual surroundings and besides, once the river has settled, we see the same crocs in their usual spots and I think it is just an exaggerated story, like most.



As the rain continued it had softened the ground considerably and there were more landslides along the banks that I'd seen before.

I've heard stories that crocs can sense when we are to expect big floods, so they construct their nest higher than usual. This is just another myth.

There is a medium sized bird called a Mangrove Heron who seems to enjoy the floods. It heads downstream, on a log, picking at delicacies, like different insects. Once the log has travelled downstream and away from that bird's territory, it heads back up river, generally pursued by another bird of the same species. All seems to be drying out now.

See you next month.

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Dragon Lady added some solid Reef Jacks to their tally in the past month



Fishing Port Douglas Charters caught and released this cracking Fingermark in the Dickson Inlet



Exceed Sportfishing caught some classic trout fishing the flats across the reef



Fraser Allen with a good Dickson inlet Mangrove jack caught on a Zerek Prawn

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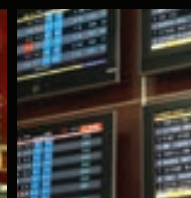
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