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VOLUME 233 PRICELESS

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**MAY 20**



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

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**Front Cover:**  
**Coral Trout**  
**Popper Fishing**  
**on Evening Reef**  
**north of Port**  
**Douglas**

Photo provided by Dan Francis



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# FISHING PLUS SELF EDUCATING

BY JAKE COLLETE



With a lot more forced time on my hands I've been keeping busy splitting time over a few areas.

There's been the upkeep and maintenance on our Saltaire & Allure game fishing boats despite not being able to do any charters for awhile. We are in the process of re-locating the Saltaire vessel to the Cairns Harbour from Port Douglas. Being a government owned marina we have secured free berthage for the remainder of the restrictions. The Port Douglas Marina was offering no relief during this shutdown.

Next I've been doing a lot of personal fishing in my newly acquired Quintrex Que 3.95m craft. It is a tidy calm water boat ideal for river fishing and also reef/coastal fishing on those really calm days. In particular though I've been doing most of my fishing in the Cairns Inlet, Barron River and Thomatis Creek. I much prefer fishing after dark using live bait methods such as prawns and sardines. I've only been fishing on the right tides which has been the week leading into the moons, with the full moon being the best. I really like to fish the high tide paying most attention when the tide starts to run out. It can see you fishing late into the evening but it is worth it.

I've tried various areas but any made lights on the water seems to attract the most activity. The bait schools gather to the light source and so do the predators. Fishing downstream towards the mouth has also been more productive.

Over the past weeks I've caught fishing by myself numerous barramundi. My best session was six quality 'bucket mouths' at night only keeping one for the plate. Overall day or night, the average barra has been 70cm with the bigger one's coming in between 80-90cm.

It's not all been about barra because you'll come across some other ripping fish. River fingermark and mangrove jack to 55cm have been quite common as the day

temperatures still have a bit of sting. Tarpon to 60cm have been insane after dark schooling up in big numbers on the deep holes and have been awesome angling as they really like to show off on the surface. I've been also placing a few mus crab pots along the way on these better tides and been rewarded with some bigger than usual crustaceans. The bodies have been full and the claws are just packed with the tastiest of flesh. Now is the time to lay your pots.

Now moving onto the next phase. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE .....



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**FISHING & EDUCATING cont ...**

With the country and particularly up here in the Far Nth being brought to a standstill, it has been the right opportunity to take advantage of the government incentives to further educate.

I've just enrolled at the International Marine College in Cairns to do my Master V skippers ticket. It is in association with TAFE and is a 6 week course. With a shorter extra engineering certificate on top, it will allow me to drive the Saltaire and Allure game boats which my Dad currently does, with me as the deckhand at the moment. I've been full time on these boats now for over 4yrs and it is time to take the next step in my career. With my Dad overseeing my apprenticeship to date I've already learnt well beyond my years in regards to boating and fishing. All I have to do now is gain that bit of paper to complete the process.

Going back to the classroom after several years has been weird. The difference this time is I'm really interested in what is being taught. The first couple of weeks has involved a lot of theory and old fashioned exams - the latter not being my favourite. However they do break it up and there's a practical side to the course. What I'm really excited about at the moment is getting into the simulation room more often. It's like a mega video Game Room with massive screens. We have an actual boat helm station, as in real life, to work our way through a multitude of boating situations for vessels of all sizes. There's gears, electronics and various navigational tools at the helm to work with. They also have the ability to lose all electronics making you work out a problem with the essential navigational basics. From calm water, to docking a boat, to night time navigation in a major city harbour and also dealing with cyclonic 80 knot winds, this has it all. I just wish I had one of these amazing set ups at



home. I would be on it all the time.

Our teachers are also buoyed by using this tool and extremely enthusiastic about its ability to best equip us students to deal with the notorious seas. It literally helps you to be able to react for virtually anything and make the right choices as a skipper. For example I've already been dropped in a hot spot, on the full sized mega screen with the boat windows covered in ocean foam from a horrendous storm. I'm also beam on to the massive waves in a really nasty situation. With no visibility I had to rectify the situation using my gut feeling and what instruments I had working at the helm. It's all fascinating and I'll keep you informed as the course progresses. Just knuckling down as we speak for a legislation exam tomorrow, better go! ■




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## DRAGON'S DEN<sup>K</sup>

BY STEVE ADAMSON

It's difficult to dwell on the past but I categorically will say with such beautiful conditions during April and the combined Easter and extended school holidays across the nation, we would have kicked a major goal this year. It is a hard pill to swallow and now everything is on the line moving forward.

As the majority of us experience 'Ground Hog Day' almost everyday for the past month, it has been a case to manage your time so you don't go stir crazy. In normal events there's not enough hours in a day and you don't have time to scratch your head. However in current circumstances I've found myself spreading the lack of work around day by day. I must say though, thank goodness I've had to put up with this in Port Douglas. We are so fortunate with family close by and a most liveable place to reside. If I was anywhere like a big city it would be simply unbearable.

The boat itself is roaring to go, looking and operating as best it can with the occasional run to sea to keep the motor legs and electronics ticking over. The residential house and gardens have never looked better, so without the extra coin I can't do much else there. Even the missus has run out of jobs for me to do. I've done the odd trip down to Cairns to the likes of Bunnings and that's been a highlight of the day! For someone who hates to sit idle it is a real challenge for me. That's life at the moment.

In saying that we have Freddy, our daily skipper on Job Keeper and we've doing something work on the boat every week. Even if it's for a day or two it keeps us engaged and ready to go. Other than this we've had an ongoing battle with the local marina to give us more appropriate relief with rent under the circumstances. This has been very arduous to say the least and there's many of us local operators on the docks banding together on this blatant issue of disregard for the local marine industry. When you consider you hear every basically every landlord in the area being considerate to the harsh times in the area, it is frustrating and beyond ordinary. Even in a severe down time going up on the slipway to do some maintenance on your boat, they have closed this basic and essential facility. Yet they expect us in the next 6 months to pay full rent with tumble weed rolling down the streets and board walks.

On another note, as with so many businesses we have been looking to adapt. It has been a lot of time on the computer tidying up some neglected areas but also establishing new networks. Currently I'm in the process of working in with a commercial operator/ wholesaler in providing product for them. With our boat survey we are sorting through the appropriate paperwork. It is not our long term plan, but for the interim it will provide some much

needed income for the business. If we can follow through it will also allow us the opportunity to make a quid in the off season months outside of charter work. From what I can gather we would go to sea 2-4 days at a time, catch our quarry, gut and gill the fish whole and put on ice (not snap frozen). All legal reef species are accepted and graded accordingly price wise to market demand. From experience over the years it is imperative fish are immediately brained spiked, then bled and followed by gut and gilling. Then they have to be chilled shortly after to ensure the best quality. It is a must do checklist. We do this as a standard on our daily recreational charters so it's no re-adjustment when it comes to processing. We'll only do this type of work when conditions are favourable, so as to not put any extra duress on the boat. Charter fishing is and always will be our priority but this could be another string to our bow.

Looking ahead there is speculation of interstate travel and even from NZ. I'm sitting on the fence on this rhetoric for the near future but if something happens in the next couple of months it will be welcomed with open arms. Tourists being able to travel up to FNQ are absolute key to kick start our local economy and businesses like ourselves. We can only be optimistic at this point. ■

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# 300 KM ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

BY HEFF



In just two days, a band of 6 of us local weekend warriors travelled and fished 300km (recorded by electronics) of pristine waters along the Great Barrier Reef. Just to give you an indication of the vast distance we covered by water, it is on par with travelling from Melbourne to Albury on the Victorian/ NSW border, or even from Sydney to Canberra. It was a hike that's for sure.

Between three private boats (2 persons per boat due to restrictions) we had father & son combination Dan and Brodie Francis on vessel 1, Dan Musset and Chris Ramsay on vessel 2 plus Pete Brown and myself on vessel 3. Our journey began at 'sparrows' from Port Douglas, an hour before the sun was due to rise. The course would see us head north over a couple of hours before we would wet a line. To be honest the first hour of travelling in complete darkness was very messy with an onshore breeze chopping up the water. Once the sun poked its head up the seas flattened out and it was smooth

sailing for the next two days barely getting over 5 knots.

As you can see our route of travel on the map, as a collective group we scooted at approx 25 knots for a couple hours before reaching Escape Reef on the outer edge of the reef. From this point each boat did its own program for several hours but keeping in touch by radio for safety purposes. Vessel 1 being pure sportfishing enthusiasts fished over a variety of reefs right up in the shallows using popper and stick bait methods. Vessel 2 ventured out onto the continental shelf for a spot of light tackle trolling. On vessel 3 we did a mixture of trolling, surface lures and bottom bashing moving between reefs including Escape, Rachel Carson and Andersen. Off the main parts of the reef there were always a myriad of isolated bommies to explore as well. Besides the superior water clarity the big notice was the amount of bait schools that were abundant wherever you went. It was an eye opener and presented countless opportunities.

For several hours each boat did its thing before meeting up around mid afternoon. In a nutshell, Pete and I on Vessel 3 got smoked countless times on the outer edge bottom to absolute freight trains including breaking a rod in the process. We caught several species including coral trout, coronation trout and spangled emperor. Also fishing in 60m of water we found a small bump on the bottom which started to deliver some great trout and spangled emperor before the sharks turned up and really spoiled a spot which had great potential. We were spewing as we started pulling up heads of trout which would have been around 6kg in weight.

Our trolling efforts went unrewarded and so did our lure fishing in the shallows. We agreed there was probably too much bait available for a fish to consider an artificial offering. We did however, and this was a highlight in my opinion, have a wonderful swim in absolute crystal clear waters on the top end of Andersen Reef. Swimming below were a dozen coral trout in only a few



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metres of water but wouldn't accept a bait with a couple of reef sharks also lurking around. Here we dined on fresh coral trout for lunch on the portable gas cooker with a beer - it doesn't get any better than this, trust me! It's these particular aspects of a trip which really turn a fishing adventure into a memorable experience.

On this first session Dan & Chris on Vessel 2 caught a yellowfin tuna and some mackerel on the wide grounds. They said the activity was surprisingly slow and came back in to the reef to do some bottom bashing nailing some impressive coral trout.

Dan & Brodie on Vessel 1 said they had an awesome time flicking poppers and stick baits across the reef battling with heavy weight giant trevally, red bass and coral trout.

From here Dan & Brodie shot off back the reefs to continue their surface lure quest for the remainder of the day, whilst we decided on Vessel 2 & 3 to fish together some deep water. We found a bit of a mound in 70m of water in the middle of nowhere, which was interesting considering closer to home it's not often you find any depth of water over 50m on our local reefs.



The current was ripping so we had to anchor some 30m forward of the mark. Even this in this depth it was hard to tell using the heaviest sinkers we had if you were on the bottom or not. Anyway our lines were reaching the schools down below and jobfish, baldy bream, spangled emperor, red emperor and mackerel started to come up regularly to the boats. It was a slug fest pulling fish up from these depths. This bite lasted for about half an hour before drying up.

From here we both headed back to the western side of Andersen Reef and found a string of ground in 35m of water. It was on a contour line and every 50m or so there a good looking bit of structure holding good life on the sounder. From these spots more coral trout, bald bream and spanish mackerel were claimed.

At 4pm we departed ways as Dan & Chris had planned to head home to Port Douglas. It was a huge day for them with a lot of travel. They did say afterwards they fished one spot on the way home collecting big time on small and large mouth nannygai.

Pete and I on Vessel 3 were heading west for a 20 mile run where'd we catch up with



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Vessel 1 and anchor in the Hope Island lagoon for the night. It was a wonderful trip there with the sun slowly hitting the ranges on the last of the Great Dividing Range in the picturesque background.

We both arrived at about 5pm and set the anchors for the evening right next to each other. This last hour or so of sunset is the best time of the day. With a beer or a glass of red, we nattered, picking away at a delightful canape arrangement. Here we learnt that Dan & Brodie had continued a wonderful day tangling with Gt's and more coral trout.

I must say at this point Hope Island and the lagoon would have to be one of the most special places on the entire Barrier Reef system being steeped in rich historical content and an amazing natural beauty. It is similar in size to that of our local Low Isle and roughly the same distance from the mainland. The difference is it is less frequented and has a wonderful feel. Barring what looked like a commercial trout boat anchored in the distance, we had this magical place all to ourselves. The sunset was typically to die for in such calm

conditions.....

After dark, Dan had already pre-cooked a wonderful Thai Curry cooked throughout the day whilst on the boat in an amazing portable rice cooking steamer designed for camping purposes. It's incredible what modern conveniences are available nowadays only requiring a battery source. After a big, big day on the water we hit the fart sack well before midnight. Young Brodie, who I must say is a fisho mad man, kept wetting a line enticing 3 squid under the boat light.

In the morning the first sign of light was a natural alarm clock and we all surfaced in synchronised fashion. As it eventuated these squid Brodie caught would be lightly crumbed for breakfast done by Dan, as well as egg & bacon wraps in the morning cooked by Pete. A chilled ice coffee drink from the esky would top off a 5 star start to the day.

With glass out conditions on our hands we agreed to venture south to Pickersgill Sand Cay and surrounding reefs, passing the Endeavour Reef where Captain Cook struck trouble 250yrs ago. Pickersgill is easily accessed on a higher tide in a shallow draft boat. It has an adjacent lighthouse which adds to its uniqueness. Here we literally beached the boats and circumnavigated the cay throwing a variety of lures with bait schools getting hammered not from the shore. Seriously imagine the most isolated piece of pure sand, surrounded by the clearest of aqua blue with amazing fringing reef only 100m away. As I've said it is this type of experience which really sets some trips apart from others. Our Footprints alone !!



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Here we flicked different types of lures at hapless bait schools getting harassed by predators in the shallow sandy waters. Young gun Brodie had the right recipe using a small metal slice ripping it through the water and landed several small Gt's just under a kilo. He certainly can pick a scenario and know what exactly to use.

It was a hard place to leave I must admit, but we then scooted southwards to Evening Reef. Pete and I on Vessel 3 were keen to replicate what the boys had been doing on Vessel 1. Soon afterwards we pulled right up on top of the reef and proceeded to get into it with a favourable tide. Seriously we were only in less than 2m of water. Popper and stickbait lures were the choice weapon. Pete and I lucked out dropping some cracking Gt's and trout. Dan and Brodie had similar form but managed to land some really quality fish. I was amazed that in such skinny water that there were such big fish. We roughly calculated over an hour between the two boats we raised over 40 trout and several Gt's. The fish were doing a lot of swiping at the lures without fully committing. These sorts generally don't miss if they are truly focused. It was however, a real mental note for another time that this reef is loaded with high end fish for this style of fishing.

After this session we departed ways as a combination and went and did our own thing gradually moving south homewards with a long way to get back to base. Radio communication ensured all was good.

Pete and I fumbled our way back in the best of weather conditions fishing blindly at the likes of Undine and the bottom of Rudder reefs. We plucked away at a few keeper trout for something to take home. We hit the local boat ramp right on 4.30pm.

It was an epic trip for the amount of distance we travelled in two days and in what you would call a standard trailer boat. We are so,

so lucky where we live and this trip only reinforced this. Also importantly it was completed in a very dour period in our time locally, and when the remainder of the country could only dream of doing such a thing .....



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## On the Daintree

By Jamie Beitzel

I'm sure I'm not the only fishing operator in the area which has succumbed to the COVID 19 virus which has brought the tourist industry to a stand still in FNQ or anywhere for that matter. At a time when I'm kept busy over the Easter period I find myself attending to our property and doing things with the family. With repeat clients unable to get up here and with surrounding caravan parks and accommodations virtually shut down it is a very strange time which looks like it will remain the same for most of the year.

It is a real pity because the Daintree River and coast was, and will continue to fish really well at this time of the year. Leading up to the last of my charters before the shutdown kicked in, I was kicking some butt with my clients. In the river my golden trevally catches were some of the best in recent years along with some brilliant queenfish angling. The queenfish were also quite thick along the coast as well. When we talk about Daintree queenfish, I'm talking about the good ones, up to and exceeding the 1m mark. Conditions were ideal for them this time around and bait supply was healthy in the area. These bigger talang variety are a whole heap of fun providing some serious pulling power but also value adding with really exciting surface action leaping and cartwheeling out of the water. They also make for a great

photo opportunity being a striking looking fish.

Going back to the golden trevally these were prolific in the lower sections of the river and as mentioned were of high quality. On lighter spinning gear they too put on a true performance giving the angler surging runs one after the other. Other fish which featured regularly included some really good javelin fish and we also caught barra when we specifically targeted them.


Talking of targeting barra, I have mentioned spending more time with the family and this included Fletcher, my younger fellow who also love his time on the water. Just very recently we went for a fish late afternoon and into the evening and got ourselves a couple of solid barra in the high 60's and were perfect to take home for the family. With the days still reasonably warm and the water temperature at a premium I'd expect the barra to fish well for the next month.

With a bit more time on my hands it has also been a period to look at improving the business for the future. With Heff at Fishing Port Douglas we are establishing a wonderful new website and looking closely at how we can be most effective when the doors to tourism re-open.

In an uncertain time, we up here on the Daintree wish everyone the best in the coming months. ■



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# Reel Cooking with Mick Hart

## Portuguese Fish Stew



With cooler nights due to arrive there's nothing better than a hearty warm meal for dinner. This is the equivalent of a slow cooked meal done in a fraction of the time.

### Ingredients

1/2 kg sweetlip or a meaty white fish (deboned and in large chunks)  
 4 cloves garlic,  
 1/2kg potato, sliced thin  
 1 red capsicum sliced thin  
 2 onions, sliced thinly  
 1 bulb fennel, sliced thinly  
 2 large tomatoes very ripe slice  
 1 cup white wine  
 1 tbsp smoked paprika  
 1 tsp cumin  
 Butter  
 Olive oil



### Method

Butter a ceramic baking dish and layer potatoes, capsicum and one onion on the base. Season well, drizzle with olive oil and bake for 15 min, just to get them started.

Meanwhile rub the fish with paprika, cumin and season well.

Remove dish from oven and layer in the fish, onion, garlic and fennel. Top with sliced tomatoes, pour in wine, a few knobs of butter and bake for 15 minutes covered then 15 uncovered to create a wonderful crusty look. Add a chilli if you want too spice things up.

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# TITANICS OF THE NORTH

BY 'SHARKY' SHANE DOWN



In the last month or so I've come across a couple of the biggest fish you could ever want to go toe to toe with.

The first adversary was on my annual pilgrimage to Karumba. With my cousin Reg, Mum and my dog Thresher we were looking forward to over two weeks of fishing at this fishing mecca. In that first week the fishing this year was notably quieter compared to previous trips. Fishing the river itself and along the beaches we were only landing half a dozen good fish a day comprising of king threadfin salmon, jewel fish, blue salmon, barra and the ever present catfish. Even with a new Garmin sounder I set up on the dingy it wasn't coaxing extra fish into the boat.

There was one particular moment fishing the river mouth that I'll never forget. We were picking away at a few fish and some bohemoth sized catfish. Over here in the gulf they easily grow to 40lb plus and are absolute brutes to tangle with on a rod and reel. At one point I hooked up to what I assumed was another giant catfish. Just by the weight and feel it was deja-vu and Reg suggested, here you go again.

For around 7-8 minutes it was a case of hang on and hope for the best. I just couldn't gain any ascendancy and it was like being hooked up to a big rock but it was moving around

slowly. Having worked myself into a sweaty slather in the warm sun, in a heartbeat it was like the world had been lifted from my soldiers. I soon found myself being able to pull some line onto the reel and back towards the boat. I was a quite mystified by the change in attitude and the answer soon revealed itself at the side of the boat.

Holy Mother of all Fish !! There on the end of the line were the remains of a mega fish, the head and shoulders of a jewfish. Now getting the carcass into the boat was no easy feat weighing around 8kg in weight.

Now for the autopsy, this fish would have been easily 40kg in weight. Look at the size of the head and its shoulders were as wide as mine. It would have easily stood as tall as myself as well. Analysing the bite mark from the shark it would have been a 3.5m bull shark which inhabit the murky waters of the river. What a shame that such a dinosaur came to this abrupt end. If I had eventually landed the fish it would have been released without question.

Now I had heard that the bigger jewfish aren't that good to eat being a bit mushy in texture and lacking the fresh flavour of the smaller models. I put this theory to the test and salvaged a feed from the top parts of the shoulder. Yep, it was mushy and not so crash on the palate.

With better tides ahead for the second week we were looking forward to more productive fishing. But for the second time in three years we were evicted from the caravan park by the local 'copper'. CONTINUED PAGE 14 ....



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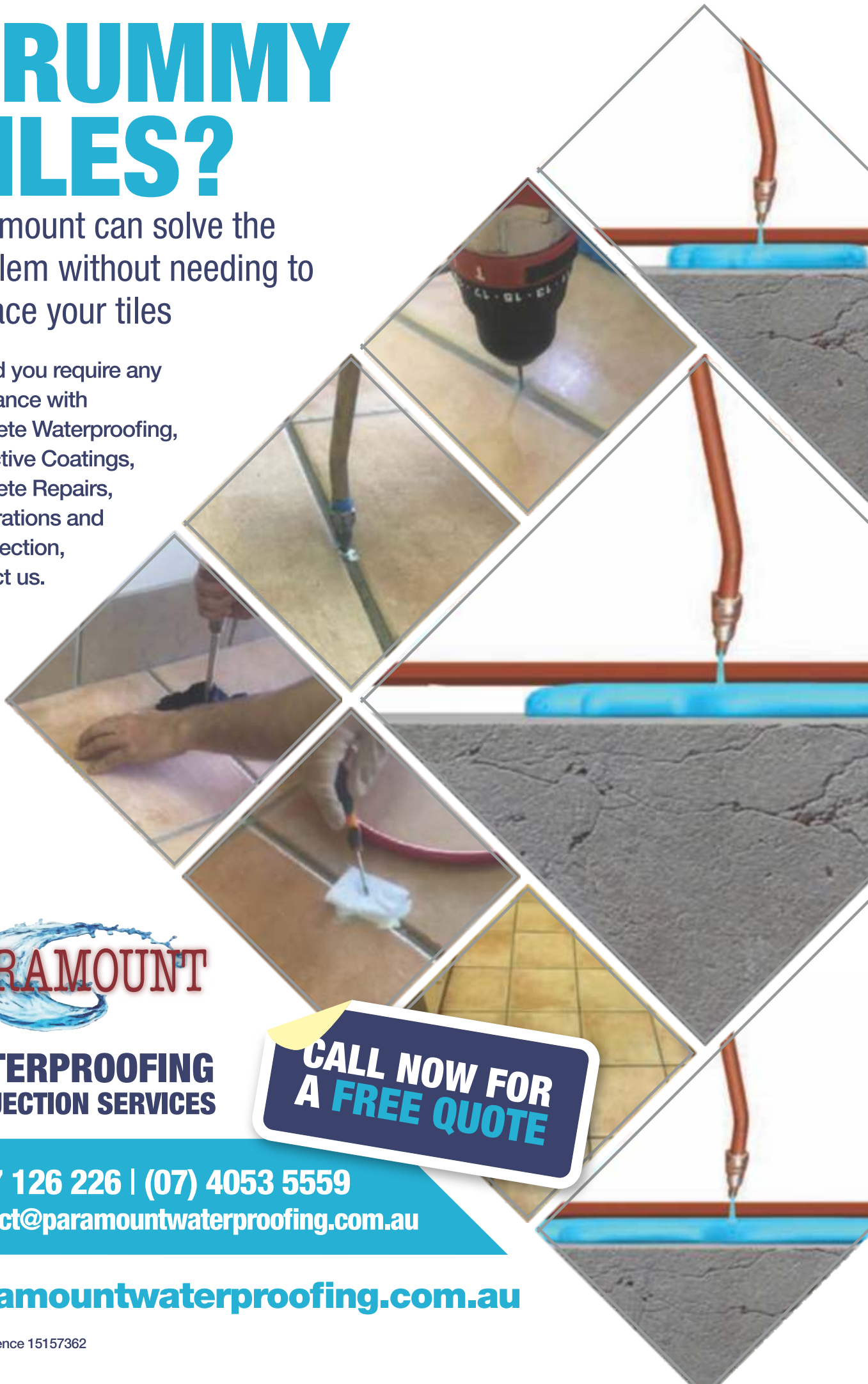
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**TITANS OF THE NORTH Cont ....**

The first time was an encroaching big cyclone on the northern parts of the country. This time it was all to do with the COVID19 outbreak. It was across the board in Cape York regions as the state government moved decisively to protect the indigenous populations. There was a community caravan park meeting with the police mid afternoon and packing up of camp quickly followed. Luckily I had fuelled up the 4WD earlier that day. By midnight we departed ways for the long, dejecting trip home 10hrs away. It was really disappointing considering it is always a highlight for the year and the amount of time and preparation that is spent going into the trip.

Back on home turf and with restrictions in full tilt, at least me and the pup could go for a fish on Four Mile Beach. It too was fishing relatively quiet for the amount of time of spent down there, even on the really good weather and tide days.

Now for years I've been intoxicated going head to head with some of the monster giant trevally that will at times cruise right into the shallows along the beach. I've seen them literally metres from the water's edge and have tempted them with various techniques. A couple of years ago I landed a 20kg model but I knew there were bigger that frequented our parts.

On this late afternoon I was fishing down on the beach just out of habit during the lock down period. The fish in general were also in lock down or more appropriately lock jaw. Sitting in the camp chair with a live diamond scaled mullet out yonder, I was musing about the recent turn of events in the world but also grateful I was restricted in such a wonderful place.

Whilst pondering in a trance of some sorts, I was shaken up with a very rude awakening. The rod in the holder had bent over completely and the reel was lit up with line smoking off the reel. Naturally I leapt up as if I had steel springs in my legs.

From the moment I grabbed the rod I knew this was going to be momentous. I had just serviced the spin reel a few weeks prior but it was under duress from the onset. This fish literally ripped 200m of line out to sea with the drag adjusted on sunset. Have you ever held a reel that was on the verge of a melt down. Well this thing was seriously red hot to handle as I could feel the bearings disintegrating within the casing. I was using my hand as a manual drag system to try and stop the carnage. Then the line roller on the bail arm of the reel gave up crumbling before my eyes. Holy Crap! I instinctively used my finger to hold the line above the bail arm which then cut deep but it was the only way to keep going. This was categorically a Line Burner moment!

Sacrificing body parts I knuckled down and managed to stop this horrendous first run. Then it became a grinding battle to encourage it back towards the shore. Just when you thought you had the advantage it would take off with a turbo charged boost reminding your hand & myself we were still alive. This gruelling stand off lasted for over 30 minutes taking me on a merry walk up and down the beach. When I finally had the fish right up in the shallows we both were equally tired with no gas left in the tank.

With very weak arms I tail grabbed this stonking giant trevally and with only my smiling mouth muscles left in tact, lifted this beauty out for some photos. Luckily a passer by was able to take a few pics

on my behalf.

Nursing her back into the water we both revived ourselves in the shallows. Once I could feel a thump in the tail I let her go and off she shot to continue its rampaging quest in life. It was a 30kg fish which I'll never forget having the pleasure of going head to head with and a moment to saviour of Four Mile Beach.



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# magical daintree

## Reflection Time on the Daintree with Bruce Belcher

During this pandemic, one has ample time to consider what is happening now and what the consequences could be in the near and far futures. We all know that the world experienced the Spanish Flu at the end of the First World War, but none of us now, except a few surviving older people, have ever experienced such a phenomenon. However, I believe that the world is onto it and dealing with it in the best way we can; like a baby learning to walk.

We hear of rumors about China trying to destabilize America and vice versa, but regardless of the gossip, I think this is only the start of the changing world to a degree, after all, we're told that this is the 19th mutation of this virus and we expect these mutations to continue and so we'll develop more vaccines to combat this. Watch this space!

All this information has encompassed developed regions like Europe, China, India, Japan, South East Asia, Australasia and the Americas. I've not heard thoughts of Africa, where we know there is over one billion people living there in underdeveloped conditions and how they police things like social distancing, just for a start. Watch this space, too!

This sudden change in our activities has caused concerns from far flung friends that I've not heard from for over 30 years. Just another consequence of forced changes. Then the obvious question arises like: "How are you dealing with this?" Our family is in a secure situation and my main concern is how the world's economy is going to deal with it. The Reserve Bank of Australia must have a bottomless pit of money! Again, watch this space!

Anyway, apart from doing a few small chores of maintenance, a lot of my time is either reading or sleeping. I do feel guilty about not being productive, but I've just turned 70, so I can justify it!

I often walk down to my jetty and look around. It's quite eerie scanning upstream and down not seeing any boating activity, particularly from my colleagues in tourism. On a daily basis, I head down to Pig Island, in my boat, to check



on the progress of my favorite crocodile, Lizzie. She has been nesting there for 18 years. Up to this point she has not produced hatchlings. Generally, she will see her hatchlings in February or March. I think this year has been a failure, for her. There have been four sightings of single hatchlings in different locations, which is quite normal for hatchlings to wander prematurely, only to be killed as they are too young and unable to protect themselves. I'm not giving up on Lizzie, because, just as you speculate on nature, you can be proven wrong.

Just the other day, our guide, Ray, spotted 6 hatchlings upstream from our place to a female called Shazza. He said they were well established and about 6 weeks old. See you next month.

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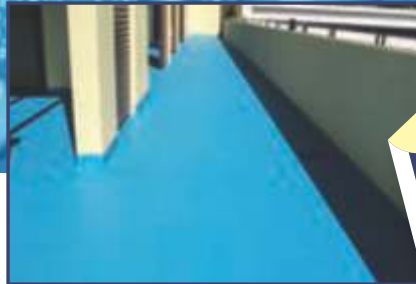
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