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Front Cover:
Adam Boone with a sample of Dragon Lady Coral Trout caught during June



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Owner / Editor

Fishing Port Douglas Charters

By Adam Boone

Proceedings really got moving as June ticked over and we moved into the start of July which looks like being a bumper month on the tourist front. The weather as the days went by showed increments of improvement and hopefully this trend continues.

With indifferent conditions to deal with we often found ourselves fishing the Dickson Inlet. This last few weeks there has been a really healthy supply of sardines in the system and sourcing live bait has never been easier. Any swimming morsel of note find these juicy baits irresistible. The sardines however are stress heads and can give up the ghost easily so a couple of tips to keeping them alive for longer include aerating the water and most importantly keeping them in the dark. Live baits tanks are perfect but if you are using a bucket a dark towel over the top will help to relax them. Another component which helps considerably is the use of a draw string net. Yes they are more expensive but they don't mesh the bait in the net. As you pull the net together they simply drop down and fall out the bottom in much better condition.

We fished the extremities of the system from top to bottom and found the fishing to be quite productive throughout. The upper reaches were really handy for mangrove jack, the middle sections great for estuary cod, bream and fingermark and the lower reaches really good for good sized giant trevally and mid sized queenfish. With a lot of families fishing with us,

the kids and also the adults were treated to the numerous crocodiles basking in the sun on the banks as well. Some of the crocs can almost be guaranteed to be in the exact same spot as the day before, as if they hadn't moved at all.

To value add our experience up the Inlet we have been setting the crab pots with tremendous success on the bigger tides around the new moon. Bucks up to 18cm were on the move and we also caught and released one of the biggest Jennies I've seen and she would have been close to 19cm across the shell. On average we were pulling 2-3 keepers per 4 hour fishing session.

Towards the back end of June and start of July we were able to head down the coast in the mornings before the winds came up. Well what a treat this was because the mackerel were going ballistic. Spanish and spotted mackerel were as thick as fleas on a dog with a sprinkling of grey mackerel thrown in. We simply used metal jigs 25-40gm in size and had a ball when they were in a frenzied mood. All it would take was for one fish to hook-up and it would then start of chain reaction and you could see the mackerel below darting all over the place in an excited state looking for something to smash. This would have to be one of my favourite methods of fishing and the clients just love a 'mackie' on the end screaming line off the reel. With the season well and truly upon us hopefully we can be doing more and more of this style of fishing. ■



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Exceed Sportfishing

By Jake Wyatt

As I Am writing this, it's now the first day of July. Which means things are kicking into gear and town is starting to get busy. With the wet season behind us and hopefully the wind, we can look forward to longer days, warmer temperatures and glass out conditions. The wind has been relentless the last few months which has made conditions hard for reef fishing.

When we have been out the fish have been hungry. Large bar cheek trout seem to be very common and have been loving a 7in jerk shad. The plastics fishing has been going off on several species with good size cobia in the mix also.

We did a few coastal trips and it has been a bit lumpy along the coast to be honest. The wind does seem to funnel up from down south and can be deceptive. We enjoyed one particular morning trip jigging up three brilliant spanish mackerel which performed admirably on the light spinning gear. Hopefully this trend continues because the clients just thoroughly enjoy line screaming from the reel.

The river fishing has been great, and with school holidays happening right now, the kids have been smashing the mangrove jacks. The biggest we have landed at this stage measured a whopping 47cm which is a high class estuary fish. There have been many jacks around the 30-40cm range on most days and there's been a few decent surprises thrown in like black jewfish and some decent fingermark also.

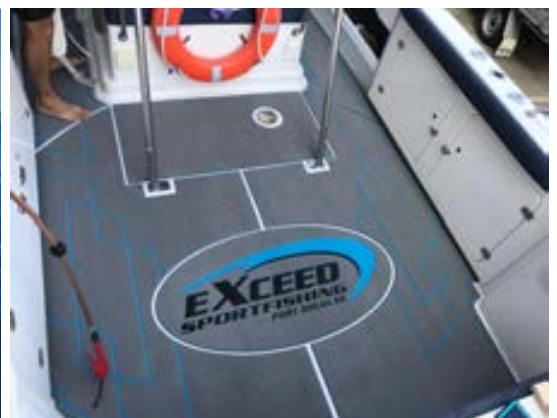
Over the last few weeks, Exceed base

camp has been busy with maintenance to the trailer, the floor and some new combos also. A boat trailer is a major piece of the puzzle and should never be over looked. Preventative maintenance is the key, so if you stay on top it, everything should run smoothly. We treated the trailer to a whole new stainless breaking system which included disks, calipers, bearings, hubs and also new braided lines. Although more expensive than the normal Gal system, it will last a lot longer.

Another major Improvement we made was a whole new deck floor. Now this was something that has been in the pipeline for a few months and has come up better than we could of imagined. Coastal Coverings in Cairns came up with a design, templated the whole thing and laid the new floor to perfection. Now these guys know their stuff. We use to have carpet in the boat which would get super hot in summer and also smelly from bait and fish. This new floor eliminates both of those problems and gives a cushion like feel under foot. If your thinking of changing you floor anytime soon, make sure you give them a call and have a chat. Any design and any colour to match your boat. I'm sure you agree by the photo it looks supremo.

Now we are all set for another bumper season. We pray to the fish and weather gods to give us a break in the weather and we can all get out there and wet a line.

Till next time, tight lines



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

As the month of June began to transpire there was notably a few more people around town especially in the second half. Currently we are being bombarded with the school holidays in full swing. The weather this year has never really settled down and most of our trips recently would have been conducted between 15-20 knots. However I guess the blessing has been we haven't had to cancel any charters caused by a strong wind warning. I'm of the opinion not much is going to change in the weather department in the near future and it could be just one of those windy years.

The moderate to windy weather hasn't effected the fishing one bit, in fact it has been very successful. I can't remember the last time we have been disappointed in the number of fish we have caught on any given day. It has been a real mixed bag of fruit with a variety of species turning up at different times. There wouldn't be too many we haven't caught over the last month or so. At the top of the list it has been coral and bar cheek trout by the truck load and numbers of nannygai at times. Adding value to these has been a big run on solid spangled emperor in particular, green jobfish, cobia, spanish mackerel, gold spot trevally, sweetlip, reef mangrove jack and red emperor to name just a few.

There has been a few stand out days including one which saw the freezer piled to the lid in a sea of red fish including mainly small and large mouth nannygai plus a host of coral trout. We literally had to pull the plug and call it an earlier day than normal. It was just one of those days where the fish were on the bite from the first drop till the last.

There's been quite a few moments where certain spots have been homage to substantial numbers of coral trout and of decent size to 4-5kg. Up to a dozen or more have come over the side in very quick succession and in a heartbeat your daily catch has bulked up nicely.

Probably the trip which caught my eye was where we had a cobia blitz. Clients were catching a variety of fish then one after the other cobia started dropping on the floor. They were good sized fish and in a moment or two of madness on the deck we had 6 rippers in the bin. It is not unexpected to catch one or two in one location as they have been known to travel in pairs, but to land six big ones is something I haven't seen before. It never ceases to amaze me what the GBR can deliver just when you thought you've seen it all.

There's been a few interesting observations, the first that the large nannygai seemed to taper off slightly towards the end of the month with the small mouth happy to power on. I'm sure however this will change again soon. The second has been the copious numbers of red emperor we have seen just under legal size. 52-54cm Red's were very prolific at times but they had to go back. Even at that size they are a very impressive fish and fight like the clappers on the end of a line. Lastly the trevally species dropped off considerably in the past month including tea-leaf, which have disappeared, bludger and even

the gold spot were down on average. There was the odd good sized golden trevally around but more an exception. Looking ahead I suspect the weather will continue in a similar vein for at least a month or so more. There is no reason why the fishing will alter and catches will be healthy. Tourist numbers have improved dramatically and hopefully we can settle into a good routine of running charters after a very indifferent start to the year. God knows we have a bit of ground to make up and I believe this has been the case for most local businesses. ■



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Whale Season on the Reef

By 'Sharky' Shane Down

After having been trek setting for the last couple of months on my fishing adventures it has been time to settle into normal life in Port Douglas. Well, the winds still haven't been kind to us fisho's in recent times with a few nice days thrown in here and there. It meant I could only manage a couple of sessions on the iconic Four Mile Beach this past month or so. Interestingly there has been a bit of bait around to collect including garfish, mullet and some Pacific sardines which are primo if you can get your hands on them. They would be the 'duck's nuts' if you could gather them before heading to the reef. The only way you'll access them is on an incoming tide along the beach. My couple of sessions on the beach yielded smaller queenfish, a giant herring and a nice blue salmon of about 50cm which was converted into some very tasty Thai fish cakes. We are well overdue for a run of calmer weather and if so considering the bait supply is healthy, the beach should fish well moving forward.

Now changing the topic completely, the whale season is well and truly upon us and I'm fortunate to see this first hand on a daily basis skipping a dive boat. These majestic creatures inhabit our waters for a couple of months and purely add to the diversity and speciality of the Great Barrier Reef. Pretty much off Port Douglas and a bit further north we are at the end of their epic journeys having travelled from way down south. The whales arrive here to the warmer tropical waters to raise their new borns, fatten them up and also to breed for the year. We have two main common species we see regularly and that is the Dwarf Minke and the gigantic Humpback Whale. The Humpback travels all the way up from the Antarctic and the Minke from a bit further north of the Pole. The Minke generally stays from May to August and the Humpback a little

bit longer. They will feed on krill, herring and any small bait schools they come across.

Now a group of whales is called a pod and not a school as commonly used. There can be anywhere from 3 - 20 in a pod and it is does vary.

Another misunderstanding is that when you often see a whale on the surface is that they are just simply having a look around, much like a croc checking out their environment. A whale will spout when it needs to breathe and a breach or jump is to throw parasites. It is thought the adults will do this to also teach their young ones and it is like playtime in the school yard. You'll see way more breaching from the Humpback in the next month or so.

When it comes to breeding a female could have up to 5-6 males hanging around to impress and try and impregnate. Each whale has its very own unique voice or tune which can be heard for vast distances underwater. The Minke sounds have been described as the same as the Star Wars sound track.

It is a fascinating time of year travelling out to the reef and you'll see a lot of activity between Low Isles and the edge of the main reef. If you see some activity keep this in mind. You must not touch or feed, or attempt to touch or feed, a whale. You must not enter the water within 100 metres of a whale. You must not approach closer than 30 metres to a whale you happen to be in the water. However if you cut the engines and a whale approaches your boat, that is fine and sometimes they will come right up to you as they are often very curious creatures. That is an amazing experience but also a touch scary especially if you are in a trailer size boat. However there's never been an incident recorded when they do this. ■



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The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

By Fraser Allen

Now this adventure, and it was an adventure trust me, has three main components to it - The Good, the Bad & the Ugly. As it transpires I'll let you know which component is relevant to each section of the story.

I had a scheduled day off work from the Dragon Lady Fishing Charter and was wandering what I might do the next day - naturally it was going to entail going fishing. The night before I got nattering on the phone with my mate Conrad and he and his brother Carl were keen on the following idea which I thought sounded pretty cool. We would launch his boat at the Daintree River boat ramp and make a dash out to St. Crispin's Reef for a bit of spearing and a general fish. What could possibly go wrong - the forecast was generous ??

At 5.30am we had his boat at the ramp and launched the 4.2m boat (not 100% sure of the make but like a Quintrex hull) with a 60hp Suzuki on the tail. It was categorically pitch dark and quite cool at this hour of the morning. The trip to the river mouth was done at a trickle because of the lack of light and also keeping to the deeper sections which crisscross at every section of river.

We made it to the river mouth without any incident and looked forward to a quick steam to the outer reef.

BAD - As we motored past the adjacent Snapper Island the wind and swell was notably more than what we expected. It

wasn't over the top but we could not travel as quickly as we wished. We dropped off the rev's and meandered slowly to our destination. It wasn't comfortable at all but we were on our way. The approximate 18 mile trip took us two hours, considerably more time than what we hoped.

GOOD - Once we were out there it was still lumpy but it was time to show our colours. We decided to spearfish a spot in about 20m of water which we had discovered awhile back and was littered with big reef mangrove jack. We were hoping for something similar and it is basically is a big bommie which suits their requirements.

Donned in our gear over we went with spear guns in hand. The water was a bit chilly but bearable and the water clarity was good at about 15m visibility. There was a fair bit of current running which made our efforts a bit more challenging having to free dive down and then readjust when we came to the surface. Our initial survey deep down indicated the reef jack were there and we went about our business.

Over an hour or so we were able to spear a couple of reef jack, 68cm and 55cm respectively. We would have got more but the current was hindering our ability. In the process Conrad was able to nail a 90cm spanish mackerel which happened to be swimming by as he was descending down to the bommie.

Continued Next Page



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GOOD, BAD & UGLY cont

That is what you'd call an opportunist shooting and we were happy with the results considering the conditions - 3 quality fish to take back home, or so we thought!!

Back to the boat we decided then to head around the top of the reef to throw some lures and poppers - basically to warm up after an hour in the water. This proved to be a bit eventful. A 20kg giant trevally drove us into the bricks and was lost which can happen. A big bronze whaler probably 12ft in length had a crack at one of the poppers and luckily did not hook-up as it would have towed us around the ocean. Conrad then caught a small passionfruit trout on a surface lure which he released. The wind gradually grew in momentum so we decided to do a bit of trolling and consequently lost what seemed to be a good sized spanish mackerel. The BAD component was creeping back into the equation. By 2.30pm the wind had got the better of us and we decided to make the long road ahead back home. A further 2hrs of bone crunching waves bashed us up as we travelled and it was cold.

UGLY - Arriving at the mouth of the Daintree you would of thought awesome and we were sighing a breath of relief - we were nearly home. In a moment of haste or tiredness we decided to cut the corner of the mouth across the sand bar to save time. As the water was really stirred up we

couldn't see the bottom but knew it was reasonably shallow. Then the unimaginable happen - we ran aground stuck in the sand. We were about 70m from the shoreline but the boat had come to a grinding halt. We cut the engine to avoid sucking sand through the motor and tilted the engine. The obvious choice was to head to the shore so we all hopped out and pushed the boat almost thigh deep towards high ground. I must admit this was a bit nerveing considering we were in the heartland of 'Croc Country'. As we approached land we walked through a bit of a gutter so we tried to tilt the motor back down to position.

The UGLY then became UGLIER. The bloody motor wouldn't trim back down so we pulled the boat up to the beach. All wet, cold and now really concerned we set to the task of dealing with the motor tilt. It was apparent the fluid had built up in the mechanism and wouldn't go back down, even to water level. The release valve required a screw driver or something to similar to get the job done. Do you think we could find a screw driver set on this damn thing - no bloody way. We even tried using sticks or anything else we thought might work, but to no avail. Man oh man, what were we going to do?

By this stage my phone was the only one with battery left and we made an emergency call to Conrad's father. It was starting to get late and we were desperate.



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We got hold of his old man but he was out of town and wouldn't be able to get to us in another boat till morning the next day. We tried a few other calls but had no luck. We were stuck !!

Reality kicked in realising we were stranded for the night. To make matters worse the mosquitos came out in force right on dusk and were unbearable. So we gathered some wood and made a fire to help relieve the situation. We had no additional food so we made do with what we caught and cooked up the mangrove jacks whole the old fashioned way on the fire. I can't remember the last time I cooked this way but it was just sensational. At least we were able to fill our bellies and felt a bit better for the moment. The main thing was we were safe and would just have stick it out for the night.

By the time we had something to eat tiredness really kicked in and we had to conjure up some sort of sleeping arrangements. We made a makeshift camp and gathered some green palm fronds for a mattress, used life jackets for pillows and utilised the emergency orange V-sheet as a blanket for some sort of cover. We stoked the fire up best we could and fell asleep under the stars. Honestly it wasn't what you would call sleep as you always seemed to have one eye open and couldn't wait for the night to be done and dusted. The UGLY was nearly over.


Naturally we were up at the first hint of sunlight. The temperature had dropped considerably, in fact it was freezing. I must admit though, the Daintree River is such a stunning place at first light. The fire was re-fueled and we warmed up best we could. Conrad's old man wasn't due till later in the morning so we had several hours to kill and contemplate our dilemma. What better way to pass time than going fishing. As the sun got higher in the sky we cast poppers and diving lures from the bank. It was incredible

how much surface activity was going on with fish scattering bait schools in all directions. Carl was able to snatch a mid sized queenfish on the popper which was encouraging. I eventually changed over to a diving lure and was rewarded in spades. Something huge smashed the lure and took off at a hundred miles an hour. Then in spectacular fashion a big queenfish came flying out of the water. It proceeded to jump around like a jack in the box. At size they would have to be one of the best sportsfish going around. The sunlight was hitting its big silver flanks and was a sight to behold. All our worries seemed to disappear in a heartbeat. The fish fought solidly for a further 5 minutes before I was able to curb its enthusiasm and drag it up onto the sand. With some happy snaps taken I was glad to release this striking fish to live another day. That was about it on the fishing front so we tidied up our makeshift camp and sat and waited for the response team. We still had a sense of humour about as we sat and discussed the calamity we had found ourselves.


At 10.30am we heard the tell tale sign of a tinny coming down the river mouth. I have never heard such a sweeter sound in my life. Conrad's dad greeted us in certain colourful terms and then we released the pressure on the tilt was a simple screw driver. Such a simple tool to solve a big problem.


We meandered back up the Daintree River to the boat ramp north of the ferry on a really low tide keeping a wide berth of any sand banks. We had already learned a hard lesson in navigation. We eventually arrived back in Port Douglas a couple hours later completely exhausted, grubby, hungry and ready for some proper shut eye. We had just been through what you would describe as an indifferent experience in itself - The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. ■






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Related Local Information

June report GBRMPA - Eye on the Reef program

El Niño and Indian Ocean Dipole

The ENSO Outlook remained near El Niño thresholds. However, climate models suggest a shift away from El Niño in the coming months and moving towards an Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), bringing warmer and drier than average conditions to much of Australia.

Climate Outlook

July to September is expected to be warmer and drier than average for most of Australia, however northern Queensland is expected to have near average winter conditions.

Salinity levels

Salinity levels of inshore regions between the tip of Cape York and Townsville (including Princess Charlotte Bay) have returned to near normal levels at 34-35psu, following a prolonged period of below average salinity conditions following the northern wet season.

Crown-of-thorns Starfish Control Program

Over the last month, the crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) control vessels completed management activities at 21 high value coral reefs, culling over 17,500 COTS to protect coral and enhance the resilience of the Reef.

Eye on the Reef sightings network

Over the last month we have seen some interesting sightings submitted through our Eye on the Reef App showcasing the reef's World Heritage biodiversity values.

The real stars of the show this winter are the whales with the seasonal arrival of the famous Minke Whales. The first report this year came from the Ribbon Reefs. Since then several others have reported experiencing this incredible interaction, at Opal Reef and Flynn Reef in the northern part of the Great Barrier Reef. A particularly exciting sighting was a Brydes Whale feeding between Lady Elliot Island and Lady Musgrave Island in the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef – a fantastic observation that showcases the whale's behaviour in the World Heritage Area.

Seeing a whale in the Marine Park is a special and memorable experience and, to ensure it happens safely, there are rules in place to protect onlookers and the whales:

Vessels must stay at least 100 metres from whales in the Marine Park, and at least 300 metres in the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area

Marine monitoring program activities

The Authority, Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University continue to conduct monitoring activities throughout the Marine Park. This includes coral monitoring, water quality surveys and seagrass sampling.

Sea surface temperatures

With the onset of winter, sea surface temperatures continue to decrease throughout the Marine Park. Sea surface temperatures winter forecasts are for slightly below average from Cairns to north of the Marine Park. Average winter conditions remain for the Whitsundays to Capricorn Coast regions and above average winter sea surface temperature's predicted for the southern regional areas of the Marine Park.

Line Burner Update

With a recent focus on our www.fishingportdouglas.com.au website and Facebook pages we are glad to announce that on top of our distribution of our hard copy magazines from Cairns, Port Douglas, Mossman, Wonga Beach, Daintree and Cooktown the magazine is reaching a further audience on-line. In June 1,500 people viewed the magazine on-line easily doubling our reading audience. If you can't get hold of a hard copy go to the website and download very quickly your monthly edition. It is literally like holding one in your hand.

On a further notice the hard copy and on-line version will now come out in the 2nd week of each month. This greatly assists with reaching deadlines, especially around the Christmas period when a lot of businesses close for a few weeks.



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Reel Cooking

with Mick Hart

Garlic Butter Spanish Mackerel

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 80g butter
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1/3 cup flaked almonds
- 4 × 180g Spanish mackerel cutlets

Method

1. Heat the oil and butter in a pan. Add the garlic and stir over low heat for 2 minutes, or until light golden. Remove from the pan.
2. Add the fish to the pan and cook over high heat for 2-3 minutes, until golden brown on each side and cooked through. Remove from the pan, cover and keep warm.
3. Add the almonds to the pan juices and stir until golden brown. Add the parsley and reserved garlic butter and stir for 1 minute.
4. Serve the hot cutlets with the almond and parsley mixture spooned evenly over the top.

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The Younger Generation Trends

By Heff



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Fishing techniques and methods, much like fashions and trends go through constant change. Often the same orientations make a comeback years later down the track and it is led purely by the younger generation of fishos. Running sport fishing boats we see the evolvement of tackle on a daily basis - some old and some new.

I remember soft plastic lures hit the fishing scene big time about 25yrs ago then they receded only to make a huge comeback in recent years with obvious improvements. But still it is the same concept. They have been adapted to be used in the rivers all the way to the reef tackling a variety of big species. Leading brands include Berkely, Z Man, Zerek, Chasebait, Squidgy, Gulp and Savage for example.

Now a lot can be said about metal jigs or as I call them metal slices (old lingo). They too were huge about 20yrs ago mainly led by the brands of Raider Spaniards, Lazer Pro and the likes. Now they have re-emerged as a high selling and very appealing method of fishing for a variety of reef species including the mackerel. Jigging for mackerel has hit new heights and extremely popular on sport fishing charters as we speak. Brands such as Surecatch, Savage and Storm are just a small sample.

The latest trend to take a stranglehold is the use of Blade & Vibe lures, particularly in the rivers. The concept has been around for years but now is hitting their straps with new and improved product. The Vibe range is remarkably so life like it's not funny. Kokoda, Savage, Zerek and Jackall are very popular brands in this area.

Now probably the most popular trend in the modern era has been the acceptance and use of braided line. When it comes to a

bonafide sportfishing environment you will not see monofilament used whether it be a charter boat or even on a personal outfit. It did take an adjustment period for anglers to get comfortable using it, tying knots and getting the feel for the line. With better product flooding the market it seems it is here to stay for the long haul.

The last trend I'd like to point to is in regards to the fashion stakes. For a very long time fishing people didn't have an identity as a collective. For example golfers have a look, bike riders have their apparel and to round it off ruby, soccer, or AFL have associated clothing which identifies them. In the fishing game in recent years the Columbia styled shirts became very popular and is still very much with older aged fishos - it is a great product. The big clothing game changer we see on the charter boats nowadays is the very descriptive and artistic designed fishing shirts. They are light, comfortable and breathable. Every second man, woman and dog comes onboard with one nowadays. It has undeniably given the fishing fraternity their own unique identity.

In 5 years trends will have changed and there will be something else new or even re-emerged from the past. However support your local tackle stores featured in this magazine for the very, very latest changes or trends to add to your armoury. ■



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Breathing in the Saltaire

By Damian Collete

After a solid block away from home for nearly 8 weeks fishing the National Titles in Papua New Guinea it was to say the least so nice to get back home and sleep in your own bed, as opposed to sleeping on the boat.

Back into some standard charter work back out of Port Douglas in June, Troy Dallman as skipper and my son Jake on the deck did a few private light game trips. We were hoping for some decent weather to explore the wide grounds between cairns and Port for some small black marlin but it was simply going to be an arduous task in the conditions. Luckily enough there's always a Plan B and that is to utilise the protection of the of the outer reef. The trips we did were on borderline hovering around the 20-22 knot mark.

Not to be perturbed it didn't stop us from having a big month on the spanish mackerel for our clients. Each trip produced good numbers of fish with one stand out trip in particular. It was just prior to the new moon and we had some guests on from the USA. They had fished in a lot of places all over the world and were relatively experienced in all forms of fishing. The lumpy conditions didn't seem to phase them at all.

When you go out on charter you have a

bit of a game plan in mind and then see where it takes you. The boys this day decided to head out through the reef to open paddocks which offered better sea conditions. As things panned out the fishing was relatively quiet with a few strikes but no hook-up for some time. The pressure does build up in the flybridge with the skipper, trust me.

With the turn of the tide early afternoon Skipper Troy decided to hone in on some big pinnacles which shoot upwards from around 50m of water. This turned out to be a game changer which completely transformed the fortune of the trip.

On the first run over the top of the mark it resulted in a double hook-up of 'spaniards' roughly around 7-8kg apiece. Once reeled in and dispatched it was straight back to the spot which was marking a good supply of bait on the sounder. Wow, a triple hook-up resulted and it was crazy times on the deck sorting the anglers out. With good fishing capability the clients did a great job in landing all three fish. Well as you could imagine spirits were very high on the boat. Well without sounding like a broken record this went on for the next 40 minutes or whilst the bite was running red hot.

The end result was 15 spanish mackerel

in the boat ranging from 6-15kg. My son Jake described it probably one of the best mackerel bites he has been part of. He said you could have thrown an old shoe over the side and the mackerel would have eaten it. As it eventuated the wogheads and diving lures that were used looked like a they had been to hell and back after the multiple attacks. That's the beauty of fishing where we do because the landscape can change in the blink of an eye.

Towards the end of the month I brought a mate's game boat back around from Weipa in a whirlwind trip which see me complete it in 4 days with barely any sleep. So as you can imagine I'm very content to settle back into some normality running charters out of Port Douglas.



Fish of the Month Spanish Mackerel



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New Arrivals for Old Adversaries

By Dylan Case - Nautical Marine

Here at Nautical we have recently received a heap of new gear from Lucky Craft, building on our ever-popular range. Lucky Craft is a world leading lure designer from Japan and produces some of the best gear on the market. These lures are built with purpose and each model has a unique and mesmerising action, making them some of our absolute favourites. Without a doubt, the most popular design is the Pointer, which we currently carry in 2 different sizes (78 and 100mm) and 3 diving depths. The 78mm pointer is available in 3 depth models, the SP (suspending, dives 1.2-1.5m), DD (dives 1.8-2.1m) and the XD (up to 3m). This size, as you would expect, is a prime smaller presentation for essentially every estuary species. Dead slow cranking the DD and XD models down the face of sunken timber and other structure is a great way to draw bites. The 78 SP model is a weapon for freshwater species, as well as barra and jacks holding shallow. The 100mm bigger brother has long been a go to among barra anglers, in both the shallow (SP) and deeper (DD) models. The 100SP is my personal favourite of the bunch, because it is probably the most versatile. Diving to around 1.5 metres this model is perfect for twitching snags, slow rolling open through water and just about everything in between. With these and a few other weapons arriving in the shop in June, I was pretty eager to take some out for a test drive. A mate of mine, Darryl and I managed to get out for a JP session late in June and trialled some of this awesome new gear. Jungle perch are often at the top of the list for me at this time of year since conditions are quite good for them after the wet. I started off the morning flicking a few of the Molix RT shads in 3.5 and 4.5", which had been killing it for me in the last few sessions. Though smaller than my usual first choice, the 3.5" model has a great presence underwater and seems to punch well above its weight on the bigger perch. I ended up pulling some really nice fish (up to 44cm) on this weapon of a plastic by lunchtime. I had it rigged on a 1/4oz 2/0 jighead with a jigspin to add flash and vibration. Darryl saw similar success running the 4.5" RT shad on a 1/2oz 6/0 jighead, which produced some incredible eats at a leaders length. Later in the day I switched to a Lucky Craft pointer 100sp to mix

things up a bit. Normally this would be considered a big lure for jungle perch, but they are willing and more than capable to take lure this size and bigger. This was certainly the case on the day, as it drew aggressive strikes one after another, from big and small fish. A lot of the larger fish were also responding much more positively to the pointer than other techniques, which was a welcome surprise. There were many instances where multiple casts in an area with soft plastics wouldn't draw any interest, but fish responded instantly and aggressively to the fast twitched hardbody. Before this trip a 100mm pointer was not something I would use regularly for JPs but from now on there will always be more than one in my tackle box! A great example why it pays to experiment, even if you are completely confident in your approach. Overall, we had a great session, with 11 jungle perch over the 40cm bracket landed, including a 44cm beast, and a couple others in the 43cm class. Another memorable trip with a few little things learned to keep us excited!



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An Iconic Friend of the Tropics with Bruce Belcher



Our favourite frog here is the White-lipped. It's the world's largest tree-frog and is found in North-East Queensland and New Guinea. The largest one I've seen was about 12cm. Frogs belong to a classification called amphibians, whereby they can live on land and in fresh water. In the larval (tadpole) stage, they breathe air through gills and then they become terrestrial lung-breathing adults, but more of that later. Frogs are found worldwide but this one lives here only and primarily in trees. It has sticky toe pads which enables it to climb in trees and to evade predators. It can leap great distances in hoping to catch a leaf upon which it can use to escape.

I'm often asked if they are dangerous, which surprises me but upon research I've found that some frogs have toxins in the skin but this one doesn't. Apparently, this information derived from the knowledge of the Poison Dart-frog from South America. The natives there collect the frogs and coat their blow dart with the toxin, which in turn kills the victim from the poisonous dart! Then, of course, there's the cane toad, which is also a frog, which secretes a dangerous toxin in shoulder glands. The toad was introduced from Hawaii, in 1935.

We're told not to handle these frogs because secretions from our skin can upset their well-being. I doubt this. Frogs breathe through their skin as well as into the lungs and I believe that washing hands before touching them is a myth when you consider their earthy surroundings, full of nasties!

As these frogs are found in wet tropical forests, life is pretty good for them. It's even better that they live in trees which cuts out some of their potential predators. The cane toad, being found on the ground only, can not cause any problems, competitively. Their main predator in the trees is the Green Tree-snake, which evolved without the need for fangs or venom as the tree-frog doesn't need immobilising but swallows the frog alive. I've seen a frog regurgitated by a snake several minutes after being swallowed, only to hop away, freely! Another major predator is the Brahminy-Kite, a scavenging hawk found along the watercourses. It has amazing eyesight, picking up the frogs from the branches.



As tropical frogs, their breeding is done in the wet season when there's plenty of water lying on the ground in which they "frogspawn". I'm told they spawn in water pods among the leaves in the trees. I often sit on my veranda at night and listen to the chorus as the frogs conduct their mating calls. There seems to be an arrangement whereby the male frogs orchestrate the calls so the sound sweeps from one area to the next. I believe that the female listens in and selects the male with the best vocals. These frogs engage by "piggy-backing" whereby the female secretes the eggs and the male fertilises them externally. There's something for everyone! See you next month.

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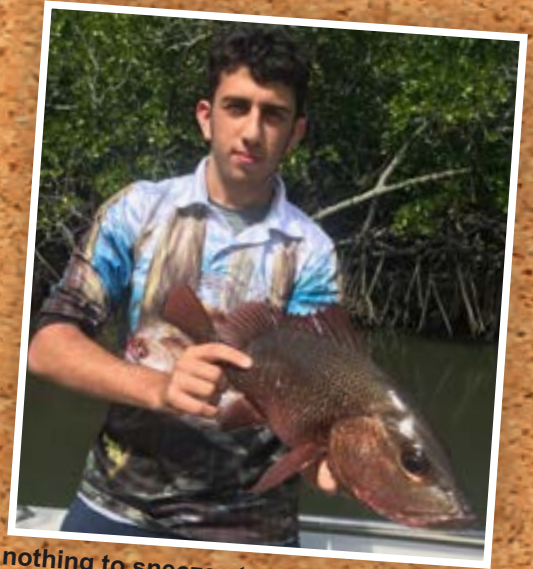
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Local Bragging Board



15 Trips in 3 weeks - Andrew Quan caught nearly every species possible on Dragon Lady during June



That's nothing to sneeze at - a 47cm Mangrove Jack caught in the Dickson Inlet by Exceed Sportfishing



Young Ben was brave enough to hold this big Mud Crab for a photo on Fishing Port Douglas Charters



Saltaire Charters ripped into the Spanish Mackerel big time in June. Up to 15 'Mackies' in a trip

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