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Front Cover:
Saltaire Charters have been leading the charge on the Mackerel Season with many quality catches



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Word on the Street in FNQ

By Heff

Up here in Port Douglas and the immediate region we are all treading on egg shells in the hope the Australian domestic tourism market doesn't collapse. The Victorian situation has already put a massive dent in a lot of aspirations and the fear is NSW may be the next to follow. From our charter businesses point of view and I have mentioned this before, we rely of 90% of revenue from these two states over the course of a year.

Since our last edition release we have been very grateful to see people being able to holiday up here but it has been a far stretch from what would be a normal trading period with moderate numbers of tourists. The absolute shocking boating weather for offshore fishing at the start of the school holidays very much compounded everything and we lost some seriously much needed revenue. We have since been able to make up a bit of ground in the last couple of weeks. With the uncertainty of the next month or so tourist wise, we are at the point of accepting the potential worse case scenario, again. It's a nervous feeling.

In Port Douglas, I reckon we are a half glass full community and there has been some positives to translate. It has been awesome to see people again down the main precinct of Macrossan St and the local marina. Albeit, not the normal busy hub we are used to seeing at this time of year, it is much better than seeing tumble tumbleweed rolling the down the street.

On the marina we are seeing life of boat businesses hanging in there but it still a far cry as to what is needed to be sustainable. In saying this at Fishing Port Douglas I can

say is the Dragon Lady Reef Charter has been one of a handful of boats running regularly, even compared to dive, snorkelling, sailing and river cruise operators. It seems to be only long term operators are the ones that have been able to weather the storm, and with good reason. Up on the Daintree, Jamie Beitzel has been kept

Along the main street it has been a case of every second shop open in regards to retail and restaurants / pubs are running on an oily rag or slightly better. Again it is long term businesses which seem to riding the storm.

Accommodations are ticking along and I know the deals are at the best price I've ever seen, so if you can get up here that is a great starting point for visitors.

As a final word the past month has seen Fishing Port Douglas website traffic quadruple. It highly suggests so many people are looking to holiday up to the area at some point and unfortunately I guess many are really hopeful, especially for our friends in the southern states. We all hope you get up here for a wonderful holiday experience and the fishing will only get better in the back end of the year



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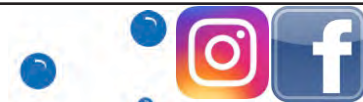
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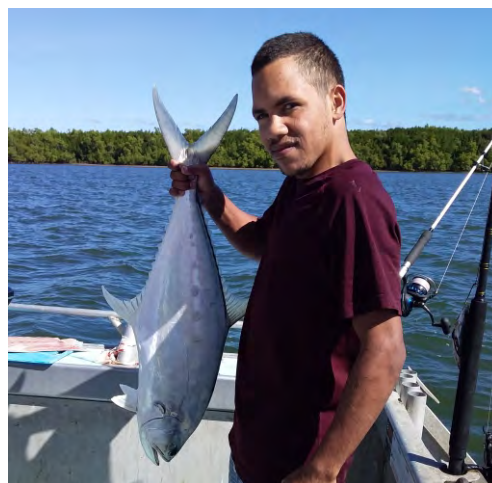
School Camp Fishing Trip

By Heff

This fishing trip had been in the pipeline for a couple of months now and we are glad to say it went all to plan. It wasn't necessarily the trip itself but at Fishing Port Douglas the hoops we had to jump through to get the tick of approval by the authorities was labour intensive due to the Covid situation. When we say authorities it was the sections of the QLD government and education departments that made it a monumental exercise. Numerous emails, phone calls, account departments and then a 43 page document to complete to satisfy Covid protocol was part and parcel of this trip to get off the ground. Far from your standard booking.

It involved a group of 16-17 year old students from Woree High School, Cairns who were on their annual school camp trip. 12 students and three teachers were in tow basing themselves near Cape Tribulation across the Daintree River. Their day with Jamie Beitzel's Fishing on the Daintree involved two separate half day trips, all in the one day, to complete this charter.

Talking at length with Jamie following the trip he said it was extremely satisfying. These kids from what one could describe as a more challenged part of society were given a magnificent experience from our end. From what we could gather, for the majority it was



their first time on a boat, despite living in so called paradise FNQ. Being born and bred on the Daintree River, Jamie was well versed to provide a wonderful day.

The boys got to hook into some really good fishing catching numerous quality queenfish, assorted grunters and river trevally, a few smaller mangrove jack, a couple of hard fighting stingrays and topped it off with mud crab in the pots. They got fully involved being taught how to throw a cast net for live bait and how to keep them alive, spotted crocs on the banks, pulled up the anchor and listened intently to Jamie's very informative and comprehensive knowledge of the Daintree ecosystem. Education like this can't be taught in the classroom effectively but Jamie said these boys took in a lot of information which they won't forget soon and confident they will retain it.

A big thanks to Traye Hodge, the main organising teacher who made the whole trip viable for the boys. Many would not comprehend what is expected of teachers nowadays, yet alone in a pandemic situation. Credit also goes to the Clontarf Foundation which funded this trip. The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and by doing so equips them to participate more meaningfully in society. ■

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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

Since we last communicated we started to see some reasonable bookings come through for the first week or two of the school holidays. We were really looking forward to getting back into the swing of things. However, the weather played havoc and we couldn't run at all. 20-30 knot winds hounded the coastline and we had to take another kick in the guts. I'm not one to sit and whine about things but this was really disappointing. It almost gets to a point where you question what the hell am I doing. Just on the eve of QLD borders re-opening Victoria went into shutdown which compounded things. What happened down there does make you scratch your head. We rely on their trade significantly for the coming months and it will be telling. We've been stating for awhile now that 90-95% of our business for the next six months is shared between NSW and VIC. This latest development will truly show how big a piece of the pie VIC does play. We have been served well enough from QLD involvement for the moment and the NSW role will be critical in the foreseeable future. In saying this you lick your wounds pretty quickly and get on with things.

We weren't able to run a charter till the 8th July due to the shocking weather and even this was conducted under duress in borderline conditions. We actually felt obliged to get this charter in as 15 of our fellow Queenslanders we given a leave pass from a big cattle station from Burketown in the far west of the State. They had very little wiggle room in their schedule. The sole purpose of their leave pass was to come to Port Douglas and go fishing on the reef. I'm glad we were



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able to provide a great day for them. They were that involved they all wore the same shirts for the day and were a wonderful young bunch of hard working Aussies.

In bouncy conditions we headed for the safety of the reef between Batt & Tongue reef. There's a lot of ground to explore but we were pretty much on the mark where we concentrated on for the day. Copious numbers of coral trout were happy to commit suicide, the large mouth nannygai were handy on a few spots and as a bonus there were a few red emperor up and about. Despite the challenges, which I guess these guys are quite used to working and living on the land, we all had a successful trip. There was a lot of job satisfaction from our point of view.

Moving forward we're hopeful for a break in the weather, gee's we deserve some respite. Our bookings are suggesting there are a few coming across the border from NSW and other bit and pieces from the rest of the country. What the near future holds is anyone's question.

The local marina has seen tumbleweed blow down the boardwalks for months now and some more sign of life would be great to see. ■

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Breathing in the Saltaire

By Damian Collette



It's been awhile since our last contribution to this great local magazine, but that has been due to the Covid situation. Another reason is that we temporarily re-located the boat to Cairns where we received free berthage being a government owned facility. I must say at this point the Port Douglas Marina has done no favours for the local industry in such a devastating time and very un-Port Douglas like.

For the moment we are running back and forth from Cairns to Port Douglas in a single day to continue our commitment to the area. The PD Yacht Club may become our new home in the very near future.

Now down to the fishing and I can say the mackerel season is here. The mackerel can turn up in numbers any time from April / May onwards, but the old Cairns Show Day date in July has been the benchmark for ever. It rings true having done a couple of charters in the last week or so.

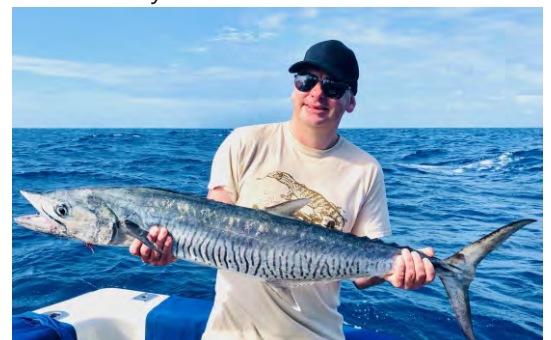
For us it is always worth having a look at Satellite Reef 12 nautical miles from the mainland to the outer reef at this time of

year. If they are there, and they are more often than not, then you can push quickly onto Batt Reef a few miles to the east and then run the edges. Satellite produced some handy mackerel around the 6-7kg range but the bigger 8-10kg models were closer to the main reef over at Batt. The bait life and consequent predators that follow, really like that strong southerly current at this time of year on the inside of the main reef.

Now on Saltaire, at any time of the year we only use the highest quality gear. Our mackerel outfits for light tackle this year are the latest Shimano Speed Master overheads and our spin reels are the Cabo brand which are also great for reef fishing. For the mackerel we've been running a spread of DTX Nomad lures which have been well received by the mackerel. They are a high end lure but very well built with quality terminal. Look them up for yourself.

Also on these mackerel charters, because the weather was so good at the time we did drop the pick and managed a heap of keeper coral trout which made for a nice bounty for the clients.

If you looking to charter you can't dismiss chasing the mackerel at this time of year and there are also small black marlin down on the wide grounds. When the pelagic bite goes quiet then the reef fishing is also more than handy. ■



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Old Fashioned Technology

By Steve Adamson - Dragon Lady Charters



With whizz bang technology nowadays it is so easy to get weather forecasts on your phone with varying apps which give you a fairly accurate account of what the wind will be doing and if there's any unfavorable boating conditions ahead.

However, with recent south easterly trade winds seemingly becoming a common component of fishing so far this winter, I always fall back to old instrumentation to give me the final word on the morning of any trip.

In recent times we've had to make a few borderline decisions as to whether we will run or not according to the digital forecasts. However before throwing the ropes and leaving the docks the first thing I do when I jump on the boat early morning is check the barometer in the wheelhouse. If the pressure system reading is still reading okay and in accordance with forecasts we'll run. For example the other day the forecast suggested it may get to 20 knots with the weather map suggesting a 1024 high pressure system on the continent. The boat barometer was reading 1018 HG in the morning and you know what it never got above 18 knots for the day. Being an older

barometer I sometimes have to give the glass a tap to make sure the needle is working but it has always been quite accurate. Even the rain squalls at this time of year don't really change the reading on the barometer.

There's only been a handful of occasions when I've seen the barometer change dramatically within a day or so and it generally is associated with cyclone activity within the region. It is not a common occurrence.

Now one instrument I really miss is the old fashioned storm cup we had in the house. I lost it during a shift of place years ago. But as the picture suggests it was a glass configuration with water dye, but ours was really old fashioned and mounted on a wooden plaque. It's not what you can buy cheaply on the internet nowadays which is mainly called a storm glass with chemicals etc. When a low pressure system was approaching or even a good dose of rain the dyed water would drop down the capillary tube and it was 100% accurate. When it really dropped before your eyes you knew it was time to get the washing off the line and batten down the hatches. ■



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Cherished Nautical Relics

By Heff



After putting up Steve's article from Dragon Lady in regards to old fashioned marine technology, it got me going as well to what I had kept over the years.

These following two pieces that could be considered artifacts I found in an abandoned seafood processing shed which hadn't operated in a very long time in the local area. That was back in 1997 not long after shifting to the area when I acquired the following. I was at the time always out and about exploring the region in full with fishing rod in hand. From what I've been able to retrieve from longer term locals is this abandoned building was the old Shae's Seafood place where they processed local product and also had the ability to sell direct to the public. It closed sometime in the 80's.


The shack I was inquisitive to investigate was something out of the movies. Dilapidated from the outside, weather torn and barely a structure with weeds growing all over it. I established the main door and clawed my way through the foliage. Once inside it was draped in a mass of spider webs from top to bottom. What was

immediately notable was an old wooden processing table in the middle and against the back wall a series of racks. Over on the racks were a variety of discarded objects, wooden boxes and bits of chain etc... However a couple of things caught my eye. Being a new comer to the area I was a bit dubious about the potential wildlife in the spin of webs but I had to have a closer look. Using my fishing rod I cut through spinifex of spider lair with creepy crawlies darting in all directions. It was movie worthy just for attempting this in real life.

I got to the racks furthest away from the door and locked eyes on a couple of pieces. All very new to me, I gathered one was an old fashioned sun dial reader and the other an ancient pro fishing reel. I couldn't see anything else of interest so I grabbed these two relics and got the hell out of there before the spider populace decided to defend there haven left in peace for a very long time.

To cut the story short I've shifted around several times over 25+ years in the area but have always packed these two items. Fishing gear and equipment comes and goes over time, but these have always remained.

The sundial is not old news but I have researched this design in length and from the build it is very original and quite old, not the cheap crap you can buy over the internet. How old, it is hard to say. With the help of a close friend this particular piece maybe worth a couple of grand nowadays for collectors. The best part of it is the saying on the plate, "Grow Old Along With Me The Best Is Yet to Be". It's a groovy work of craftsmanship and when pointed north the time clock is right on the money. I took this photo at 2.45pm and the sundial read exactly the same.

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Anyway they sit proudly in my office knowing they at some point played a role in the fishing industry history of our famous seaside village. That alone gives me a lot of satisfaction. ■

News in Brief

River FADS

A study in southern QLD has found artificial man-made structures called reef domes increase fish numbers in what some would describe as barren estuaries with little natural structure. It is common knowledge artificial reefs can have a huge impact on fish activity and become extremely popular and productive fishing locations in offshore waters. A study focused for a couple of years now on estuaries with predominantly sandy bottoms revealed some interesting data. According to the report, researchers added 30 reef domes in six different locations to create six new reefs per estuary. The fish numbers on quite a few locations has seen the fish population increase approximately 20%.



the best part of 10yrs with a couple of different investors as the stakeholders we have seen some attempts to improve the facility, mainly in regards to added marina berths but very little else.

With the Crystalbrook multi million accommodation developments currently in Cairns basically running on thin air, it is hard to see any movement here in Port Douglas for quite some time to come. Yes, it does need going ahead but local boat operators seem to think we've heard all this before and we'll sit and wait and see.

This topic came back on the agenda following Chiodo Corp announced a massive spend on a development on prime location in Port Douglas with the view to capture the high end domestic and international market.

Port Douglas Marina Development

It was recently suggested that the Crystalbrook Collection company still intends to re-development the Port Douglas Marina in the coming years. The Covid pandemic has put plans on hold for the meantime but the local mayor is still confident they move forward when possible. That is positive news, however for

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On the Daintree Charters

With Jamie Beitzel



Things have been ticking along nicely with charter work and I must say a big thankyou to Heff at Fishing Port Douglas for his new involvement. I must admit I wasn't anticipating working as much under the current circumstances.

The weather over the past few weeks did play into our hands for our river trips, as the offshore conditions for the majority of other operators were not viable. It was 3-4 weeks of some very wintery conditions.

Naturally I've stuck to the mighty Daintree River for my charters and have been dealing with mainly family groups and couples. We have also done a school camp trip from Cairns and a fly in helicopter trip via Nautilus Aviation. From what I gather though everyone is just happy to be on holiday and naturally have either been NSW or QLD residents.

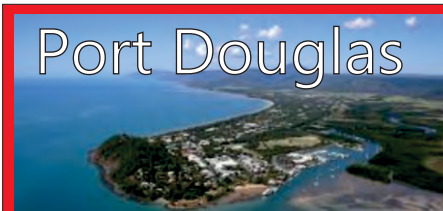
The river itself has settled into a real dry season, colder water temperature system with still a fair bit of fresh trickling in off the mountains. The upper reaches are too hard to fish for this reason and I haven't ventured in this direction. I've been going to lower

reaches below the ferry where the tides are pushing saltwater into the river and offering more activity. Some days have a bit slower than others but I have seen some reasonable action at times. In fact some days could have been considered right up there, but due to angler ability on those days we did lose some ripping fish. That's part of the charter business when you know that they have a fish of a lifetime on but somehow manage to lose it. It's all good and I get used to it. It is slightly annoying however when you set the drags in the right position and give them on the job coaching how to angle the fish, yet they muck around with the settings and don't listen at all. At the end of the day they missed out on something really special and at least I can say I got them onto a beauty.

Now what have we been catching !! There's our run of good sized queenfish in the system and some of them have been those awesome 1m plus size. The golden trevally have been consistent and the grunter across the flats have been up towards the 50cm size which are getting up there. I have fluked a couple of barra for those hellbent on catching one but it is hard yards in the cooler months.

I expect to find myself continuing to fish the river for a bit more to come as it seems to be one of those winters but I'm always keeping an eye out for a proper break in the weather. If I can get out and the Snapper Island waters I know the mackerel are there and more of those big queenfish. Then the coastal patches and wrecks will come into play for the likes of big nannygai, giant trevally and coastal trout.

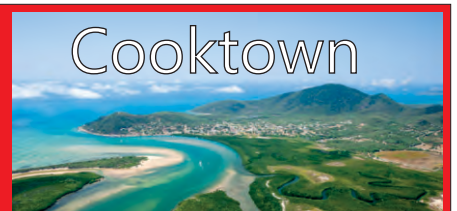
We are just pleased to be getting back into the charter mode and I will See You on the Daintree or nearby soon



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Reel Cooking with Mick Hart

Busy Time Fish Easy Meal



With the return of tourists filtering back into town, we may find ourselves looking for a healthy, night time feed of fish after a long shift. This one is quick and easy and you can pull most quality reef fish from out of the freezer. Just de-frost the fish in the fridge the night before.

Ingredients

- 4 quality reef fish fillets - either coral trout, emperor, nannygai
- 2 green onions
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 carrot
- 1/4 cup reduced-salt soy sauce
- Steamed white rice or cooked noodles, to serve

Method

Preheat oven to 200°C.

Cut onions into 5cm lengths. Remove seeds from capsicum. Peel carrot. Finely shred all vegetables and place into a bowl. Toss until well combined.

Line a baking dish with baking paper. Place fish fillets into prepared baking dish. Top each fillet with shredded vegetables. Drizzle with soy sauce. Season with salt and pepper.

Place another sheet of baking paper over fish. Fold all sides of baking paper together to form a parcel. Place dish into oven. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until fish flakes when tested with a fork.

Serve with rice or noodles.



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magical daintree

Contraversial Times with Bruce Belcher

The following article is Bruce Belcher's opinion

This story is not about the Magical Daintree but how it involves those of us living in this magical place. The uncertainty of the COVID-19 continues, and we follow the daily announcements of good news that gives us all hope of things improving. Every newspaper, all conversations and just about any other encounter seems focused on the subject. It has been 3 months since the lockdowns were enforced.

How has it affected me, personally? Being 70 years old and ready for retirement, it has not had much effect on my daily routines. Usually, I would back up to conduct a 1- hour cruise when required but that has been the only real daily change. My wife would interrupt here and say: "You're not in charge of the money!" That is true.

I was recently asked by a local journalist about my thoughts on the Queensland premier's choice not to open the border. My response was that I would have to agree with her and her advisers, after all, they are much better educated and experienced than me. I checked the newspaper the next day for my usual 2-bob's worth after a question. I was not surprised that my comments were not included. The reason, I believe was that I was not behind the brigade urging the government to hurry into re-opening. So, perhaps my views were not in line!

Recently, an Afro/American man was killed by a white policeman during an arrest in the U.S.A. This recent killing sparked global protests. To me, this particular policeman is a misfit and should be found guilty of murder, regardless of his career commitment and the perceived protection of doing his job. I will argue all the way, that like some misfit priests hiding behind religious shields and being pedophiles, this person used this shield to commit a murder. Therefore, anger by the community is justified. What has this got to do with the pandemic?

The global community has been ordered to observe social distancing. The riots and protests excited places, like Australia, to



demonstrate their frustrations. This pandemic is serious! No one has the right to ignore the rules. I do not care if you are black, white or brindle, the rules are for everyone!

Otherwise, we all risk a dark future with this situation. I understand the emotions as I have witnessed racism in some ways. However, I feel that Australia's leading indigenous elders, particularly in Melbourne, where they are more active, should have been more responsible and vocal in their leadership. Afterall, we are talking about equality here! I know it all happened quickly but in these modern times, people like these elders do use modern communication methods to stabilise people's feelings.

See you next month.

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