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Fishing Port Douglas News



with Heff

After a fairly fierce tropical winter for July we are hoping we've turned the corner for a better second half of the year, especially with wind conditions. With associated rain squalls it has been a testing period for our charters that were willing and capable of heading offshore. Even though the fishing was quite good, it was a case for the more seasoned angler to participate on most days.

Here's a snapshot of each day with maximum winds gusts during the course of any given day in numerical order plus the average wind velocity on that day in knots recorded from Arlington Reef - basically offshore outer reef fishing.

1. 28 knots max & average 17 knots
2. 26 knots max & average 16 knots
3. 23 knots max & average 13 knots
4. 17 knots max & average 11 knots
5. 21 knots max & average 16 knots
6. 13 knots max & average 9 knots
7. 27 knots max & average 18 knots
8. 27 knots max & average 19 knots
9. 28 knots max & average 19 knots
10. 27 knots max & average 20 knots
11. 25 knots max & average 17 knots
12. 30 knots max & average 15 knots
13. 33 knots max & average 22 knots
14. 34 knots max & average 22 knots
15. 32 knots max & average 18 knots
16. 35 knots max & average 20 knots
17. 33 knots max & average 22 knots
18. 23 knots max & average 20 knots
19. 23 knots max & average 19 knots
20. 24 knots max & average 18 knots

21. 18 knots max & average 14 knots
22. 16 knots max & average 9 knots
23. 10 knots max & average 5 knots
24. 33 knots max & average 22 knots
25. 30 knots max & average 22 knots
26. 33 knots max & average 24 knots
27. 30 knots max & average 18 knots
28. 28 knots max & average 19 knots
29. 27 knots max & average 19 knots

So there you go, literally a write for the small boat brigade offshore and a challenge for even our 35ft & 48ft vessels for the majority of the month. You'll see the associated rain squalls that have invariably rolled through do really heighten the severity of the conditions on the water.

Here's praying for a stranglehold from the relentless barrage of an indifferent weather pattern with brighter days ahead. This may take at least a couple weeks according to forecasts to improve.




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Fishing On the Daintree

with Jamie Beitzel



Hi to everyone from the magical Daintree River. As suspected I've been kept flat out working the entire month. School holidays are always typically busy, the tourist season has kicked into full swing but fortunately for me the trade winds which have hit top gear, don't effect me on the river. I've got no doubt some extra business has come my way due to the rotten conditions offshore for the majority of the month. Personally I think it would have been a tough month for many relying to operate offshore.

In saying this the cooler and often windy conditions did impact even fishing on the river. Popular targeted species such as barramundi and mangrove jack did literally shut down for the month. Even my favourite species, the fingermark did slow down a bit this past month. The one's I did catch were quite substantial in size which was pleasing.

So with the conditions as they have been you have to adjust. I've been doing this for 30yrs so I know when to change tact and still provide a good angling experience. Live sardine baits still play a role for big queenfish that are frequenting the main channel down towards the mouth. They will also account for fingermark amongst the snags and even a barra if you get lucky. During these deeper days of winter which can see the river dirty up in water clarity, fresh dead baits such as a

combination of pilchard/ squid will account for some great javelin fish, river trevally and golden trevally which patrol the edges of the main channel and up onto the shallow flats. If you can source it, Californian squid is premium as it has a genuine smell and looks nice and white in texture. It's a bit more expensive but the improved results are completely justified.

Another bait which is a go to for me, is the frozen prawn. Not just any prawn but a quality prawn similar to what you'd purchase from a prawn trawler. The key here is to discard the head and completely take the shell off leaving the nice soft flesh to cut into half or quarters. A fish is more willing to slurp down a soft, juicy presentation. The good old peeled prawn is best used closer to the mouth where the bottom is sandy and also the shallow sandy flats adjacent. This will attract the likes of golden trevally, javelin fish, permit, sickle fish and feather bream of good size. So there is a variety of fish to target on any given charter. In this scenario the incoming tide is best with the current and wind running in the same direction. Down sizing your hook on a running sinker rig is advisable.

So I've been able to keep the reels turning despite the challenges. Looking ahead it may be an extended winter into mid August and then we'll turn the corner into some better conditions.



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Dragon Lady Charters

with Derek Brown



Well wasn't that an interesting month we've been through for July. The weather taunted with us for most of the time, we had some good days then it became a bit challenging soon afterwards. However it was pleasing to cater for the many enthusiastic anglers during the school holidays despite it being indifferent conditions. As we do with a smile and positive attitude, it's all about our service and fishing capability and we'll give ourselves a pat on the back in this department. Unfortunately towards the end of the month we had to finally back away from the weather over a few days when nasty trade winds went to a new level making it impossible to consider.

Okay let's get into the fishing ! Barring the odd quite day, I can say according to the log book we experienced top quality results on the fish for 90% of our charters.

For many days of the month we found ourselves up closer to the reef which provided extra protection from the weather. Plucking heaps of coral trout was not an issue which is always a popular fish for our punters. Small mouth nannygai had some bright moments and then you value add a myriad of other tasty species. These included some more exotic morsels including cattle dog cod and baldy bream plus sweetlip, moses perch and stripies. There wasn't a shortage of fish willing to bite.

With a bit better weather at times, it was when the fishing got bigger in size and attitude fishing in



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deeper water. Red emperor, large mouth nannygai and gold spot trevally extended the arms. However we had some cracking days on the spanish mackerel float. It was ignited with regularity and certainly had our undivided attention. For so many of our clients they got to experience the thrill of a screaming mackerel tearing across the ocean. For most that was the first time ever and it created a real buzz of excitement for everyone on the boat. As per our policy on this pelagic species caught on a community rod, the fish goes into a community chest for everyone to share in a fillet of mackerel at day's end.

Looking ahead bookings are solid but the weather may have a bit of say in the near distant future. If can offer a valued trip from our perspective we'll be running with bells on because the reef fishing is brilliant at this time of the year. Join us for a fun filled day on the GBR outer reef.

Saltaire Charters



with Craig Newbold

Despite some pretty ordinary weather for July we somehow found ourselves relatively busy. We conducted a handful of charters and continued on with our Marine Air Rescue program.

On the fishing front it went great with hardcore anglers onboard and quite a few families during the school holidays. The spanish mackerel weren't too difficult to find whilst trolling light tackle gear and they ranged in size from 8-12kg which is basically a typical schooling fish at this time of year. Again we didn't over complicate things running a spread of 10m deep diving hard body lures and 2m shallow diving lures near the surface. We try a range of colours and it's interesting to see after a few charters which lures have the scars of being monstered by the razor sharp teeth of a mackerel. The deep diving lures that seem to attract the most attention have a dark top half which could be navy, dark green or black and then a light silvery bottom. The shallow diving lures can be split over three colours including gold, white with red head and also silver with speckles of various other bright colours. For us the Nomad and Halco brands have proven to stand out amongst the others.

The bottom fishing was also fruitful with an abundance of coral trout now moving into shallow territory. They were the main species by far and when you get lucky you can catch several from one stop. On some of these trips there was a bit of snorkelling performed particularly with the family groups.

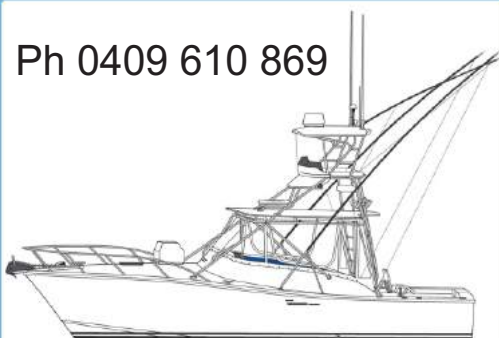
As mentioned our Marine Air Rescue schedule was quite busy this month. I had an interesting conversation with the main body of this operation and they indicated they are continually training up new pilots to do this

sort of work. Also the seasoned pilots require practice as they are not always conducting emergencies. We had one instance the past month whereby the 9am exercise was cancelled with us because there was a distress call to a sinking boat with 2 blokes in the water at 4am in the morning. Location up near Papua New Guinea, so they cover some serious ground and on call 24/7. The plane has a fuel range of approximately 5000 km.

With this sort of work and quite a few charters scheduled in August we will have a pretty busy few weeks ahead. Hopefully the weather improves as July was definitely challenging.



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