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SEP 19



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Front Cover:
'Sharky' Shane
Down with an impressive haul of Mud Crabs caught by hand and foot



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Fishing Port Douglas Charters

By Adam Boone

Gday Readers, and welcome to our report for the this edition of Lineburner.

August has been an exciting month for Fishing Port Douglas Charters, we have had a few changes go on behind the scenes where myself (Adam) and my partner Kiara have now become 100% owners of the business. We are excited for the challenges that lay ahead and would first and foremost like to thank ex-owner Heff for all his help and support through the transition of the ownership. Moving forward, we are keeping him on as our main booking man who will hold the phone for us and take all calls relating to bookings, you can call on 0434 644 707

Another development that has happened behind the scenes is the creation of our very own Website

(www.fishingportdouglascharters.com) here you will find information related to the business, latest photos, charter descriptions and an online booking facility among other things.

Last of the major things to happen behind the scenes this month was a new charter that we are running. Over the months of January, February and March we are offering All Inclusive Multi Day Charters, including accommodation, transfers and either 3,4 or 5 days of fishing, shoot across to our website for more information or give us an email

info@fishingportdouglascharters.com for any enquiries.

Now on to the fishing... with all the other stuff going on we took a fair bit of time off this month but for the time we were on the water we managed significant catches both inshore and offshore.

Inshore we managed large catches of Grassy Sweetlip and the school Mackerel are still around in plague proportions. As I wrote in the previous issue, small metal slices were producing best on these but they were more than willing to take baits on the bottom meant for non-pelagic species. Offshore on the couple of trips we made, the Coral Trout were on the bite and of a really good size. Also Large Mouth Nannygai and a few GTs were about to stretch the arms on the wrecks which made things interesting as well! However our most memorable/exciting moment of the month was where we found ourselves sight-casting poppers for Cobia off the back of Manta rays, not more than 50m out from the channel markers. On the way back in from a charter I noticed a manta ray on the surface not far from the mouth of the Dickson inlet, we decided to go over for a closer look with our punters, cameras at the ready. **Continued Page 8**



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Exceed Sportfishing

By Jake Wyatt

Finally we have had a break in the weather during August and the seas began to settle down considerably. Finally once again we found ourselves travelling far and wide and overall the fishing has been quite good. We discovered a lot of new and exciting ground along the way but to be honest the best of it was not as far as one might expect. Our most productive days were what you would call as right under your nose.

Some days when it has been blowing a bit, we have been ducking in behind certain reefs to get some cover to find some fish. With the Simrad and 1kw transducer, we have found some cracking isolated rocks loaded with good fish. It also pays off to really watch your sounder while underway. A small mark that comes up when doing 27 knots is worth doubling back around and having a good hard look at the area.

Another thing that we have found lately are unfortunately the big old dirty sharks. Man, these things have been thick especially on the moons. From one reef to another, they have been there in big numbers and not small sharks either. Sometimes you just have to shake your head, pull the remaining lines up and try moving to another place. Once they turn up there's no chance of getting a fish to the boat and you end up losing valuable fishing gear.

When we have managed to get away from them there has been some cracking fish on plastics, jigs and bait. Spanish Mackerel have been smashing jigs along with some

decent Bludger Trevally which make for a great fight on the 20lb spin gear. They have a massive fuel tank and a few of these will tire out any angler.

At times we've come across some of the biggest Bar Cheek trout I have seen in the area. They've been coming onboard for a quick photo before being sent back to the depths. On more than one occasion these beasts have taken a live Husser from off the bottom.

The Nanny's and Reds have been on the chew also at various places minus the sharks. However on one particular drop we pulled some quite decent fish up before the sharks invariably showed up. We then proceeded to pull up a Nanny head that measured from the nose to behind the pectoral fin at a whopping 50cm. It would have been a screamer of a fish and we were truly upset. I'm conservatively guessing it would have been a 12kg plus specimen.

The next few months are absolutely packed with charters and we can't wait for the weather to continually improve. I suspect the fishing to go off its head and the mornings will to not be so cold. The past month or so it's been bloody freezing at 5:30am - haha.

I'm hearing the small black marlin season has been considerably quieter this year season but I'm still hoping for a late run with some charters scheduled in the coming month - Tight lines to all. ■



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

It took till the second week of August before the relentless south easterly trade winds, which have been haunting us for months, decided to dissipate and hopefully for the last time this year. There was a bit of wind still around following this but very manageable from our point of view. It feels like however the weather pattern will only improve from this point on.

The general fishing was still solid with some bumper days on the nannygai and trout still happening. Some days saw us return with more than enough fish. Other species to regularly show up included red and spangled emperor, big mosies perch, tea-leaf trevally which we haven't seen for awhile and some nice spanish mackerel on the float. Some of the best catches were caught by the ladies this month and I have a theory about this. They tend to really listen to the crew and what we are trying to instruct. These women more often than not will out fish the blokes. A lot of the men that come onboard often think they know it all and sometimes ignore or block out our advice. I guess it is a testosterone thing!

There has been a slight shift in momentum at different sections of the reef recently with some fish full of roe in readiness for an early spawn. These areas tended to fish not quite as well and we made note and a point of avoiding them. Contrary to what the government believes with their reef closures in October and November and so forth, when the water warms up some sections of the GBR will be favourable for mating earlier than anticipated. Nature will not wait for anyone and when she's ready, she will do her thing.

Also as the water temperature started to gradually climb the shark population really became more notable. We know well of the problematic areas, which have been okay during the winter months, but now they are an issue. The new and full moon days are notorious and you can be guaranteed they'll be there. We are not talking about the small stuff either, 300kg whalers will quickly turn up especially at the 'reds' residence. Once they flex their muscles there's no choice but to vacate

the area completely. They will follow the boat for a few miles at times so it's smart to shift quickly and to greener pastures.

I have to introduce you to our new team member which actually has been with us for probably for over 12 months now. Brian the Great White Heron joins us every afternoon on the back deck for a feed of pilchards. He has our routine down pat and turns up like clock work at about 4.15pm each day. It took awhile for us to gain his trust but now he will accept a pilchard by hand. He only gets a couple each day so he doesn't become reliant but I have heard



otherwise. He has been spotted up at St Crispins lake following fishermen cast netting for live bait for an easy feed. When questioned about his loyalty to us, Brian has denied this but our sources are very trustworthy.

Be aware school holidays are almost upon us and probably our busiest time of the year. If you are considering a fish with us definitely book in advance. I know from experience a lot will simply miss out due to the volume of people in town. ■



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Marching for Mud Crabs

By 'Sharky' Shane Down

Invariably every year there comes a tipping point due to weather conditions that you have to change tact and do something different. For me this year any time off on my weekends has seen the weather deteriorate religiously preventing a fish off the beach or even heading out in my boat for that reason. It has been a horror run that's for sure. Recently, with my days off approaching, the forecast was for more bloody wind. With that in mind I was still determined to catch some fresh quarry with mud crab as the target.

A couple of days prior I teed up some fresh mackerel frames from a local charter boat at the marina. On Tuesday afternoon I hit the flats of southern Four Mile Beach or more appropriately the mangrove flats leading to the Mowbray River. I carried 3 pots by foot and placed them apart by a few hundred feet at some likely places in front of the mangroves on low tide. It was about an hour or so exercise. The trick is to stick as close as you can to the mangroves by foot where the turf is a bit firmer. If you stray just that bit further and you'll end up knee deep in smelly mud. The pots would sit overnight with a rising tide after dark.

The following day as the tide got low enough to walk I went back to check what this had achieved. The first pot had been torn apart, likely from a croc, and left inside

were two little 'Jennies' which were released. I made some on the spot repairs and rebaited with the intention of doing the same program again overnight.

The second pot was somewhat more productive with 10 crabs trapped within. There was one legal 'Buck', two undersized and seven 'Jennies'. The big boy was tied up and was destined for dinner.

The 3rd pot was another disappointment with another savage attack by something 'teethy' of size. It has two remaining 'Jennies' which were set free. Again some quick repairs were made and rebaited.

Early the following morning I made the trek back to check if things had improved. Across the 3 pots there would have been half a dozen okay sized 'Jennies' and no males at all. It was a bit of a let down and maybe the southern flats had already been targeted recently. Not to be perturbed I had a Plan B the following day.

This day coincided with a massive low tide late morning, so I packed the surf ski on the 4WD and made my way into Port Douglas central at about 11am. The exposed flats opposite the Sugar Wharf are an iconic local piece of landscape. As many of you would know we filmed a segment here on the Line Burner TV series a few years ago chasing mud crabs by foot.



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With the surf ski launched at the local boat ramp I made the short paddle across the main channel which had been reduced to a narrow strip of water. I dragged the ski up to dry land and proceeded by foot from there. I had a few hours to explore before the tide would begin to turn back in. You just have to be very mindful of your timing when you do this.

Within a couple of hundred metres of reaching the actual mangrove system I came across my first big 'Buck' which was actually sitting on top of a female. It's not hard to work out what they were up to but I rudely interrupted their private moment. I didn't need to bother as it measured only 2mm short of the legal size of 15cm. So close but yet so far. I put him back next to his lady to let him finish his business.

Not much further on I came across another good sized male but he was a one claw bandit and was also 2mm short. Bugger - I was keen to just find one more at least to add to my crab from a couple of days ago to make a good feed.

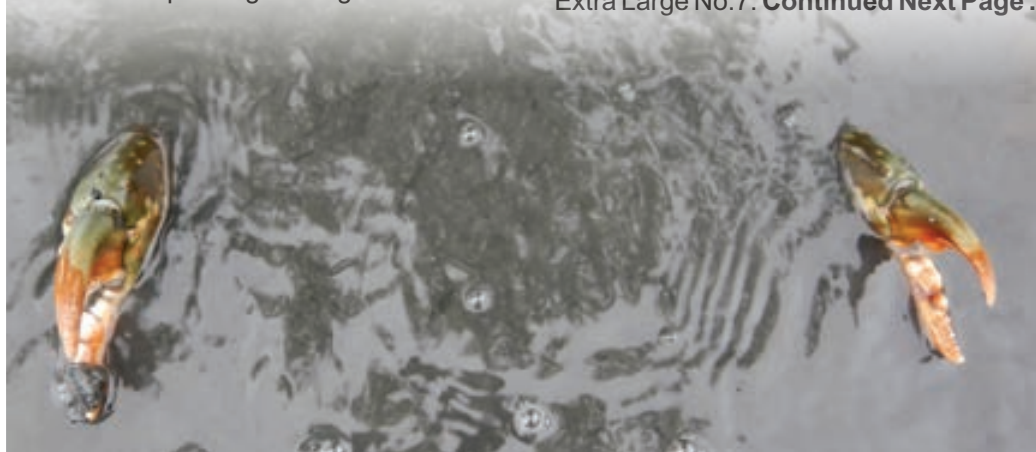
Just when you begin to wonder my next few hundred metres of walking turned into the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In roughly 10cm of water lapping against the mangroves I started spotting several big crabs sitting in their mud hides. It does take a keen eye to spot them but I've been doing this for 'donkey's years'. Before long I had I had plucked, tied up and packaged 5 rusty crustaceans all 18cm across the back. The size of their claws were some of the biggest I've ever seen. I simply could not believe my fortune and I was dancing on mud.

It then started to drizzle with rain and it made it more difficult from this point on. With spots of water on my sunnies it made the task of piercing through the water



challenging. I was able to spot another horse sized crab not long after and having secured it I thought I had achieved more than enough. I was probably 750m shy of reaching Muddy Creek but had 6 rippers in the back pack which was more than I had ever hoped for.

I turned for homeward bound and headed out to sea a bit where it actually offered some firm sand to make the trek back. I kid you not, only 10m from leaving the soft ground I came across what looked like a big male half buried in the sand. I tapped him on the back and a big set of fangs came launching out from underneath the turf. He was telling me to bugger off but by the size of his claws I knew he was a beauty. I had no choice to but to coax him out from his bunker and claim mud crab Extra Large No.7. **Continued Next Page ..**



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That was it and I kept my eyes looking forward and not down from this point on. I do tell a 'fib' because as I had to walk through a little river run where I spotted another critter. It's not what you're thinking but it was a deadly stonefish sitting amongst some small rocks.

This section of the mangroves I am very familiar with over the years. That's why I walk in bare feet because as soon as you can feel rock under your feet keep a serious eye out placing every step with caution. These phenomena are the ultimate camouflage kings which are comfortable sitting in the shallowest of water. Avoiding this potentially nasty end to the completion of a great session I made the last bit of stretch. Along the way back and just taking in the scenery, as opposed to looking down, there was a lot of debris across the flats in the way of discarded rope, landing nets and old fishing rods. It was a bit annoying to see how humans can leave a footprint in such an amazing place. Anyway I finally retrieved my surf ski still high and dry and made the paddle across the Inlet to the boat ramp.

It was time for a deep breath and a quick reflection on what was an amazing experience. It will go down as my best effort on foot locally for mud crabs in nearly 30 years of living here. ■



Fishing PD Charters Cont ...

The Ray glided past the boat within about 2m when a Cobia about 1m long swam out from underneath the ray and around the back and back underneath. At the time I was videoing, but once I saw this I went from nature watching mode to fishing mode, putting the camera down and quickly tying on a small 4 inch Halco rooster popper (red-head) to one of our lighter sticks. The punters on board kept a close eye on the ray while I tied the lure on, once ready we motored up within casting distance... I don't think the popper had hit the water for more than half a second before the cobia came from out underneath the manta ray and smashed the popper.. we were on! It turned into a 10 minute to and fro between angler and fish with neither giving much ground. Unfortunately with the fish about 5m under the boat a momentary lapse in concentration and some slack line gave the fish the opportunity to throw the hooks and

off he went. Profanities ensued and off we went to the boat ramp to finish the charter. Not the result we wanted, but to see the take of the lure on top water was almost worth it... Until next month, Happy Fishing ■




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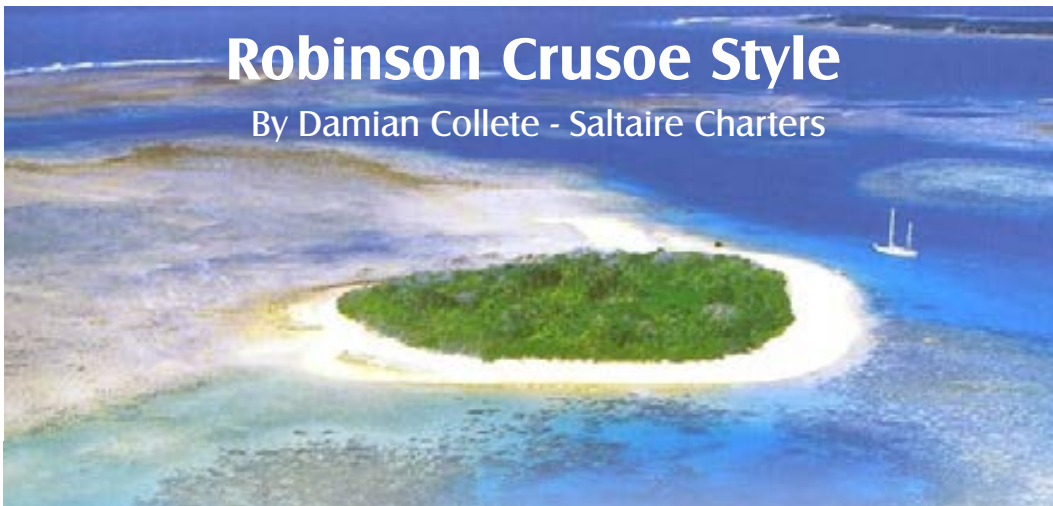
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Robinson Crusoe Style

By Damian Collete - Saltaire Charters



37 kilometres south east of Cooktown you'll find the stunning Hope Island group consisting of a western and eastern island. Basically they are a blimp on the map of the Great Barrier Reef but seriously considered something really special, especially by the travelling boating fraternity who see it as a safe haven. Adorned by incredible surrounding reefs and also being a significant landmark in Captain Cook's journey 250 years ago, it is a captivating place to visit. Just for a bit of a history refreshing here's the story behind Cook:

The Hope islands were named by Lt James Cook on 13 June 1770, after his ship HMS Endeavour narrowly escaped sinking after running aground on the eastern part of Endeavour Reef at 11pm on 11 June. Cook writes of taking a risk and sailing from the reef on the morning of 13 June in favourable conditions but the three operational bilge pumps could not keep up with the flow of water. Cook wrote "we were always in hopes of being able to reach these Islands". Cook speaks of he and the crew thinking the situation so dire that the best scenario would be to ground the boat on the reef surrounding the islands if the mainland could not be reached. They aimed to build a vessel from the wreck to make it back to the East Indies. Fortunately some crew members were able to "fother" the leak using a sail so that the water could be cleared easily using one bilge pump. Endeavour was able to be sailed safely to what is now Cooktown so that repairs could be undertaken.

For 9 years now (7 with Saltaire Charters), a band of dedicated friends make the annual trip to Hope Island and camp and fish this remote area for 8 days. They collectively originate from Sydney but some of the group have expanded their horizons to England and Hong Kong. No matter where they are in the world they come back in August every year to partake in what you many would consider the ultimate fishing trip. The majority of the group leave from Port Douglas on Saltaire and a couple of stragglers make their way to Bloomfield and utilise the services of a local operator to get

them out to the island group. It is a trip filled with massive logistics but over the years we have refined it to the last detail. Camping gear, refrigeration, water supplies, fishing gear, food and beverages are just some of the essentials required to transport. The boys camp on the eastern island which is booked through the National Parks. The island itself is very basic in its set up with a bush dunny, an awning and the ability to sling up a tarp with coppers logs in place so you camp under. It is pretty raw stuff but once the camp is set up it is comfortable and efficient enough. There is no showers so to tub up the boys simply take a dip in the ocean.

Once the camp is all in place it is time to hook into the fishing. To be honest it is God's Playground with a hundreds choices of choices where you can wet a line. Each day we ventured on Saltaire to different places covering the following amazing reef systems including Pickersgill, Cairns, Lena, Irene, Emily, Ruby and Ribbon No.1 reef. I'm kidding you not the fishing is just completely insane. The boys really loved their reef fishing and we stocked up on reef fillets for them to take back down south. Quotas of fillets are quite generous on extended charters and they caught a truck load to take back. Only the very best was processed including coral trout, red emperor and nannygai. When you fish so remotely the number and quality of fish is out of this world.

To break up the reef fishing we caught copious amounts of spanish mackerel on the troll and utilised these on the camping menu and to also make mackerel sandwiches for lunch every day. We also did quite a bit of popper fishing across the reefs and landed some of the best Gt's going around. Even off the beach back at the island the boys were pulling quite a few Gt's from off the beach for just a bit of fun. I could go on forever about the fishing because the it was just so good. Compare it to your best days fishing out of Port Douglas or Cairns and times that 8 times for 8 days. Mind blowing fishing really !!

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But on an adventure like this it's not all about the fishing. The stunning views, beauty and tranquility and complete isolation are also a big part of the experience. The boys had their own tropical island for the entire stay and made the most of it. Every late afternoon they would gather on the beach and have a friendly game of rugby on their own private sandy field with the most amazing sunsets coming from across the mountainous Daintree rainforest as the back drop. Just amazing stuff !! Also every afternoon was cocktail time on the beach with a different exotic concoction on offer each day. Even one evening with the rugby Bledisloe Cup due to be aired on TV the boys found a corner of beach with reception where they set up the camp chairs and esky and watched it on a lap top with a Wi-Fi dongle set up. That was rather awesome and unique.

Each night once darkness had settled in it was camp cook up at the makeshift kitchen. This was not your typical BBQ type style of cooking, these boys do it the 5 Star way. Each night was something different including Beef Cheeks, Lamb Casserole, Curry Night, Steak Night and Fish done five different ways. It was food fit for a king !! Overall the weather remained dry but a little windy on some days but there are countless options to combat this. It all went without a hitch and after many years of doing this there is always a solution to any curve ball dished up.

One of the most amazing parts of the trip is on the last day at the island. Out of complete respect for where they have been, the boys



comb the entire island for any rubbish including any debris that has washed up onshore from the ocean. All the findings and camp rubbish is bagged up and brought back on the boat for proper disposal. It's just a nice touch to what is an incredible trip to be part of every year.

I highly suggest if this sounds like something of interest for you get in touch because we have this trip down pat and you'll love the fishing and what the island has to offer. It's only a couple of hours travel away from Port Douglas too. If you do the math it really is the most affordable trips for such a remote style of fishing going around on the GBR!!! ■



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Reel Cooking

with Mick Hart



Easy Dinner Coral Trout

INGREDIENTS

2 x fillets of Coral Trout

3 jalapeños, stemmed, seeded
(save some of the seeds to add later if you like things spicy)

1 garlic clove

Sea salt

Finely grated zest from half lemon and also separated 2tbsp of juice

1tsp honey

Good splash of olive oil 4tbsp

Bunch of baby broccolini, cut into single inch pieces

Preferred lettuce, I like large leaf Cos Lettuce

4tsp rice vinegar

Toasted sesame seeds (for serving)



Method

Finely chop jalapeños and garlic on a cutting board, sprinkle with a pinch of salt and then crush to a mash. Add lemon zest, honey and 2tbsp oil and toss to combine.

Heat 1tbsp oil in a medium nonstick pan over medium-high. Add broccolini and cook, tossing occasionally, until charred in spots and crisp-tender, 5–6 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

Heat remaining 1tbsp oil in pan over medium. Season coral trout with salt and cook both sides till golden brown.

Arrange broccolini and Cos on a platter and season with salt. Arrange trout over. Stir lemon juice and vinegar into dressing. Drizzle dressing over trout, then top with sesame seeds.

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Western Cape York Barra

By Dylan Case - Nautical Marine

As August rolled around, we found ourselves preparing for another barramundi mission, this time to the western side of the state. Sorting out gear for these 10 days trips can be a daunting task at times, as it can be tough to gauge exactly how much of everything two people will go through over the course of the trip. Obviously, it is preferable to bring too many lures than too few! 95% of our barra fishing is done using lures that fall into the following categories: prawn imitations, paddle tail plastics, jerk shad plastics, hard bodies, vibes and "big baits". We packed plenty of these, along with heaps of heavy leader, and jigheads to match every soft plastic in our tacklebox. With our gear finally sorted, we left late after work to knock off some of the kilometres through the night before setting up camp around 100km from our spot. We arrived at our base for the next 10 days early the following morning, and quickly prepped the boat and gear and hit the water to start covering some ground. This was our second trip to this particular system so we had some idea where we would find fish, but we wanted to explore even more of the area to try and pinpoint some of those harder to find spots. It didn't take us long to fish a couple fish, as we scanned a few average

specimens in a spot we had previously had success. We left them initially, as we wanted the tide to get a little lower, knowing it would activate the spot and likely draw in more fish. Patience and timing can be key for a spot like this, so we continued further along the river with the intention of returning to this spot in an hour or so. After finding a few more fish, and putting a couple smaller models in the boat, we went back to the spot we saw most of the fish earlier. As expected, the spot, which we will refer to as "the gutter", was much livelier than earlier in the day, and we could see a few larger models in amongst the fish that were probably averaging 75-85cm. Darryl positioned the boat downstream as we spot locked well away from the bulk of the fish. Casting prawn imitations, I boated a fish in the 80s first cast, and proceeded to put another 3 smaller models on deck in the next 30 odd minutes. The unmistakable rod-rattling thump of a proper specimen on my lure quickly cut through the light-hearted excitement of boating a few rats. We could tell it was going to right around that metre mark as soon as it hit the air. A quick net job and the monkey was off the back for the trip! Definitely takes the pressure off to land this thick-set fish of 101cm early in the piece!



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This seemed to put the wind up Darryl and he quickly jammed hooks into his first barra of the day. Once again, we knew it was a proper fish and readied the net immediately. This fish looked as if it was cast from the same mould as the one I had just landed, and again measured 101cm. Another pristine fish! We boated a couple more fish from this school up to 90cm, before calling it a day. Day 2 started with a plan in mind, and we decided to give a spot we knew housed a lot of large fish a run. The first pass with the sidescan confirmed our suspicions as we marked a few fish, including some of the giants we came here for. We could tell this spot was going to take up a lot of our time over the next week! We had a few casts but knew to not waste too much time, as you don't tend to fluke these giant fish. We will call this spot "big fish", and we would be back. After wasting away most of the day searching for spots, we returned to big fish for an arvo session. Again, we sounded plenty of bigger fish, and set up to spend the rest of the day casting. We cycled through a whole range of lures before we found a couple that seemed to match the scenario well. A couple hours went by when Darryl's big bait got absolutely crunched. A few moments of panic in structure, but we managed to manoeuvre the large fish away, with a combination of heavy swimbait gear and boat driving. As the fish, which was over 110cm neared the surface, it appeared to be hooked well and we were reasonably confident taking our time

with it in open water.

As it was coming up towards the boat, it rolled over and we could now see the hook was hanging on by a tiny piece of lip. One last kick with its tail and the hook pulled clean. There are a lot of things you can control in barra fishing, but this was just one of those things you can't. It's definitely a tough thing to come back from, but we kept fishing and got 2 more bites from relative "rats" at 85 and 92cm. It seems a bit greedy to refer to this class of fish at rats, but when you're fishing on a school of metre plus fish, with a few real monsters thrown in, it's almost disappointing when a 90 breaks the surface. A few more casts after these smaller fish and we decided to head back for the night. There was no question where our plans lay for day 3, as we revisited the scene of the crime from yesterday afternoon. At least now we knew it was possible to get a bite from these fish, so we picked a time and sat on them. Both throwing big paddle tail plastics, Darryl got another bite from a giant and cranked a big hookset into it. The fish hit the air straight away and we could tell it was probably over 115cm. Darryl was undoubtedly sweating on this fish after the one we put down the day prior, but he did well

and pulled it away from structure and into the waiting net. This fish was an absolute brick and went 116cm on the brag mat which was a PB for Darryl.

We were both beyond stoked to put a fish of this calibre on board and soaked it in as we watched it swim away. It's hard to back it up after a fish like that but we cast the afternoon out nonetheless.

The following days seemed to pass by fast, with hour after hour spend prospecting different areas for fresh ground. We still made time every day to fish big fish daily, but they seemed less responsive to our various techniques and approaches. Of course, we filled in the quiet times with a few rat sessions and caught a couple in the 80-90 class every day. **Continued Next Page ...**



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Around day 7, a tiny bit disheartened by the relatively unsuccessful big fish sessions over the previous days, we gave in to the pressure and chased some rats along an active stretch to pass the time. With current ripping along a shallow stretch of snags, small barra were stacked thick. We pulled around 80 fish from a couple of patches, almost a fish a cast at times. They were mostly small, to around 75cm, but heaps of fun in clear, shallow water!

Leaving these rats, we stumbled across an isolated timber on the bottom in open water. It had a fair few fish stacked around, and we pulled 4 fish in 4 casts before they dispersed, including a 94 and 95. We also found a few fish sitting along a snaggy bank, where we had fished for but not caught them in the past. We must've pretty much nailed the timing for these normally tough fish, because we got bites straight away, and landed a couple decent models to 93cm.

On the morning of the last day, we explored a small creek away from the main system and found fish early on. Unfortunately, only the smaller models seemed keen to bite, and I reckon I put about 20 in the boat before Darryl had even woken up. Of course, after I knocked down all the rats, Darryl got the only worthwhile bite of the morning, boating a 95cm fish from heavy

structure. Moving back to the main system, we ran a couple of the spots we'd be doing well on for the previous few days.

Again, rats were the story of the day and the bigger fish were actually becoming quite hard to come across in numbers. Nevertheless, we made the most out of our last afternoon and gave it a good crack. Just as the sun was dipping, we headed to the gutter for one last crack. We could see the odd decent fish hanging around, which was a positive sign! Casting a prawn imitation, I got about half a handle turn in before getting nailed by what was clearly at least a reasonable fish. As it got aerial in the afternoon sun we could see that it was probably a high 90 model, maybe a touch bigger. We netted it and chucked it on the mat. To our surprise it actually just snuck in as 100cm flat! A nice way to top off the trip! We didn't really hang around very long after that fish, as the rest quickly dispersed. Since our supplies were running a touch low, we stopped over at a notorious rat spot on the way back to base camp to get our dinner for the night. 2 casts were made, and 2 fish were landed. We picked the smallest, a prime eating size fish of 65cm and headed off to camp to recount days past around the campfire. Overall, a great trip with 4 fish over the metre mark landed, and around 8 90s as well. We will be back soon for that 120.



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A Defining Moment in the Daintree with Bruce Belcher



During my tours I'm often asked about crocodile attacks in the district. It's rare that I talk about these things unless I'm asked, out of respect for the families and friends of the victims.

Back in 1984, a local woman was killed by a large male croc, over 4.5 metres long. My friend and eventual employer were present on the night and he described the details graphically. His name was John, who has since passed away.

A Christmas party was held by the original tour operator on the river with the intention of expressing good will in the community. I understand that it was not a restricted party but one to unite everyone. He said that there was a need for this as there were awkward times during this pioneering tourism activity which was seen by the locals as being intrusive.

I can imagine the tension felt by the locals who had enjoyed peace and tranquillity for a long time, to be subjected by newcomers bringing progress with them. The locals basically had the river to themselves and in the prior times the river was quite scant of crocs, soon after they were protected. So, as croc numbers began to recover, this interest in wildlife tours was there.

John told me that the pioneering tourism couple were subjected to harassment and intimidation as a deterrent, but they were steadfast with their intention. By then, the business had been sold twice but the couple remained in tourism. I'm not going to describe the events, but I remember listening to the early morning news flash on the 22nd of December 1984, which told of the attack. In the days and weeks later, the media followed the details greedily as it was big news.



Some time later, John described the legal arrangements which were necessary, into the investigations. Obviously, the public had its perception which involved thoughts of foul play. The resulting investigations cleared any doubts and life went on.

John continued by saying that this incident widened the gap further between locals and newcomers in tourism, just as relations were improving. In times following, I remember reading letters to the newspapers where heated exchanges were had between the couple and isolated locals' comments about things not related to the croc attack but those that suggested that this intrusiveness caused continued problems.

By the time I started work as a river guide for John in 1987, there were still simmering exchanges. Many years have passed but the memories continue.

See you next month.

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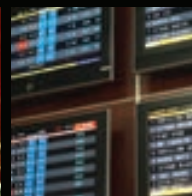
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