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Front Cover: Former long term resident Rosco Sheehan visited recently and caught this ripping Red Emperor aboard Dragon Lady Charters



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Lynton Heffer (Heff)
Owner / Editor

Fishing Port Douglas Charters

By Adam Boone

.Gday Readers, before we get into the fishing... A big congratulations to our local sporting teams for their stellar seasons. The Mossman Sharks walked away with both reserves and league premierships, The Douglas Dragons won the Title in the Soccer and The Port Douglas Crocs walked away with their 4th Senior premiership in a row in the AFL Cairns competition.

Fishing wise it seems to be a common theme all year, and that is that the wind has controlled the scene all month. There was small pockets of good weather enabling us to get out offshore for 1 – 2 days here and there at a time but the majority of our time has been spent up the local creeks and estuaries. Thankfully for us and the clients the catches in and around the estuary systems have been relatively bountiful with a lot more Fingermark showing up on the end of the line along with the ever present Mangrove Jack. Queenfish and Small GT's have been great fun on the light gear up on the flats and some thumping bream up to 38cm have kept punters busy when everything else has been a bit quiet. With school holidays coinciding a lot of these trips were done with families and it was satisfying to see a lot of the kids catch their first ever fish.

When we have had the chance to head offshore, a popular choice for clients has been our 6 hour wreck and reef charter. Having conducted 5-6 of these over the course of the month they all managed to produce some serious fish. Both pelagic and demersal species were on the bite using a variety of methods such as jigging, live baiting and soft plastics which seemed to be most effective. Our lure of choice was the 6.5in Iridescent McPaddle Tail by Abrolhos Tackle out of Western Australia. It accounted for multiple species but found the big Cobia went especially nuts for them as well as some good Large Mouth Nannygai up to 7-8kg. Check out www.abrolhostackle.com.au for their whole range including Plastics, Metal Jigs, Rods, Reels, Stickbaits, Poppers and more, you definitely won't be disappointed!

Moving into October we're looking at the weather patterns changing for the better and fingers crossed we'll be hitting the inshore and outer reefs a bit more, we still have a number of dates available for charters right up until Christmas, so give us a call to book on 0434 644 707 or hit our website up and book online at www.fishingportdouglascharters.com
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Exceed Sportfishing

By Jake Wyatt

Wind, wind and more wind. What a crazy year it has been for weather. Personally I have never experienced a year where we have such bad weather for fishing out on the reef.

The couple of days we did happen to make it to the reef were fantastic. With the weather forecast predicted to be below 5 knots over the weekend we knew there were going to be a lot of guys and gals heading to the reef. We decided to ditch the reef fishing and head straight to Linden Bank and troll some lures around. The weather was glam, a few birds flying around and not a boat around for miles. We started trolling not far from the edge and bang, managed a nice spanish mackerel straight up. As we moved further out the birds started to form a nice patch and as we moved towards them, the yellowfin tuna started to mark up nicely on the Simrad. Before I can say, hey guys, check these marks out, one the rods went off. Soon after we had a solid 'Fin' around the 10kg mark and off we went again.

Things went a little quiet for about a hour before we ventured into the edge a bit shallower and then off went the rod again. This time it was smoking off, and an insane fight ensued before we hosted a nice Wahoo around the 25kg mark. What a magnificent fish I must say.

With more than enough fish onboard we decided to troll back to the opening and maybe have a pop for Gt's. On our way across the opening the rod keeled over and we soon had another nice Wahoo boat side of similar size. We did not plan on getting

another so we tried to swim it next to the boat although it sadly passed away. Not to worry, we found a trailer boat not far from us who were having a slow morning so we kindly donated the fresh Wahoo to them. We finished catching a few more 'Mackies' on the way home and all in all it was a great day out. Wish we had more opportunity to do this style of fishing whilst it's primed.

We did manage one or two reef trips in the last month and as for the bottom fishing, when we have been able to pull the fish away from the sharks, it has also been great. We managed to track down some decent coral trout, some awesome cobia on the light plastics gear and a few cracking 'Nanny's'. Unfortunately these days were limited due to the wind factor.

Now with the wind blowing on most days we have been focused on getting our clients onto some great river fish. With the warmer weather the fishing has been fantastic. As I am writing the article now, we just came back from a morning river trip with a total of 5 good mangrove jacks, a couple of big cod, and some juvenile jew fish.

Some mornings we have even landed 7 'Jacks' and all were let go to fight another day. Just because the wind is up does not mean you can't go fishing or that there is no good fish to be caught. The Port Douglas Inlet can produce some great fish and it's the perfect place for kids to try fishing out or get use to a boat.

Hopefully this wind drops soon so we can all get back out there and enjoy the thriving reef and beyond once again. ■



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

Well, I will admit when I'm wrong when I posted in the last edition that I thought the weather pattern would improve in recent times. Sure we've had some okay days, a handful of decent days, but generally it has been another trying period. I'm categorically of the opinion now that it will go down as one of the windiest years I can remember on record. It all started last Christmas then it has seemed to roll on from that point. The most disappointing thing is that it effected the school holiday period for the most of it. There was one week there when the enquiries were close to non-existent because it decided to blow its backside off. It was perfect timing in the fact that it allowed us to go on the slip to do some prop repairs, not that this was ideal. This year we quickly whipped the boat down to Cairns and it went like clock work. Down and back up in 3 days was just brilliant. The last time we did a similar exercise locally it went on for over a week costing us in excess of 10K. This exercise only cost us 2.4K which was a relief and was mainly due to an old acquaintance from my prawn trawling days some 30 years ago. This guy came in quick smart late afternoon, removed the prop and had it back on the boat the following morning by 11am. Wonderful service and we are for ever grateful.

Anyway, enough of the doom and gloom and onto the fishing. Well to be honest it has remained pretty bloody handy. Going through our log book we had some absolute bumper days with in excess of 40-50 fish coming back to the docks. The coral trout re-emerged nicely and were of good quality for the most which surprised me a tad. We mainly targeted them in areas where I knew they would be gradually congregating for a potential spawn later this month. The nannygai were a bit more patchy but the conditions didn't allow us to target them in the deeper waters as often and we would have hoped. The red emperor and spangled emperor were solid on most days with some nice reds coming back on certain days. Generally speaking it's not a bad time of year when their presence is felt a bit more. The trevally family gave some exciting moments along with a steady run of sweetlip, stripies and moses perch. Again if I had to give 3 votes for the fish of the month it would have to go to the cobia or also known as the black kingfish. We rarely went by without seeing several of them come onboard with our best day snaring 6 of these great sporting fish which fight to the death's end, even on the deck. All of them have been caught off the bottom as well which was interesting. Their numbers have been exceptional all year and I can't give a definitive reason as to why. Some years you'll see a particular species exceed for no apparent reason. On the float rig the spanish mackerel were down on numbers in recent times but the one's we boated were of real quality.

We expect the tourists to be steady in town for awhile to come and I just hope we get a decent run of weather which I've been saying for the majority of the year, much like a broken record. We do have reef closures coming up for 5 days at the end of the month from the 25th-29th October so be aware.

With these days set aside I have promised the grand kids to take them camping out west for a few days which I'm really looking forward to. Destination yet to be announced but it will be a lovely fresh water stream or river where there is no fear of crocs and the chance to sit under a mellelucca gum tree and drink a Lazy Bear or two.

Coming up in early November we are looking at entering a team in the local Port Marlin Challenge as anglers on a mate's boat which will also be a nice change - keep you posted how we go. ■



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A Little Ray of Sunshine

By 'Sharky' Shane Down

Well finally the 'Weather God' was in my favour early last month. I couldn't remember the last time I had the opportunity to put the boat in the water as it probably has been the windiest year in my recollection. The forecast was predicting 10 knots and it was my weekend so in the days leading up it was a bit of preparation. Replace some electrical connections, new bilge pump and buying a new set of flares were a few jobs required. I also had a mackerel rod re-spoiled with new line. On the day in question I topped up the fuel, grabbed some ice and launched the boat just before the sun was due to rise and I was super excited. Admittedly I was a bit nervous at the ramp as the 'old girl' hadn't been for a run in a very long time. She didn't let me down and the 130hp 2 stroke engine fired up in a bellow of smoke and was purring like a kitten. There were no obvious concerns and it was time to let rip.

I had plans to catch some live bait to take out with me but I was a bit early and the tide was higher than I expected in the harbour, so the cast net went back into the Cruiser. At 6am I was under way with a 10 knot SW up my backside. It wasn't the smoothed ride so I took it easy until 8 nautical miles out, then sea smoothed out and I was cruising at 20 knots and arrived at Satellite Reef at 6.40am. I was hoping that the current was going south and I also wanted to see if there was any fusiliers working the shallows. So I put out a couple of lures on and had a bit of a troll for half an hour, unfortunately with no hits. However I was right and the current

was heading south at about 1 knot. I wound up the lures and dropped anchor on the northern edge. I chose a bommie I marked earlier in the year and I found myself perfectly positioned. The first that went out were my 2 mackerel rods with ganged 7.0 hooks and a full pilchard on each as my plan was to get a couple of spanish. Then the handline was dispatched for a bottom fish.

It was slow going before I was able to secure a fish which was converted into hard bait. This did the trick almost immediately and this fish had a bit of grunt about it. To my surprise I pulled over a 2.5kg fingermark which went straight in the esky. These fish are generally associated closer to the coast so this was a big bonus as I reckon they are one of the nicest fish on the palette.

My luck continued and 5 minutes later it was action stations again. This fish had some decent pulling power and it was no surprise when a 5kg cobia presented itself at the boat. They truly possess some horse power no matter the size. It too went into the esky after a few fisty cuffs having went bananas once on the deck avoiding the high priest.

All rebaited it was the TLD 20, which had been recently serviced and re-spoiled, received a tickle before bending over and started singing a merry tune. There was a bit of tap dancing around the boat following the fish before it tired enough to bring alongside. It was a nice little spanish mackerel around 4-5kg which would eventually turn into a couple of wonderful tasty fillets. My morning was coming along nicely.



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My next encounter was back on the handline and it felt solid enough. With a bit of elbow grease I coaxed to the boat a red emperor which had me excited until I put it across the tape. It was just shy of 55cm, the legal size, so it was reluctantly put back in the water. The reason for this size limit is because of their inability to reproduce until they get to around this size.

Anyway moving on it wasn't long before the mackerel float rod was ignited again. It had a didn't feel about it and the fish stayed deep surging vertically with some sting. I suspected a decent trevally initially but after several minutes of persuasion I dragged up a ripping reef mangrove jack of around 5kg. Boy oh boy, I was starting to dish up a seafood delight fit for a king and I was getting happier with every fish.

My next battle was again on the handline and a very worthy adversary. The only disappointment was it turned out to be a 51cm red emperor which was not going to cut the mustard - bugger.

The action didn't wane and before I knew it I was helicoptering on the handline with another white knuckle encounter. This fish certainly packed some punch and eventually a big whitefin or big eye trevally gave up the ghost. It was a decent size of about 10kg and luckily for it being a trevally it was released. At this point in time it was 9am and there was only a slight breeze across the water - this is why where live in FNQ.

The next series of action turned back to the mackerel rod with some strikes bouncing the rod around without connecting. Finally one stayed connected and a relatively easy fight played out with a decent doggie mackerel coming to the boat. They are a

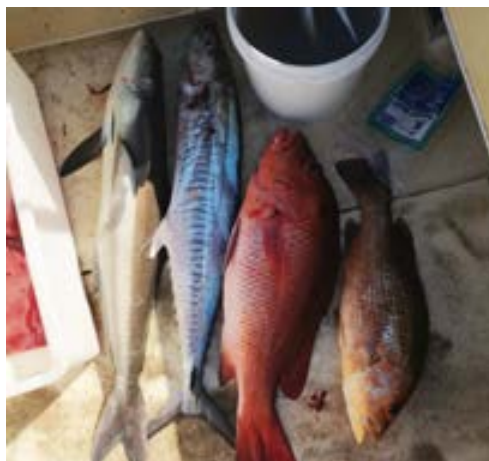
worthy fish to eat for sure so it was dispatched.

My next enquiry was back on the handline and it was full of aggression. Fast runs with telling powerful runs had me earning my keep. It took a little while to curb but unfortunately was a big bludger trevally which are no good to keep to eat but make an excellent hard bait, so it was converted.

It was starting to take turns from above and below as the mackerel rod was next to be lit up. It felt decent enough and gave a good account of itself. It felt like a good mackerel darting all over the place at high speed on the surface. It turned out to be a good fish but of the wrong variety being a sharky mackerel, not overly rated. However I did dispatch it because they make for good slab on the beach fishing front.

By 10am proceedings slowed down so I started to pack up as I was still keen to hit a few wonky holes on the way home. In the process of tidying up the mackerel rod decided to interrupt my movements. With the rod doubled over I gave it a good old heave and set the hooks. It was another mackerel the way it tore up the ocean surface. After a robust effort I coaxed a classic 6kg spanish mackerel to the boat which was the perfect way to end this stint. Looking back this new mark provided a lot of variety and some very respectable fish on ice.

All packed up I did run over a couple of wonky holes to see what might be at home but the sounder didn't show anything encouraging to warrant a drop of the anchor. I scooted home in ideal conditions with a dilemma of what I would cook up first that night for dinner. This decision was the first time in a very long time. ■



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Lakefield National Park - 88 Barra

By Jake Collete - Saltaire Charters

I often get asked what do I do outside of working with my old man on the Saltaire game boat. Well I'll let you in on a little secret - I go fishing elsewhere. Here's my latest experience outside of reef and game fishing in the early parts of September. With 80-90 days straight coming up on the game boat I was looking forward to this trip.

With two 4WD's fully loaded with camping, fishing gear and a boat in tow, my friends Milly, Andrew, Tim, Laura and myself made the 5hr trip from Cairns to the Lakefield National Park for a 5 day expedition. There's something about going camping which is primitive and back to grass roots, it's hard to explain but I just love it. It's as close as you can get to nature without encroaching.

Leaving the last of the bitumen not far from the Lakeland turn off the dirt road was surprisingly not too bad and the corrugations were okay on the trailer and my 3.8m Stessco boat. Even after the Laura turn off into the National Park itself was good going. The terrain is awesome and some of the country covered in termite mounds resembled a mass cemetery filled with head stones, it's pretty cool to see. I'm not going to say exactly where we camped but it was booked through the 'Parks' itself and I had secured 4 campsites with good access to the river and a short drive to the


myriad of lagoons in the area. For around \$15 per night per site it's awesome value.

Once at our final destination the camp was set up with tents, swags, engel and multiple eskies. Only at one point did we have to make the 40 minute trek back to Laura mid trip to top up with ice. With camp all set up we were in our element. Each night would see us doing a traditional campfire cook ups in the hot pot with wholesome roasts and barra done several ways including an barra amazing stir fry I certainly remember.

Onto the important stuff and that was fishing. I had been to Lakefield quite a few times prior but it was always in the cooler months when the water temperature was lower and the fish harder to entice. With water temps much higher this time I was eager to see how we would fare this trip.

Well, I must say over the days we fished till our arms dropped off and were rewarded handsomely. We fished the main river by boat and by foot and also drove to multiple lagoons and found the barra to be very active. I believe our tally was 88 by the time we finished up.

We lure fished the entire time utilising various products including shallow diving hard body lures around 5", soft plastic 3" Z Manns and a variety of surface lure including 'walking the dog' models.

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All had their various moments and contributed to the tally. I myself used a Penn Clash overhead reel on an Arrows rod suited for 12lb-25lb line with 30lb braid and 30lb leader. It handled all the fish with consummate ease including the bigger fish. I guess the average sized fish was just over 60cm with the biggest stretching 83cm.

Hot spots along the river included big snags on the upside of the water flow pushing onto the timber. Pretty much how you fish a reef system with the current pushing onto it. Also rock walls were very productive especially on the surface lures. In the lagoons it was all about peppering away at the fallen timber.

Interestingly this year all the barra, bar a few were all saltwater models with the characteristic yellow paddle tail. They are also much better to eat. With a very handy wet season at the start of the year it has allowed the barra to travel extensively inland to the various river branches and lagoons. Even the barra that were caught in the now, land locked lagoons were predominantly saltwater barra.

Another notable difference to my previous trip in the colder months was that the barra this time were extremely aggressive especially with their bite and also their carry on once hooked up. Every fish launched into orbit once hooked time and time again and also pulled under water with driving force. The winter barra in comparison can be a bit lethargic.

We caught barra throughout the day but there was times when they were more active. Not surprisingly early morning at the crack of dawn was very productive but probably more so late afternoon between that 5-6pm window as the sun was settling. It is very much like any inland fishing where it is not tide effected.

There's a lot more to enjoy about camping at Lakefield besides the fishing and that's the multitude of wildlife to see. Every type of bird life you can imagine, heaps of snake varieties including massive pythons and then there's the croc life. In a relatively unpopulated area they rule the roost. You always have to have your wits about you and we saw plenty of big one's in excess of 4 metres. They are truly a beast to behold and a timely reminder as to who is king of this domain. At night time we took to the river with a spotlight and it's hairy as to how many sets of orange type coloured eyes are dotted everywhere. The bigger the gap between the eyes the bigger the croc and there were heaps.

In summing up this was the best trip I've had to Lakefield. I've travelled to many exotic destinations through work but this place hold a very special place to me. It one of the few places you may describe as one of the Last of the Wild Frontiers to visit. The beauty is it is well catered for via the National Parks and also what you would call a short drive in Far Nth Qld terms.

Lakefield National Park Facts

Lakefield is a national park in the Shire of Cook, Queensland, Australia, and 340 km north-west of Cairns by road. Lakefield is the second largest park in Queensland and a popular place for fishing and camping.

The park stretches from Princess Charlotte Bay in the north to the town of Laura. It covers 537,000 ha of land, and includes sections of the Normanby River, Morehead River and North Kennedy Rivers, as well as lakes, billabongs and wetlands. There are more than 100 permanent riverine lagoons in the park. ■



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Latest Developments

By Heff - Fishing Port Douglas

In a crossover period on the calendar as the day and water temperatures rise we are seeing some movement on various fishing fronts:

Mangrove Jack

Without doubt our river charter boats are seeing probably the most active run on these terrors of the calm water in a very, very long time. The local Dickson Inlet in particular has been the hot spot in the region. Multiple numbers of high quality fish have been encountered with up to 6-7 caught in a short period ranging from 40cm up to 47cm. Obviously the spike in water temperature has agreed with them. There is an observation that they are schooling up and hunting packs. One theory is at this particular size they could be in preparation at some point to make the transition from the estuaries out the reef in numbers where they will grow even bigger and live out the remainder of their long lives. They have been known to survive up to 30yrs.



Reef Fin Fish Spawn

With the first of our Reef Closure due from the 25th-29th October there are indications there will be a spawn from some sections of the reef in the region according to Dragon Lady Charters. They are seeing quite a few fish already roed up and the coral trout are an indicator congregating at certain sections of the reef for the process. However they are adamant some fish spawned early in September already. There is also another indicator of different proportions and that is the more common sightings of the Whale Shark. 'Sharky' Shane down was kind enough to forward



this particular photo only take a few weeks ago. Make sure you tap into his Instagram account at Auzzie Wild where he updates regular amazing photos.

There is a theory that agreed by a few that they also visit the reef at this time of year for the reef fin fish spawning. Being a filter feeder they will come right up into the shallows to feed on the love concoctions. They have been seen as far inshore as Satellite Reef inside the main reef itself which makes some sense why they maybe there.

Big Black Marlin

With very limited opportunities due to conditions there has been one local charter that can categorically say the big black marlin are now arriving at the shelf. Saltaire Charters have encountered several around the 200-250lb mark and just a week ago had a good sized one come to the boat around 700lb. From this point on the even bigger models will be arriving in numbers. The yellowfin tuna schools are already present and they are a favourite for the bigger predators which ill encourage them even more.

Just a reminder the Port Douglas Marlin Challenge is on from the 8th-12th November next month and is attracting good interest, especially considering the Lizard Island tournament, always run in October did not entice enough numbers to proceed this year. The first time ever since the tournament started some 30yrs ago.

For more information and a look at the newly updated website go to:
www.portdouglasmarlinchallenge.com



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Reel Cooking

with Mick Hart



Mackerel with Hollandaise 2.0

Ingredients

3 egg yolks

100ml white or red wine vinegar

1 lemon

250g diced salted butter

1/2 kg Spanish mackerel



Method

Place vinegar and lemon juice in a small pan and reduce by half.

Prepare a double boiler by half filling a pot of water and placing a stainless bowl over the top. With the heat on low add the reduction and egg yolks whisking continuously until the mixture begins to thicken, don't scramble.

Keep whisking while slowly adding the diced butter until it is all combined, remove from heat and add your favourite herbs, dill, chives, farragon or chilli. Serve over grilled Mackerel with fries and salad.

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Blue Ribbon Fishing at the Beach

By 'Sharky' Shane Down

Every now and then you complete a fishing session which not only leaves you with a big smile on your face but has you walking away thinking what the hell just happened. Of all places, considering the inclement wind conditions we have experienced this year this particular trip occurred down at our iconic Four Mile Beach. With the winds slightly abating I raced home from work, packed the fishing trolley, grabbed the dog and thought I'd get maybe an hour or so of fishing in before dark. As time was of the essence I took down some slabs of sharky mackerel I had caught not so long before. I had absolutely no expectations and was just happy to be down on the sand and water breathing in the salt air and letting the pup go for a run. It's always social down there seeing familiar faces and there's always a few pooches for the dog to have a play with. I arrived at 5.25pm and set everything up, I didn't even go for a proper scout for some live bait as my window was going to be short. Slicing up some mackerel I cast out a couple of rods and sat back and relaxed. There was a bit of chop on the water, it wasn't overly clean but at least the tide was rising over the flats which is best. Looking to the south the Mowbray area was now covered with water and to the north the couple of channels running parallel to the beach were filling nicely. I'm not sure exactly where the fish hang out further offshore on the lowest part of the tide but they soon follow the water in seeing what prey they can find in the shallows. On Four Mile Beach the currents or tide mostly see the water first travel up from the south covering the dry sections there first before filling up the exposed patches further north. Anyway I was probably sitting for the first 20 minutes of so before a rod decided to spring to life. You beauty, I jumped up and because the rod was bending nicely I set the hooks. Fairly quickly into the fight I picked it as a small shark which soon proved to be correct. I curtailed him in reasonable time and de-hooked it before releasing it. It was just good to be down on the beach wetting a line having not done so for so, so long. For the next short period the mackerel seemed to be getting hammered by small pickers, mostly likely from the prickly stripey

grunter which can often be annoying when they are out and about in force. Suspecting one of my rods to be almost stripped of bait I began to wind it in. As soon as it was moved from off the bottom something latched onto it without hesitation. I knew immediately it wasn't a shark and a surface break on the water suggested a good fish. With a bit of encouragement and a bit of an argument from the fish I led it into the shallows to reveal itself as a decent blue salmon of 55cm. You little ripper was my reaction and it was dispatched humanely.

Out went the freshly baited rod in the same direction and it received attention very quickly. Whack, went the line and it was an instantaneous hook up. Far out, I ensued another good little battle before a similar sized fish was forced up onto the sand. It was also dealt with as quickly as possible. Highly suspecting there maybe a school of these fish moving through I was back in the water within a flash.

You couldn't have written a better script because it was attended with vigour within moments. Fighting the fish it seemed similar in size and by this stage I felt confident it was another blue salmon. My hunch was confirmed shortly afterwards. Completely chuffed I followed suit and presented another strip of mackerel.



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No way, the bait was dealt with in the same fashion and just as soon as it settled on the bottom it was hammered. Laughing out loudly at this point I was tussling with another fish and was as happy as a fat hairy spider. Soon enough I had another ripping blue salmon on the beach and put on ice.

It was getting dark but I thought could I again? Bugger it, so out went the line. Within moments it was gladly devoured. This fish turned out to be smaller but still another blue salmon which I was more than content to release. With this good deed accomplished I decided to call it quits. I had plenty of fillet for the tastiest Thai Fish cakes in the Far North.

This 20-25 minutes was one of the hottest bites I've ever experienced on Four Mile Beach and it goes to show if you don't turn up you'll never, never know.



Bigger Fish to Fry

By 'Sharky'

Recently at work skippering the Sonic Dive Boat we came across a very interesting scenario which I felt was well worth sharing. We were travelling back to Port Douglas at the end of the day and was rounding the north western corner of Tongue Reef. Closer to the reef itself I noticed some big splashes going on and thought I'd take the boat a bit closer for a look. My first train of thought was they were a school of big Giant Trevally rounding up a bait ball and crashing through it. As I took the boat closer I changed my mind to them being a pod of black dolphins as they appeared much bigger but was still unsure.

But still as the boat inched even closer I picked them as False Killer Whales so I pulled the boat back to a crawl. Several of the whales got quite inquisitive and came right up to the boat for a look which was really cool for everyone on the boat. I then started to rove my eye across the water and there was a mass of them spread over a 2 square mile area which was incredible to witness. This meant they were hunting as a big pack rounding up schools of fish. I decided to stay put and see what would unfold - it's not every day you get to see whales hunting in the wild. Within 10 minutes I could see a big adult with a sizeable trevally in its mouth and it came right up to Sonic only 20m away. Incredibly it was accompanied by a young one sidled right up along its



side. Then not long after another big female came right up to the side of the boat barely a metre away and rolled on its side eyeballing everyone - now who is watching who, I thought!

This phenomena was a great experience for everyone that day and a sensational way of ending the whale season which was drawing to a close.

The false killer whale (Pseudorca crassidens) is an oceanic dolphin that inhabits oceans worldwide but mainly frequents tropical regions. It was first described in 1846 as a species of porpoise based on a skull, which was revised when the first carcasses were observed in 1861. The name "false killer whale" comes from the similar skull characteristics to the killer whale (Orcinus orca).



Fish of the Month
25kg Wahoo



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Deep Structure Barra Fishing

By Dylan Case -- Nautical Marine Sales

Deep Structure Barramundi Fishing

We've all been in the frustrating position of losing multiple lures to structure we are trying to fish. Aside from the general annoyance of repeatedly retying leaders, it can quickly become an expensive prospect. Another reason to avoid snagging is that fish hanging tight to the snag you're fishing may become disturbed from the commotion of trying to remove a stuck lure. It's worth mentioning here that losing lures is something that is not always avoidable, as there are many situations where you must get your lures right into nasty snaggy territory to induce a bite from fish holding tight in said structure. It can sometimes be frustrating walking that fine line when targeting snag dwelling fish, but if that's where the fish are, you must present your lures as such. In addition to this, there are certainly things you can do to reduce lure loss, while still presenting your lures in the desired area.

Exactly how you approach snag fishing varies across species and particular scenarios, but good lure control is a simple way you can avoid donating gear to timber. It can pay to fish lures, especially soft plastics "gently" when passing through structure. This allows you to feel the structure as you bump through it, and hopefully avoid getting hung up. Gently bumping lures through structure also increases your chance to dislodge any lure that does become stuck, as hooks tend not to become buried too deeply.

As I've mentioned previously, no one technique fits all species, so I will use structure holding barramundi as an example here. The first step in a typical approach is to give yourself a good mental visualisation of the structure you are fishing, which often requires multiple passes with side scan to effectively assess. Once visualised, position the boat in a suitable spot, where casts will intercept the holding fish while avoiding the bulk of the structure. Obviously, it's also necessary to keep the current in mind, as it will affect the path of your lure. I like to fish these snag dwellers by placing my first cast just away from where I think the outside of the structure is, slowly getting closer cast by cast until I either draw a bite or bump the snag. If fish are active, they may come well away from the snag to take your lure, though putting the lure exactly where the fish are holding is still the highest percentage play when it comes to drawing a bite.

In very snaggy country such as thick, stand-up timber, weedless rigs can be a useful option, but are far from perfect at avoiding snags. There are also other things to keep in my when using these rigs. Firstly, fish can be more difficult to hook than they would be with conventional rigs. This can depend on the hook size and exposure, and firmness and shape of the soft plastic. Another major factor to consider with weedless hooks is that the shape tends to make them weaker and easier to bend than conventional jig heads, which can obviously result in lost fish. Keep this in mind when going toe to toe with big fish in tight country! Despite this, the weedless nature can allow valuable casts at very difficult to target fish, and potentially be the difference between catching a fish or not.

Snag fishing for barramundi (along with other species) is definitely a game of trade-offs. While there are ways to minimise gear loss, being afraid to lose lures will limit your success. Effectively putting lures in front of fish will result in more bites, structure dwelling or not. It pays to fish snags patiently and with a plan in mind to get the most out of your valuable casts. You will encounter plenty of situations with trophy fish residing deep in structure, where a well-placed lure can easily draw that one bite you need!

Pictured Below- Darryl with a 95cm fish extracted from deep within a set of lay down timbers. A weedless rigged prawn imitation did the job on this and 8 other fish from the same snag pile.



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Male Crocs Show their Weight with Bruce Belcher



Towards the end of August, I prepared myself for the probability of crocodiles fighting, as I do every year in the hope of getting video footage. It's juicy interest for people and I usually prepare the local TV stations in order to get it onto the news. The exposure for tourism on TV is priceless advertising. While I'd like to think that I get our business promoted, it's good for all of us on the river. It's a bit of a gamble because the opportunity doesn't always come about. So, in the last couple of days of August that chance happened. The resident, dominant male Scarface, was challenged by a four metre male called Lumpy and he's from upstream of our place. The action happened at the upstream entrance to Pig Island and I was just starting my 11.00 am tour. By the time I arrived, there were two other boats there, watching. The regulations are that two boats can be 10 metres away while the third boat must be 100 metres away. With an opportunity like that the regulations were put aside. Besides, when crocs are in that mood, they don't seem to bother about being observed.

Over the next hour we covered about 100 metres, such was the fascination of my eight guests. I gave them the choice of watching for a few minutes, then interpreting the rest of the tour, relating to mangroves, history, natural history and other aspects. The decision by the group was unanimous, let's watch the interaction! All of us took some good photos and video footage. Interestingly, there wasn't much contact but considerable posturing, bubble blowing and general bluff. Occasionally they would raise their heads and slam each other and bite. At the end and as Lumpy gave up, we noticed that they both had bloody nostrils. That was about it. I sent the video and photos to the media and I believe it was aired.

We've observed the inevitable mating which begins in September. Nature will take its course and all going well, we'll see Lizzie's hatchlings (about 20) by February. While we don't see other nests or creches, Lizzie has been reliable over the years.



Last summer was a good wet season, with flooding happening in November through to February, which is earlier than usual. The early flooding caused widespread damage to crocs' nests. Apart from seeing two small hatchlings, in different places and which could have happened early, we can deduce that it was almost 100% wipe-out.

Will it affect the croc population? It's unlikely, as there would have been other nest sites in other locations along the coastline up in the estuaries. Vacancies here should allow other hatchlings, over the years, to fill the void. See you next month.

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Dragon Lady on this particular day caught half a dozen Red Emperor of similar size



Fishing Port Douglas Charters snared this ripping Golden Trevally along the coastline



Exceed Sportfishing nailed numerous big Mangrove Jack during September in the calmer waters



Saltaire Charters were the first charter to tap into the bigger Marlin this season - a 250lb frisky stallion

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