

# LINEBURNER

VOLUME 251 PRICELESS

*FISHING TROPICAL FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND*

OCT 21

Features  
Ciguatera Case  
Daintree Fishing  
Reef Experiences  
Game Season Update



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Local Expert



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Dragon Lady Charters



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Saltaire & Allure Charters



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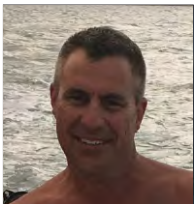
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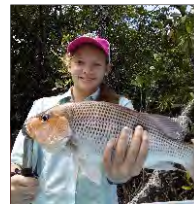
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Contact us if you'd like to  
Contribute - Most Welcome

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**Front Cover:**  
Darren Calvett with a 25kg Giant Trevally caught on the Daintree River fishing with his wife Sheree and guide Jamie Beitzel



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# State of Play in FNQ

By Heff

Another month has gone by in FNQ with the Covid border closures producing another dent in the bonnet for tourism. Business trade is well and truly down especially for what is a normal peak period for us. It has become a race to survive till Christmas where we have been promised we'll be open to more tourists. We all take this promise with extreme trepidation knowing our Premier is Covid trigger happy. Chatting with various sectors of the community, businesses will be run on the tightest of ships till then. The issue for many however is, if and when we open fully there will not be enough staff to cater for the influx in a lot of areas. We saw this occur around mid year with supply not being able to meet the demand or expectations of visitors. This is not an isolated problem and is across the board. I'm happy to say on our fishing vessels at Fishing Port Douglas this is not a concern having being able to keep our long term crews afloat with sufficient work. Accommodations, restaurants and dive boats etc.. have a headache to secure quality staff beforehand though. If you are living elsewhere, sufficiently qualified and looking for a change in lifestyle, you will gain employment very quickly in a lot of areas.

Looking ahead it is expected that we'll see a solid Christmas and New Year period extending further into 2022 than normal even in our typical wet season / down time period. In saying this Tourism QLD as a whole will have missed the boat to a certain degree. In what could have been the most ever successful domestic trade over the past two years, it will get swallowed up to



some point if the Federal Government open international borders to the Pacific, New Zealand and sections of Asia without too many restrictions attached. If this was to be the case, the millions upon millions of dollar opportunity that we could have had till now will be flushed down the drain. That is the thought of many at the moment in our neck of the woods.

In saying all this and as you'll read this publication, it has been an amazing month on the water for those who been fortunate to get here. I'll rattle off some of it for you - marlin, spanish mackerel, tuna, giant trevally, red emperor, golden trevally, coral trout, fingermark, mangrove jack, cobia and so much more in the fishing department. You add to this QLD groper at the marina docks in full sight, whale sharks coming to the back of the boat on the reef and a pod of false killer whales letting rip offshore, it has been quite eventful to say the least. The weather has also been a spectacle offering the most incredible water experiences you could hope for. Forecasts remain similar for the short term.



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# The Ciguatera Culprit

By Heff



Just very recently I had a chat with a local couple and they posed the question 'how much do I know about Ciguatera'? - (Fish Poisoning). I had in all my years I'd only come across one or two cases locally. When they described the symptoms having eaten a species of coral trout it was very evident they had contracted the poison. Hours after eating the fish it was severe vomiting, diarrhea, head spins and sweating for a couple of days. Then the tell tale symptom of chronic itching of the skin, also very sensitive to sunlight and cold (even opening the fridge door), kicked in and has lasted two weeks.

The culprit fish we have established was a Passionfruit Trout or also known as a Leopard Trout pictured here and was caught at Spur Reef on the edge of the outer reef southeast of Port Douglas. All the issues started having both eaten this particular fish two days after capture. The symptoms kicked in that night.

I spoke at length with a couple of seasoned skippers with a lot of experience and these were their thoughts. They all agreed it wasn't a huge fish normally associated with ciguatera and they seem to think they basically got unlucky. Just a fish out of the blue which had a build up of the toxin.

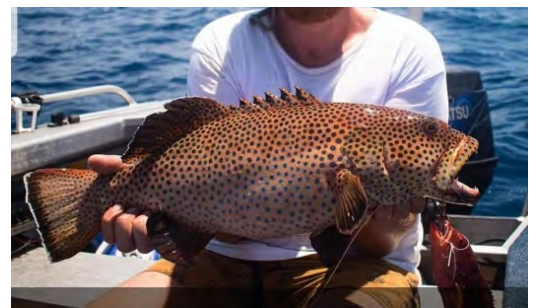
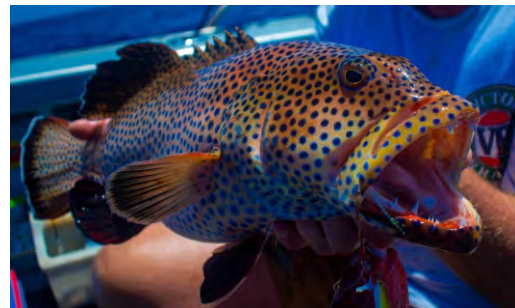
Ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP), also known simply as ciguatera, is a foodborne illness caused by eating reef fish whose flesh is contaminated with certain toxins. Such individual fish are said to be ciguatoxic. Symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, numbness, itchiness, sensitivity to hot and cold, dizziness, and weakness. The onset of symptoms varies with the amount of toxin eaten from half an

hour to up to two days. The diarrhea may last for up to four days. Some symptoms typically remain for a few weeks to months. Heart difficulties such as slow heart rate and low blood pressure may also occur.

The specific toxins involved are ciguatoxin and maitotoxin. They are originally made by a small marine organism, *Gambierdiscus toxicus*, that grows on and around coral reefs in tropical and subtropical waters. These are eaten by herbivorous fish which in turn are eaten by larger carnivorous fish. The toxins become more concentrated as they move up the food chain. The fish most often implicated in our area include red bass, big coral trout, big mackerel, paddle tail and barracuda. Diagnosis is based on a person's symptoms together with having recently eaten fish. If a number of those who eat the same fish develop symptoms the diagnosis becomes more likely.


Preventive efforts include not eating the above mentioned reef fish and not eating fish liver, roe, or fish heads. Ciguatoxin has no taste or smell, and cannot be destroyed by conventional cooking. There is no specific treatment for ciguatera fish poisoning once it occurs. The patient must gradually wear out the symptoms. However the condition can be easily triggered down the track with a simple feed of seafood whether it be fish or shellfish. Those that have initially acquired it tend to be very moderate with their intake of any seafood moving forward.

Descriptions of the condition date back to at least 1511 from other tropical parts of the world. ■




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## The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

The biggest note of difference in the past month or so was the increase in the day time temperature, even the water temperature jumped up a degree or two. This water change even had us checking our engines as the water intake even pushed up our temperature gauge marginally in the wheelhouse.

Business overall was moderate for a normal typical October and we had 5 days of reef closures at the start of the month as well. It is very evident the general traffic around town and also very much on the marina is way down for this time of year. We are just glad to be ticking over the books, particularly when you start to rove your eye over other marine operators who are very quiet and must be doing things extremely tough.

Leading into the reef closures the fishing had a bit of a down turn but following the spawn it sprang back to life in a very positive manner. We found that the quality or size of fish were profoundly bigger and numbers were good. For example we were catching regularly 4-5kg coral trout, 7-9kg large mouth nannygai, 6-7kg reef mangrove jack, 12kg spanish mackerel, 5kg spangled emperor, 7kg red emperor, 10kg cobia and 8kg golden trevally just as a sample.

Even though there were variable winds a lot of the time and a bit of northerly in it, the fishing for the most remained high quality. It did drop off a tad towards the end of October and with current conditions this will probably be the trend as the days get even warmer. Fishing as deep as possible will be our agenda when we can.

For something different this month we did an overnight trip with a corporate 11 person group in conjunction with the Argo mothership from Cairns. We did the snorkelling and fishing component during the day and the boys stayed on the impressive 27m craft for their accommodation. Here we all were treated to excellent dining and boating facilities for the



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evening. We caught them enough fresh fish for the dinner meal which was accompanied by a quality meat serving with all the trimmings. The main dining and saloon area was finely appointed and ideally perfect for larger groups. For us crew it was a nice change to do something different and we welcome such trips in the future.

One of the big highlights for this group was a visit whilst anchored on our boat by a huge whale shark. They are very placid and it came right up to the transom of the vessel and swam around for quite awhile. Literally you could reach out and touch it. A couple of the group even jumped in the water and got up real close. These amazing creatures only turn up at this time of year maybe for a month and a bit. It is believed they scour the reef filter feeding on the eggs and sperm from the fish spawning period amongst other micro organisms. They are a rare encounter but very inquisitive and very safe to snorkel around if you are lucky enough to get the chance. On another occasion a bit further up the coast we witnessed a massive whale pod letting rip into a school of bait. It was amazing to witness and resembled a massive pot of boiling water. There were literally dozens of them and they were the false killer whale variety. It was a spectacular sight on such a calm day.

Looking ahead the staff Christmas party style trips are kicking along with whatever tourists or locals we can cater. ■

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# Breathing in the Saltaire

**By Damian Collete**



Despite having dropped a lot of bookings due to border closures prior to the month, we managed to claw back some business and it was a good result upon reflection. Sure it could have been awesome but at least we saw some return.

With sensational weather on offer, those that were visiting obviously were thinking outer reef and boating. We conducted a variety of charters from heavy tackle, light tackle, reef fishing and combined trips including snorkelling. All went well with a lot of very happy people at the end of each trip. At the start of the month it looked like the heavy tackle marlin season was going to kick into gear early with a couple of captures of smaller fish around 200lb. Unfortunately the winds shifted coming from the north and it literally shut down this style of fishing. Even though the winds were light, marlin simply don't like that wind direction. At times we were marking up to 4-5 marlin all in the same area but they weren't interested even when we had good tides. Currently the winds look like they'll swing back to the south east and I'm predicting this will kick them well and truly into gear. November is in my opinion the best month to target big blacks and as mentioned they are already well and truly on our local grounds. We'll see the tally rise in the coming weeks.

On the same grounds however we were able to turn over a lot of reels using the light tackle gear. There were a lot of schools of tuna around including the yellowfin and

mack tuna variety. We topped this up with some quality spanish mackerel as well. I'd expect we'll start to see a few more wahoo and dolphin fish added to the fray in the coming weeks. The big indicator that the wahoo are not quite here yet is that they are notorious for chopping off our marlin skips baits. That hasn't happened to this point in time.

Our reef expeditions went exceptionally well with a lot of quality fish on offer. Coral trout were prolific and we tapped into some amazing red emperor and large mouth nannygai as well. We also scored some indifferent fish including the types of big gold band snapper. They are not a common catch and this was a pleasing result. You add a stunning snorkel into the equation at lunch time and with plenty of quality fish to go around, our days on the outer reef have been glorious.

I've also been doing a bit of independent work skippering an 80ft Maritimo vessel for a private owner. When you start to get to this size of game vessel it is one hell of a serious boat. Extended days on the reef visiting the Ribbon Reefs and Lizard Island have been part of my agenda whilst my son Jake and nephew Dean have been doing the Saltaire gigs to a high standard.

November bookings, once again were left with a lot of holes due to cancellations but it seems we'll recoup some of that. If the weather can maintain its current form I'm sure we'll pick up quite a few days. Christmas is already looking super busy. ■



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# On the Daintree Charters

By Jamie Beitzel - The Local Huckleberry Finn



Hi from our wonderful part of the world up on the magical Daintree system. Firstly I'd like to say that the temperature gauge certainly went up a notch during October. With a lot of calm weather around the days were pretty warm on the water, even a tad earlier than expected. After a full day of doing charters it was a relief to get home over the river on my property and enjoy the shade and cooler breeze from the mountains.

I'm not complaining because we were offered some great river conditions to play with especially when we had some run in the tide. The really neap tides were a bit challenging and the fish were notably quieter. But when things were ripe it was action stations for the majority of trips. Charter days were down this past month in comparison to previous years and a direct result of border closures. Even the river croc tours which are normally buzzing were notably quieter.

We did a handful of charters along the coast with my best day up further towards Cape Tribulation where we landed some really hefty large mouth nannygai to 8kg. I hadn't ventured to this area for some time but it was worth the effort and it was completed on one of those glassed out days with long term return locals. They've been fishing with me for as long as I can remember and it was pleasing to once again get them a good return for their loyalty.

The river fishing has been nothing short of

dynamic this past month. I had numerous days where quality fingermark were hammering away fishing on certain structure. Live sardines were the choice bait and it was good luck if any other species got a look in. The odd cod muscled their way in but it was all fingermark for the most. We are so lucky to have such a ripping fingermark system, probably the best on the east coast of Qld I'd go as far to say.

In the deeper parts of the channel we came across some big golden trevally to 6kg and grunter over 55cm, both excellent sized river fish. The highlight for the month however was mucking around down at the river mouth just as the tide was coming in. When the rod keeled over I knew immediately the circus had begun. It was straight up with the electric motor and kicking into gear the main engines. The client on the end of the rod was simply fantastic and we had a merry time chasing this fish up and down the channel. All the classic signs indicated it was a monster Gt. Slow and steady we won the battle which I guess lasted close to half an hour. Importantly the gear held up and the knots stayed in tact and the end result was a 25kg Giant Trevally. An exceptional for anywhere let alone within the river. The Daintree never ceases to amaze me and this was a classic example of how lucky we are. Here's hoping to a bit more trade ahead and would love for you to join us on the best river experience in the region. ■



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## Top 6 Ranking

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## Reel Cooking with Mick Hart Self Cooking Coral Trout



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- Mint
- Salt and Pepper



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Place cubed fish in a large mixing bowl. Set aside.  
In a small bowl, whisk together lime juice, orange juice and honey. Pour citrus mixture over fish. Stir to evenly coat the fish. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 20 minutes, gently stirring the mixture halfway through refrigeration time.  
Add the tomatoes, jalapeños, onion and garlic to the fish mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate for an additional 10 minutes or until fish is cooked to your liking.  
Drain the mixture and transfer to a serving bowl. Gently stir in the avocado and mint. Taste and adjust for seasoning with salt, pepper and additional herbs if desired.  
Serve immediately with lime wedges and tortilla chips. Enjoy!



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