



Neil Dunstan: *Ebb & Flow*

Gently Down The Stream

In north Queensland, in the period at the end of the wet season and before the dry season sets in, there is a period of weather that has quite a few calm times before the dry season trade winds which blow at 15 to 25 knots for long periods.

At this time we catch quite a few fish that are around because it is neither the wet or the dry and fish from both seasons are available.

I always know when this period is upon us as the guava tree near the back door bursts out in flower and produces masses of golden fruit. Once we have picked enough

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guava's (commonly known as pluggers, as the result of eating too many) my wife makes her famous guava jam which the neighbours line up for each year.

After that, the guavas are left for the birds, and the sight and sound of hundreds of rainbow lorikeets is truly amazing,

especially for our pet lorikeet which gets into a frenzy trying to answer all the calls.

Each year for the past three years my nephew from Melbourne comes up to our place to do some fishing, and this year he arrived about this time.

As usual, the weather was perfect when he arrived, and instantly turned to rubbish. He had a slide-on camper on the back of his 'Cruiser ute, so that he could tow his boat, and he set this up in the back yard, but except for the first few days when we got some short trips in, it rained cats and dogs for the best part of six weeks.

We were both going stir-crazy, so I suggested to him that there were a number of good spots north of here for estuary fishing, which he could try no matter how hard it blew. So he packed the gear up and took off for a couple of weeks further north. Then after he had gone, within a couple of days the weather cleared up, the rain stopped and the winds dropped back to ten to fifteens, the sun was shining - so I decided to load up the Trojan and head down to my favourite spot at Cape Palmerston, about fifteen n. miles south of Sarina Beach.

I was really pleased to get out in the Trojan, as she had been stuck in the yard for nearly four months while I could only manage day trips in my Quintrex. As well as that, I had just finished installing the

electric anchor winch, and I was keen to test it out in the field.

The trip down to the Cape was done at my usual leisurely pace of 5 to 6 knots, and I was surprised that I did not catch anything on the trailing lures which I always have out the back. However I had one

gigantic strike which bent the rod down to deck level and snapped the steel trace - goodbye to that lure!

On arrival I noticed that there were about twenty camps set up and then I realised that it was still school holidays, . . . Ah well, I was already down there, so I would just have to put up with the crowd.

Over the next five days, the weather was magnificent with five knot breezes, warm, but not hot days, and cool, but not cold nights; perfect for sleeping. I only had two crab pots to put in as I only ever take two or three crabs then pull my pots so I was expecting a feed of crabs. The first two days I got no crabs and noticed that the baits were gone and the pots had no holes where the crabs had broken out, so I guessed they had been robbed.

The next day I went up the creek where my pots were early on the making tide as I know where all the small gutters are, and got there first so I had my feed of four crabs in one go and pretty much proved that they had been attacked by share farmers previously.

I also caught a nice lot of blue salmon as I was in the right place at the right time using local knowledge, whilst the rest of the mob caught nothing.

I must admit that I was getting a bit crapped off with all the tourists tearing up and down the creek at twenty knots, sometimes only ten feet away from where I was anchored, with the tiller in one hand and a stubby in the other. They were mostly young blokes from the mines who drive in with their tricked up four wheel drives and having traversed ten kays or so of dirt road, think they are the Leyland Brothers.

They all had gen sets and dirty big stereos, so that even when I was camped in the boat a half a km away, I was still nearly deafened. One lot went passed my anchorage at half speed leaving a wake a metre

high just when I had the crab cooker boiling on the stove and I had to grab it off the stove before it hit the floor. I held up the cooker and shouted out to them, but their response was a one finger salute.

Even though the weather was beautiful I left for home on day five as the tourists were driving me nuts, so I was out on the earliest tide; this area is very tricky because of the vast area of very shallow water and you have to know where the gutters are. Once out into the deeper water I deployed my lures and settled down for the trip home in perfect conditions, poking along at six knots and at peace with the world, all the Leyland Brothers wannabe's forgotten.

I have decided to let them have the Cape, as I know another nice little estuary area not many people (except the locals) know about, where I will have my quiet days in the old Trojan.

When I arrived back at the ramp I did a few checks while I waited for my wife to bring the trailer down and worked out from the GPS that I had travelled 52 n. miles for the trip and when I filled the tank, it took 21 litres of fuel to the top, pretty economical I thought.

On the trip home I was really enjoying the ambience of the good weather and the ability to brew a nice cup of coffee whilst under way with the Trojan slipping along quietly and the little Suzuki 50 hardly making a sound at 1,800 rpm. I thought to myself that the people who said that you can't make a planing hull into a displacement hull, and also the others who said that at seventy three years of age I should not be going out to sea on my own, don't know anything at all.

So these two old buggers, the Trojan and I, will keep doing it 'till we both can't do it any more.

*Neil Dunstan.
Sarina Beach.*

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