

# Ebb & Flow



with Neil Dunstan

## One Of The Family . .

**O**ver the last month or so I have done a number of trips in my Barcrusher 530C and as a result I wrote a few words for the magazine recounting my adventures, trials and tribulations.

The first trip was a three day effort which I did on

my own out to the Beverly Islands about twenty five nautical miles off Sarina beach where I live. The second was a four day trip to my favourite estuary location at Cape Palmerston about fifteen nautical miles south of Sarina Beach. Both trips threw a number of different and difficult challenges which I had to overcome on my own and were not howling successes. The main problem being that I have probably the best, smoothest riding day fishing boat available in Australia and I am using it as a live aboard cruiser and fishing boat with many expeditions over two weeks duration, a purpose for which it is not really suitable.

I have fitted bunk extensions with thicker cushions, three quarter length weather proof covers (etc) and these make things a lot better, but I still have to work my way around a number of things that make it difficult to do what I want.

As I do the majority of these trips on my own and the accommodation was originally changed to suit two of us for the longer trips

to faraway places I decided to alter the sleeping arrangements to suit a one person crew and as the bunk extensions are easily removable I made a new set of extensions which were wider and longer for just the one bunk. For this I obtained a full width foam mattress and cut it to suit the curve of the hull and as this was 150 mm thick, three feet wide and six feet long it turned out to be really comfortable.

As most boaties will know if trying to sleep when the boat is rolling on her beam ends you need enough width on your bunk to be able to pull your knees up without hanging over the side and enough room to dig your elbows in as well. It is surprising how well one can manage if only you have enough room.

I then decided to go down to the Cape again for a week or so to try out my new bunk, so I removed the two small iceboxes and loaded my large home-made foam ice box with a hundred kilos of ice which I make in a dedicated ice and bait freezer. I also have a small forty litre 12 volt esky which runs on the

thermopile principle (which I don't normally use as it uses up too much battery power for the amount of cooling it manages) loaded it as a food-only esky hoping that my boat's new large dual batteries would be able to handle it. A hundred litres of fuel, food and water for a couple of weeks and a better than normal supply of blankets, and I was ready to go.

When discussing the trip with my wife, she suggested that I was approaching these trips with a negative attitude and that I was always negatively comparing the Barcrusher with the old Stacer. Her central comment was "Get real - this new boat is *miles better* than the old boat. Its main attribute was that it had become *one of the family*, so you knew it intimately. Just give the Barcrusher a chance.

She continued "You know, an old sea dog can learn new tricks. Adopt the new boat as a family member with some adjustments and adaptations." She also thought that in the long run we should do away with the dinky little hard top and replace it with one that is wide enough and long

*Pedro, Neil's 530 Barcrusher on the sand bar near the spot he catches most of his live bait.*



enough to be of value for the type of things that I want the boat to do.

So I set off with her words ringing in my ears and resolved to be a lot more positive about things. After all, the boat has not yet been built that does everything well, and most boats are a compromise of one sort or another.

The weather was reasonable with fifteen to twenty knot south easterly winds which is not a problem, as I just have to travel the fifteen nautical miles to the Cape and then I am in totally sheltered waters. I ran out a couple of lures as I am mostly not in any hurry, so taking a couple of hours to get to the Cape is okay.

The 115 hp Suzuki runs beautifully at fifteen hundred revs and uses buggie all fuel, so the trip was very pleasant with the reward of a couple of nice Queensland school mackerel by the time I arrived, along with a dozen sennit (the north Queensland equivalent of the yakka) which I kept for slab baits. The timing was just right as I arrived nicely in time to set my crab pots then move over to the spot where I usually anchor for the night.

This spot has at least two metres of water at low tide even when there are seven metre tides and has a very good bottom of sand, shells and gravel which has such good holding that I was able

to ride out a cyclone passing down the coast about a hundred miles out some years ago.

During my last trip to the Cape in the new boat I managed to park it on top of a sand bank which wasn't there before and sat there for seven hours before the tide came back. I also did the same thing again a couple of days later which took five hours to get off so I was getting a bit crapped off eventually. The main reason was that the new boat's super deep vee hull draws at least 250 mm more water than my old boat, and I was used to zipping around with room to spare - but not in this one.

So with that in mind, I vowed not to travel at planing speed at all in amongst the gutters, sand banks and mud banks so all my travelling around was

done slowly with a B52 and a Gold bomber travelling along behind. This resulted in catching a couple of nice blue salmon, some good sized flathead, a few trevally and mobs of steelback salmon over the next few days.

The next big test was to see how the new sleeping arrangements would work out. Well, I can only say that it was so comfortable that I had trouble getting up before 8.30 each morning, and with the very low temperatures I was experiencing (as low as 10 degrees early in the morning) I was glad of the extra blankets I had on board.

So with a couple of good books, the latest copy of F&B, and a number of footy games on the ABC I was really living it up. I stayed for a week and I have not

felt as relaxed when I got home for many a trip, it was thoroughly enjoyable with quite a few very good fish, a feed of mud crab and the boat performed splendidly. I also decided to ignore the small scratches and nicks in the wonderful paint job which I was getting quite obsessed about and decided that a few accidental scratches were par for the course with a boat that is worked as hard as mine.

I have clocked up over 150 engine hours in less than seven months. A check of the GPS showed that I had travelled a total of over seventy five nautical miles for a fuel burn of just forty litres which I think is magnificent. Three cheers for the mighty Suzuki.

I have been boating for around fifty years and have owned over forty outboard motors, the first being purchased forty two years ago, and this Suzuki is the best I have owned by miles.

So I guess I only needed to be a bit more positive about the many very good points which the boat has, make allowances for the things that I try to make it do for which it was never designed to do - and continue to develop the whole rig further to be able to do my stuff. I am sure that in time, it also will become "one of the family".

*Neil Dunstan.*

*Sarina Beach.*

**F&B**



**Above: Good tucker and typical of the flatties around Cape Palmerston's creeks. Below: Looking out to sea as Neil prepares for the quiet time . . . nice, eh?**

