



A Break In The Weather . .

The weather for the last five months in North Queensland has been terrible for we fishermen and boaties, with twenty five to thirty knot south/easterlies continuously howling in, one after the other.

In the period from October 07 to late March 08 I have only been able to get out a couple of times for day trips – and only to the islands off the coast from Sarina Beach where I live.

It got so bad that I ran out of fish to eat for the first time just about ever, and when we had visitors who normally expect a feed of fresh reef fish, I had to go down to the local seafood outlet and buy prawns.

The period leading up to Wed. 26-03-08 seemed that there might be some respite for a few days so hasty preparations were made for a trip to Cape Palmerston which is fifteen nautical miles by sea south of Sarina Beach.

The Barcrusher was fuelled up and provisions stowed aboard for a stay of up to a couple of weeks. I intended to stay for about five to seven days however if the weather came up again in that period I might have had to stay longer as the long range forecast is only for four days. On the morning of the intended departure the weather was a nice fifteen knots which is a doddle in the Barcrusher so off I went on the morning high tide. As I usually take four crab pots for

Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan

the trip I can only set them in the main part of the creeks when using the Barcrusher as it is not really suitable as a crabbing boat, so I like to arrive at high tide.

On the way I stopped at Sunken Reef, an area of gravel and rock bottom with lots of soft coral which is a good spot to catch a few fish such as parrotfish and striped bass for use as crab bait.

It was then off to my normal anchorage for the night as I wanted to organise the boat for a reasonably long stay and cook up my evening meal.

After a good night's sleep due to the night time temperatures coming down to very pleasant levels I had an early breakfast so as to catch the low tide and chase a bit of live bait with the cast net. One thing that I got a bit of a shock with was the large number of box jellyfish I caught in my cast net and I very carefully removed them from the net. Any tentacles left in the net will live you up no end when you throw the net up onto your shoulder for the next cast. These killers were up to 150 mm across the bell, which if you swam into one without protection would result in death in less than one minute.

With enough baits for the day I set off for a look at some of my favourite spots and spent the next couple of days relaxing and catching a few fish. Although I didn't catch any crabs I managed to boat some good fish which included eight blue salmon around four pound each, five reasonable bream and a heap of small but legal estuary cod.

One high light was the capture of a nice fingermark (*Lujtanus Jhonniei*) commonly known around the top end as golden snapper which is one of the best tasting fish in the creek. When I am moving around at the Cape I always travel quite slowly as there is heaps of shallow water and sandbanks which weren't there

last time and as it is a nice trolling speed I always have a couple of lures out which is what I caught my fingermark on. I also hooked up twice on large barra but they were too good for me and managed to throw the lure before I could organise myself with the boat, rods, gear (etc) which is one of the problems of always being on your own.

One morning there I was having breakfast when I heard a boat coming up the creek from the camping area on the beach. As the boat approached I heard one of the guys in the boat exclaim "That boat is *Pedro*" and when his mates asked what the hell is "*Pedro*" he said that it was a famous boat which is owned by a writer for F&B.

This was obviously no more enlightening for his mates, but he said that he was going over to introduce himself. As they pulled alongside they introduced themselves as Chris, Bernie and Fred who were down from Biloela and Moura for a bit of a holiday and a bit of fishing.

A decent group of blokes who had come for a relaxing time instead of the usual gang of miners whose soul objective is to take as much fish and crabs as they can catch and in between times drink themselves into oblivion. Over the next couple of days we went off checking the pots in their tinnie, caught plenty of bait using their drag net and I filled them in on how to fish the area and some spots to try which they did with some reasonable results.

After the first meeting one of the guys told me that the other fellow had rung his father in Rockhampton the previous evening and told him that he had been out fishing with a famous fishing writer. I had to break the spell and inform him that we here on F&B were just ordinary fishermen and boat owners, the

same as everyone else and assured him that at the end of a week living on a boat and fishing all the time we smell just as bad as they would. The only difference being that we write about our adventures (- and misadventures - Ed)

Over the next few days I caught enough decent fish to last awhile, but caught only a few undersize and female crabs which was a bit of a disappointment. This was mainly due to the fact that all the crabs were right up the top end of the gullies as the fellows that I had met told me that they got a good feed of crabs way up as far as they could get, so in my bigger boat, I could not reach them. However the lads from Biloela came by and tossed a feed of crab onto my boat for which I was very thankful.

By the Saturday the weather forecast was getting a bit worrying with the thirty knot winds predicted the next day so I decided to head home early the next morning before it got up too much. As it was high tide early I could get to my pots which were still empty and be under way by six thirty .

The trip home was in twenty knot conditions but the seas hadn't built up much so it was very pleasant with a short stop off at Sunken Reef for a catch of a dozen or so nice reef fish to add to the ice box.

When I got home my wife said I was like a new person instead of slowly going stir crazy being stuck at home because of the weather.

I had arrived back nearly jumping out of my skin; so much so, that she suggested that I refuel the boat and go out again as soon as the weather came good; now that's an understanding wife.

Neil Dunstan.