



Hemmingway Revisited: "I Got A BIG One!"

Recently I left my Barcrusher in the shed for a couple of months and went fishing in my 4.55m Quintrex tinnie for most of my outings.

There was a very good reason for this and it was this: My Barcrusher is fitted with Suzuki 115hp 4-stroke outboard which I love, and is the best outboard that I have ever owned, but it has the same problem as all 4-stroke motors ie a one hundred hour service costs over seven hundred dollars, and being a pensioner, I had to wait till I could afford it. I was able to get it done eventually by using the Xmas donation from our Santa Claus Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd.

I have clocked up over four hundred hours in a little over two years so service costs are quite significant, however I am not complaining as these engines are much more complicated than a 2-stroke, but this should be considered when contemplating the purchase of any brand of 4-stroke outboard.

Anyway, I decided to travel



down to a favourite spot of mine, Cape Palmerston about fifteen n. miles south of Sarina Inlet where I live, to stay for a week or so. I always camp on my boat and have fitted it out for this purpose - and that is why we can go off for three weeks or more to the many faraway places that we write about in F&B.

After checking for a set of tides which were best for estuary fishing and crabbing I launched the boat with the help of my long suffering wife and got going while my wife drove the car and trailer back to our house nearby. I almost always go by myself as I like to relax and read plenty of good books (etc) and listen to the weekend sport on the radio.

I usually fish in spots that I know produce regularly. My fishing method is to set out usually three live baits in rod holders and retire to the cabin to read, keeping myself in a position where I can observe the rods easily. With this method most fish hook themselves, and are usually of a decent size, as I am bone lazy and don't like too many small fish which have to be filleted and iced

down, apart from the mess they make.

Once I cleared the inlet, I set out three trolling lines, one with a rigged garfish and two with lures. As I am retired, the fact that it takes me three hours to get to the Cape instead of forty minutes if I was on the plane doesn't matter, and I enjoy the leisurely trip, especially as I get around four times the distance on a litre of fuel than on the plane.

After travelling for about an hour I was approaching the area where I often pick up quite a few decent fish when I got a sizzling strike on the lure that I catch 90% of my fish on, the RMG Scorpion deep diver.

Before I left home, I'd wound a new line on my reel, which is a Shimano TLD 15 mounted on an old hollow fibre glass rod I bought for ten bucks at a garage sale. It is a bit like Grandfather's axe which is 'just as good as new' - although it has had two new heads and four new handles, ie I have replaced all the runners and the reel seat, but it has caught all sorts of fish and some bloody big ones

as well.

The strike on eight kilo line was awe inspiring, and before I could slow the thing down it had stripped off two hundred and fifty metres and was down to the backing. I suppose that I let it get away a bit but I was trying to make sure the fish had no slack line and at the same time trying to control the boat and retrieve the other two lines out the back before the fish got tangled up with them.

Eventually I got everything sorted out and started to put some pressure on the fish, which then got upset and tore off way upwind, dragging miles of line behind. At this point I thought that I was hooked into a shark as he was circling around the boat way out and was on the surface which is what I would expect of a decent shark.

It took probably ten minutes before I was starting to gain a reasonable amount of line and when he was in to about fifty metres away I was beginning to see colour when he was outlined through a wave. He looked quite shiny and not at all like a shark which usually

appear to be a dull brown colour and I took a guess at a really big spanish mackerel.

The fight went on for another fifteen minutes or so at which point I thought to myself that this could not be a spanish as they usually stick it to you for probably three runs and then start to yield, but this bloke was going just as strong after more than half an hour.

It then became a test of patience, but I was slowly winning, and eventually I had him near enough to the boat to see the small curved dorsal fin and tail skimming through the water surface and was able to call him for a tuna of some sort.

His identity had me stumped for a while as he was a monster and we don't get tuna this big as a rule around here, most fish being mackerel tuna up to about six kg, and long tail tuna up to about the same, but he was definitely a tuna as he went down under the boat and kept circling in ever smaller circles until he was bugged and I was able to winch him up to the boat.

As he lay there alongside, nearly as bugged as me, I could see he was a long tail tuna and the biggest one I had ever seen around here, so I decided to release him as they are not all that good for eating - but when I looked closer, I saw that he had swallowed the six inch



Approaching Cape Palmerstone - epicentre of many fishing adventures for F&B's Neil Dunstan

lure right down his throat and the rear trebles had lodged in his gills -which meant he was not going to survive.

I then gaffed him and dragged him into the boat, and being a tuna he then bled all over the boat which was not what I wanted on the first day of a week long trip.

At this point I decided to put him in the ice box as it was getting near dark, and I still wanted to set my crab pots but he wouldn't fit in a 150 litre ice box and had to be cut into two pieces which even then only just fitted in.

When I got into the creek, I decided to use him for crab bait, which I guess is a bit of an inglorious end to such a fish, but he wasn't going to be wasted.

It was a bit like trying to cut up a bullock on the bait table but I managed to get two huge fillets off him and cut them up for the crab pots.

It was interesting the next day when I checked the pots and found that the crabs had eaten every scrap of tuna and didn't touch the sweetlip frame that I put in as well for a test.

So in the week that I was there I caught enough crabs for a couple of big feeds for myself and took home half a dozen or so crabs to eat at home. I didn't weigh the fish but I estimated his weight at around ten to twelve kg, and it was by far the biggest long tail tuna that I had ever caught.

During that week I got a few good feeds of big blue

salmon, some nice estuary cod, heaps of steelback salmon and bream but no barra or king salmon.

Usually at this time of the year we normally catch lots of very large dusky flathead but they hadn't arrived at that time.

Something that I found of interest was the fact that the line I caught that big tuna on was a 250 metre spool of eight kilo line from Big W and cost \$3.80

All in all a very relaxing week during which I caught a good feed of fish and crabs, read plenty of books and caught the biggest long tail or northern blue fin tuna I had ever seen.

Neil Dunstan.

Sarina Beach.

F&B