



The Jones' Girl

By Sally Jones*

Clarence River Cruising: ILUKA, NSW

The Northern Rivers region of NSW is packed with beautiful seaside towns, with abundant golden beaches and picturesque sheltered rivers to explore. Having been to Yamba many times, we thought we'd try holidaying on the other side of the Clarence River, at a place called Iluka. Apart from the Murray River, the Clarence is the largest river in mainland Australia, south of the Tropic of Capricorn, and a Mecca for fishing and cruising in your boat.

Iluka is situated about 220km south of Brisbane, nestled on the northern side of the Clarence River entrance. The town is 17km off the Pacific Highway and is therefore particularly quiet and free of traffic noise. It is bordered by Bundgalung National Park, - World Heritage Listed Rainforest, (including the largest remnant of littoral/seaside rainforest in NSW), and the Pacific Ocean.

There are beautiful walks through the National Park and during whale migration season, many pods of these majestic creatures are regularly spotted from the many vantage points and lookouts. The Iluka Bluff has an excellent large platform especially designed for whale watching. There is also 4WDing allowed (with the relevant pass), on some of the beaches near Iluka for the avid beach fisherman.

We chose this particular location for our week-long break, especially

for the peace and quiet that Iluka offers. As mentioned, the town is a long way from highway noise and traffic. It is a bit of a throwback to the old, "quaint-fishing-village" type of town. No McDonalds, department stores or upmarket resorts. Peaceful caravan parks, self-contained apartments and small motels are the norm here. There is your local pub, newsagent, IGA small supermarket and a bait shop, so you're just about



covered! It is probably more suited to the couple or grey nomad, avid tinnie fisho or family that DOESN'T want theme parks and shopping malls.

However, if you like fishing, swimming, bushwalks and birdlife, this is the place for you.

The Iluka Riverside Tourist Park (situated in Charles Street), has absolute river frontage, where you can sit with coldie in hand and watch

the Yamba/Iluka ferry passing, or the dolphins frolicking, from your very own annex. It is not one of the "big chain" parks, but a private park run by a very nice couple, Sharon and Graeme Baxter.

They are most helpful managers and are always tending to the garden or having a chat to the residents. There are very clean, reasonably priced cabins for those who wish to bring their boat with them, and the main ramp isn't far away. (There is a concrete ramp in the park, but it is a bit steep).

They also have waterfront villas, tent sites, unpowered sites, fish cleaning tables and a boat wash area.

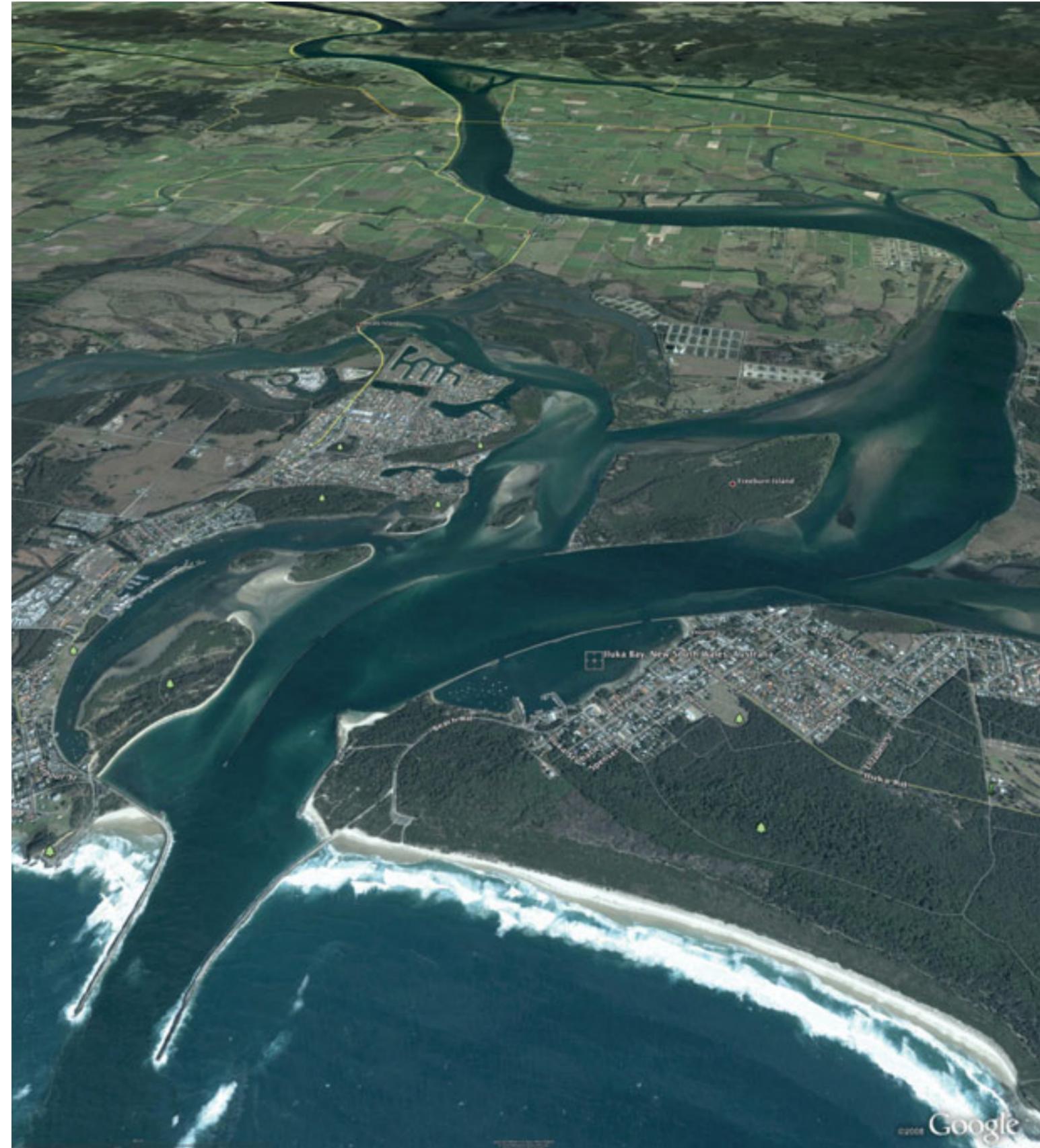
Most sites here are large, powered and include a concrete slab. We were lucky enough to spend 5 glorious nights in our caravan, on one such spot recently, soaking up the laid-back ambience, which is Iluka.

The town is very sleepy, unlike its bigger cousin, Yamba, on the southern side of the river. In Iluka, your clock is kept by watching the tides, and the most important constant is when to go fishing. There is a small fleet of trawlers and the local Co-Op has delectable fish for sale, fresh as they come. With fishing and boating in mind, we again packed out trusty

Portabote.

There is a sandy boating ramp, in the main harbour area, which is good for 4WD's. Without one, your wheels will be "slippin' and slidin'", so this ramp is best used by fourbies and light craft, like kayaks, etc.

There is another concrete ramp, alongside the ferry terminal and boatshed, which is much more suitable for the trailer-boater. It's only



Terrific Google Earth Pro view of the mouth of the mighty Clarence River, and the communities of Yamba (south, or left side of the river in this pic) and Iluka (north side) as the Clarence begins its extremely long navigable run (by Australian standards) way back up to Grafton and beyond. This really is an aquatic paradise for safe family boating, and where the Iluka Riverside Tourist Park (centre behind the walled harbour) is located, is nigh on perfect for fishing families.