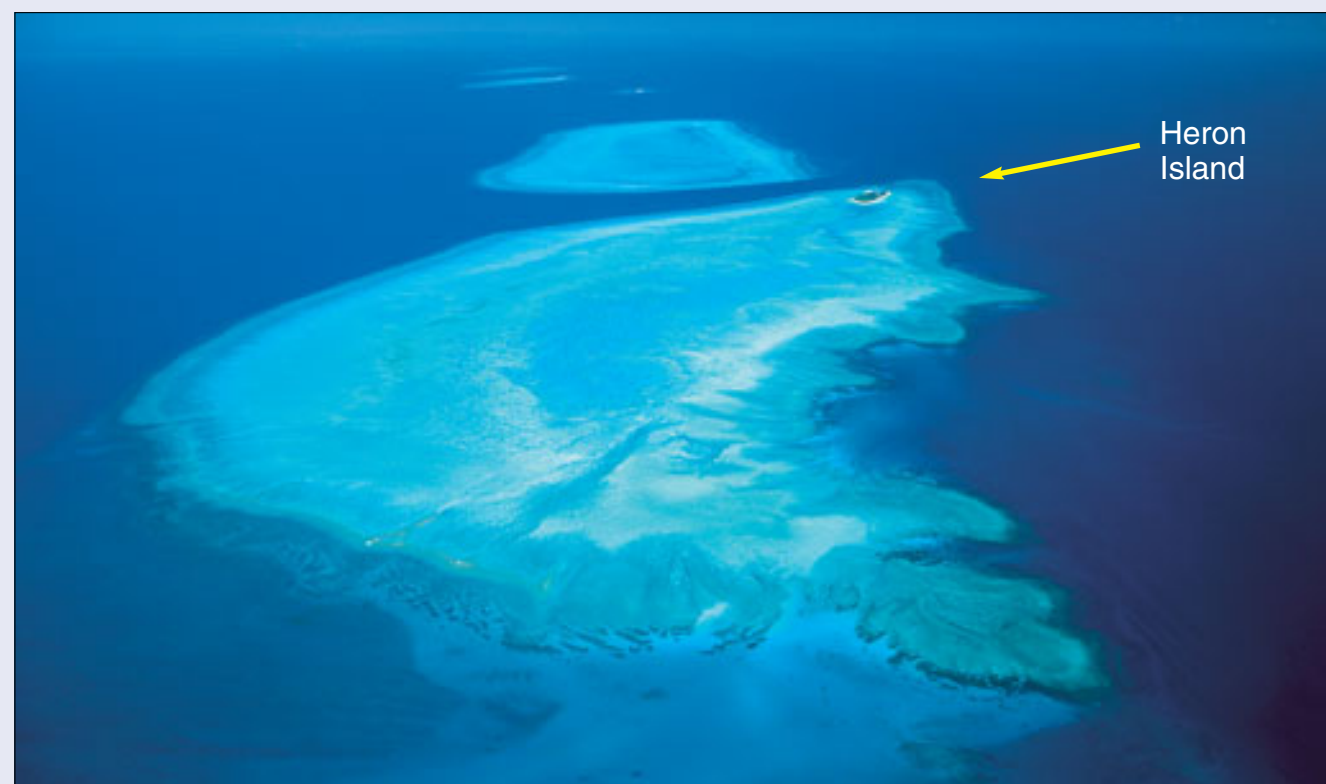




It is sometimes very hard to get a perspective on the size of the Great Barrier Reef, but these two photos (courtesy Queensland Tourism) certainly help. Above, a close-in view of Heron Island - below, the same thing, but from a much higher elevation. Observe Wistari Reef, Masthead island and Polmaise Reef stretching away to the West. This photo has been taken almost above Sykes Reef. This is just a minute fraction of this vast Barrier Reef system.



Of all the reefs that make up the Capricorn Group, Sykes is one of the least visited. This story not only shows what a top area this is to fish, but how you can enjoy your trip with a couple of mates.

# Sykes Reef

Off The Central Queensland Coast

Story & Pics by Scott Shepherd

**“The thing I like most about fishing in 125 metres of water, is the way you can get a bite to eat and have a cool drink while your tear drop sinker plummets to the seabed”, said Paul, as he let his tear drop plummet to the seabed.**

This time the bait (a full squid and a fillet of fresh fish) made it all the way down without being savaged. Bait on bottom, rod in hand, slow retrieve up 5 to 10 metres - and *WOOSHKA*, at a zillion miles an hour, it hit like a Lennox Lewis punch. Five minutes later another quality pearl perch found itself at the bottom of our landing net.

This is just one of many great moments from our latest fishing trip in June, when we three amigos - Paul, Daryl, and myself embarked on our once a year adventure in my boat *ODYSSEA*, to find out what boating and fishing is all about. Mind you, not that I would ever forget.

Planning a trip to Sykes Reef came about after many trips to nearby Masthead Island and Polmaise Reef. We have also spent many top days in and around the Fitzroy Reef area, which is only a short trip south. This trip however, we wanted to do something special. Visiting the continental shelf east of Sykes provided that challenge. The fishing is good around most of the Capricorn Group of islands, but Sykes was different.

Boating has been my life, and much to my wife's dismay, I'm very



Scott Shepherd with a beaut golden trevally

passionate about it. I have experienced many facets of the fishing industry, from commercial net trawling, commercial line fishing, set-netting, and more recently over the last 20 years, full-on sport fishing. I've also given plenty back, but Quells have helped in that department.

I am now seeing the need to

explore the theory of our intrepid leader, Peter (*'tell it how it is'*) Webster - he keeps pushing his theory that *'boating is always best enjoyed with your mates, kids and family; being out there is miles more important than how much you catch . . .'*

I think we all agree he's right, but we've all agreed not to tell him - got the picture ?

Trips like this one cannot be taken lightly, as the distances by boat and by car, especially for our southern readers, can be immense. Fuel loads calculated can be doubled if the forecast turns nasty. I have at times been caught out at the Reef by worsening conditions. However, with the accuracy of the Bureau's forecasts these days, that is really not a problem any more - just plan your trips around the weather.

Our original plans on this particular trip were to go and explore Cape Capricorn on the pointy end of Curtis Island, but that can be done in any sort of weather. One thing you learn as a boatie up here is that when the weatherman says "Go Fish", you 'go fish' because the weather can become set in its ways up here, and for weeks on end, too.

### Stock At Caltex Boyne River

We gave our budget a fair workout at Caltex Boyne River, with 260 litres of bang juice, lots of ice, bait and some well needed tackle, followed by a splurge at the grocery store at the Boyne Plaza, which is one of the