

**S**tepping off the small Ansett jet, we were greeted with the sort of heavy, humid air only associated with summer in the tropics.

In keeping with the setting of our new environment, we were treated to the initial stages of a tropical downpour as we were half way across the Weipa tarmac. It was the start of what was to become a familiar pattern over the next week - the afternoon thunderstorm. Typically, the



Damon Olsen with 4kg of Nominade River barra

boating and fishing at this fantastic spot.

**River Systems:** There are 5 major river systems in reasonably close proximity to Weipa. The Hey, Embley and Mission Rivers flank the peninsula which Weipa sits on. Located further to the north are the Pine and Nomenade Rivers which empty into the gulf through one large, shallow, tide swept entrance. There are also two major rocky headlands to the north and south of Weipa, these being Duyfken Point and Perra Head respectively.

The Mission and Hey/Embley systems have been closed to commercial fishing for the past 25 years. These rivers stand as a shining example to the rest of Queensland about the tourism dollars that healthy,



The mouth of Noname Creek. The above pic shows the water at about the correct level to fish on the rocks. Below, a few hours later, what is underneath. This was typical of Weipa, with barra sitting amongst the oyster encrusted rocks for a few hours either side of the tide.



of Weipa's best guides, Dave Newman, for 6 and a half days fishing around late March and early April of this year. We were Dave's first booking after the wet, and were expecting the hot climate to bring some equally hot fishing- and we weren't disappointed.

Rather than going through our adventure with a cast by cast description, we'll have a look at the highlights of each day and also try and explain the fishing situations encountered along the way.

In the true spirit of F&B, we want readers to be able to read this article and actually go to Weipa with a real expectation of having a great time and catching heaps of fish.

**Different Fishing:** The fishing in Weipa is quite

associated shopping centre for everything you could ever need. It is unlikely that there is a more civilised town in such a remote area anywhere else in Australia.

This is clearly one of the main attractions of Weipa. Being able to stay in an air conditioned cabin at night and experience incredible fishing during the day seems almost a contradiction in terms, but it works in Weipa.

If we had any doubts about Weipa as we stepped off the plane, the first afternoon's fishing laid them to rest.

As mentioned, we stepped off the plane at 2.0 pm, it poured with rain until 3.0 pm, and Dave had us casting gold bombers at mangrove roots in the Embley River by 3:15pm.

I was hooked up to a

From the mudflats and mangrove's to the coral bommies on the beaches, Weipa really has everything any sportfisherman could ever want. This month we take a look part 1 of 2 in Damon Olsen's special report on this amazing fishing haven. By the end of this series you should have enough of an idea about fishing in this part of the world to go there yourself and expect to have a great time.

# Weipa, Qld: Jewel Of The Gulf, P-1

storms last about 40 minutes, and arrive at about 2pm.

**Logistics:** My father and I had just arrived in Weipa in Queensland's far north. Weipa is located about 800km north of Cairns by road and is only accessible in the dry season on a fairly ordinary road. Driving from Cairns to Weipa takes anywhere from 10 - 14 hours, depending on who you believe, local knowledge, and the state of the road.

The easier option is the 50 minute daily Ansett flight from Cairns to Weipa. Mind you, it's a bit hard to get your 4.3 m Quintrex Hornet on the plane as 'personal baggage'!

So most fishing visitors still do the run through by road with their trailer boat. However, if they are genuinely worried about the road into Weipa, they often book their boat and trailer onto one of the daily road trains or road freight semis, and then fly or drive in themselves. A 4WD is hired at the Weipa end if you've flown here - so you pick up your trailer boat from the depot at Weipa - and start fishing.

Weipa seems to be one of the forgotten wonders of Cape York. The charms of this place have certainly not been ignored by a select few fishermen who have been travelling to this paradise for many more years than some of them would like to

remember, however it seems to be largely ignored when most people think of fishing in Cape York. This fact is most unfortunate for those folk who visit the Cape and fail to stop in at Weipa, because the fishing is so good it has to be experienced to be believed.

The fishing around Weipa is better than any other inshore or estuary environment I have ever visited.

There are a few other places in the country with fishing nearly as good, or even occasionally better than Weipa, but this place definitely has the edge when you come right down to the catch:effort ratio. Hey, and does anything else matter? C'mon, let's get into the

fish rich tropical rivers can bring to a community.

The few guides working in Weipa are booked solidly for 3 to 4 months without one day spare after the wet season, and are similarly booked in the build up to the wet. These guides usually require bookings 8 or 9 months in advance.

Understandably, the tourism dollars generated by these fishermen are immense. And that is not to forget the tourists who drive to Weipa in the dry and completely fill the caravan and camping ground for months on end.

Anyway, enough of the politics. I'm sure you're all wondering what my Father and I were doing in Weipa. Well, we had booked one



Damon's father, John Olsen, with 11 kg of brutal Weipa GT.

different to what one would expect from other parts of Queensland, so after reading this you should be able to explore this area and know what to look for in terms of areas which will hold fish. I can't tell you precisely where to go, but most of the fun is in exploring new areas anyway.

Before we get onto the fishing it is just worth pointing out that the reason Weipa is so exiting to F&B readers is that for once, it is accessible by 4WD during the dry season, and happily (for once) the fishing is also sensational during this time.

The other feature of Weipa is its extremely civilised nature, with a superb camping ground and a huge Woolworths and

barra after only three casts. As it happened, I lost it, but you get the picture, I'm sure.

**First Session:** Dave started us fishing in a shallow sandy bay surrounded by the loading facility for Weipa's bauxite mine, and the main road to the boat ramp.

We extracted a few barra from this area before moving down to the aboriginal community's boat ramp. That's right, we were actually fishing on the upstream boat ramp and managed to catch some barracuda, queenies and real barra. Dave had his electric motor attacked by a croc while at the ramp and it stuffed the little plastic