

The Cressbrook Equation

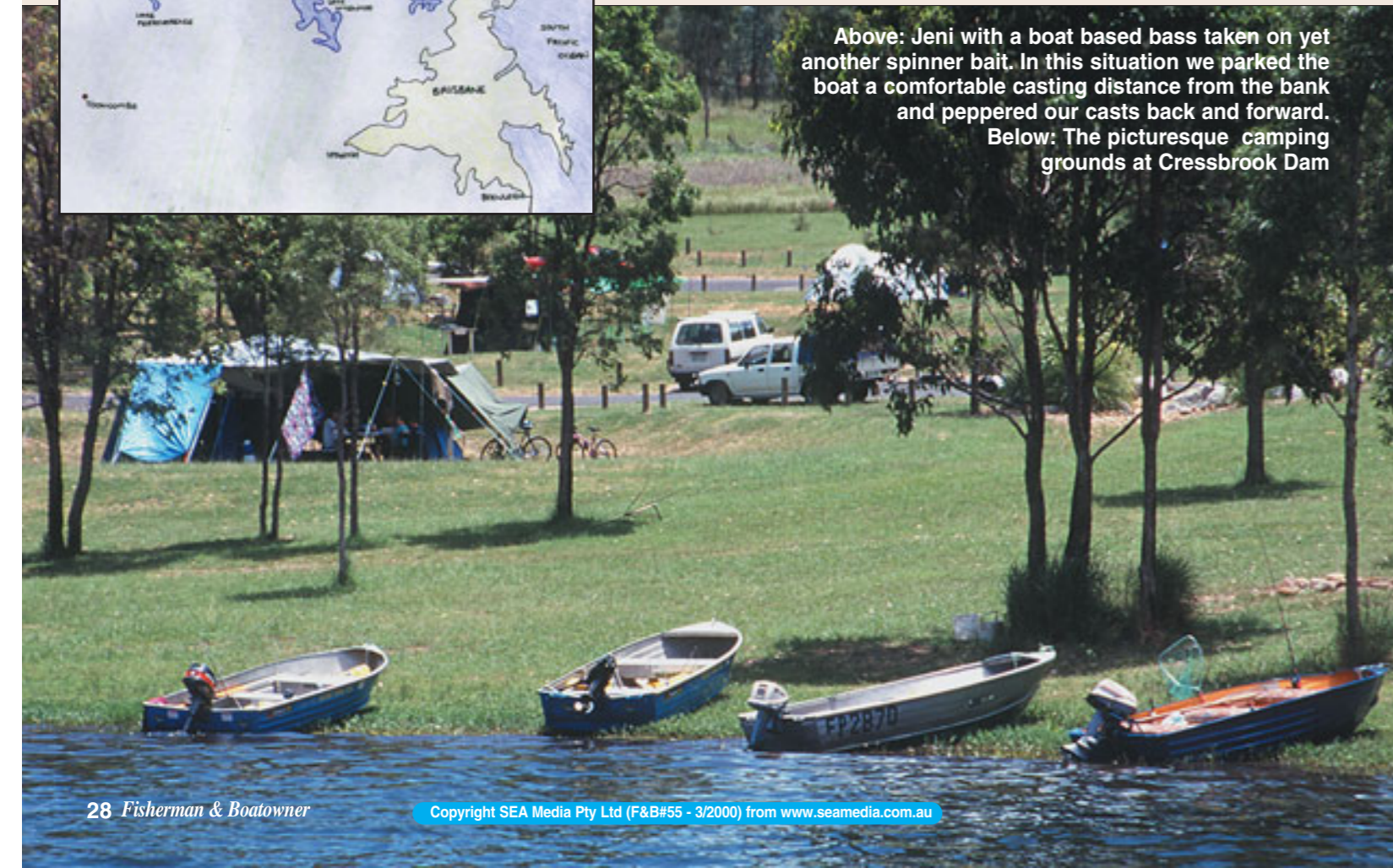
Part 2 in our series on freshwater impoundments & rivers, written and photographed by Kim Bain



Nicely conditioned Cressbrook yellowbelly or golden perch



Above: Jeni with a boat based bass taken on yet another spinner bait. In this situation we parked the boat a comfortable casting distance from the bank and peppered our casts back and forward. Below: The picturesque camping grounds at Cressbrook Dam



"The young fishing & boating family will love this dam" was my first thought. An eight knot top speed limit which applies to all combustion engines using the dam, a family camping permit which favours those with kids under 18, and facilities right on the water, makes for the ideal family vacation spot.

Originally built in 1983-84 to service the water supply needs of Toowoomba, the proclaimed 'Garden City' - home of the Festival of Flowers and the major city of the Darling Downs farming community.

The dam is situated near the town of Crows Nest, and is approx 50 km north-east of Toowoomba, as the crow flies. It is an easy two hour drive west from Brisbane (approx 170 km) and is within reach for the majority of south-east Queensland's population for a weekend away.

At 81,800 ML capacity, a surface area of 515 ha and a mean depth of 15.8 m, it is best described as a mid-sized dam compared to some others in the south-east Queensland region. Stocked by the Toowoomba and District Fish Stocking Association and run by the Toowoomba City Council, permits are required for all water-based recreational activities such as fishing from the bank, sailing, canoeing and windsurfing. At the time of writing, permits cost a reasonable \$5 for a week. This caters for the permit purchaser's immediate family (immediate family generally means husband, wife and children under the



Kim with a nice bass - the green and yellow skirt on the tiny 1/8oz Kokoda head with tandem gold blades (a gold colorado with gold willow above) has long been a favourite with the author.

age of 18). Yearly permits cost \$50 and are available from Toowoomba City Council, the ranger at the Dam, or Mullet Gut Marine.

Australian bass, golden perch, Mary River cod, saratoga, silver perch and snub-nosed gar have been stocked into the dam. The snub-nosed gar will hopefully be a self-sustaining breeding population and from what I saw on my last visit, there are snubbies everywhere, so their viability seems assured. Additionally, there are resident populations of tandanus catfish, eels and spangled perch.

Angling Methods Australian bass and golden perch are by far the predominant catch at the dam, especially when using spinner baits. Whilst the bait fishing and trolling tactics as described in the May '99 edition of F&B (Getting Into the Freshwater Fishing Scene - Bjelke Petersen Dam) are appropriate, Cressbrook is a great place to embark on a lure casting career.

There is plenty of visible structure, like big boulders, shady banks and the occasional clump of lilies to cast at in Cressbrook. To make things very easy for the novice lure caster, there are quite a few bass patrolling the often clear water along the dam's edges. If timber, weeds and lilies are present around the dam's edge (depending on the water level) then they are the best places to start fishing.

When selecting your tackle, I recommend a light 7' (2.1m) graphite spin rod coupled to a high speed threadline reel spooled to within about 5mm of the spool lip, with fine diameter line. This outfit will cast light spinner baits of 1/8oz (3.5 grams) to

Cressbrook Fishing Regulations

Species	Minimum Size	Bag Limit
Freshwater Eels	30 cm min	no limit
Australian Bass	30 cm min	2
Golden Perch	30 cm min	10
Silver Perch	30 cm min	10
Saratoga	35 cm min	1
Mary River Cod	50 cm min	1

(One Mary River Cod only in possession, upstream of the Dam Wall)