



Brad Baldwin and the best barra of the trip - a 1.3m Awoonga special!



Chris (hooked up) and Mike Parker locked up in a big in the Awoonga's deep blue depths.

The Awoonga Supremacy

with Mike O'Neill, and his NSW Northern Rivers mates

Queensland impoundment fishing for barramundi is a low-cost alternative to dragging butt and boat to the Northern Territory or the wild rivers of north Queensland.

Pound-for-pound the fish don't perform as well on top of the water but what they lack in aerial energy they more than compensate with staying power and size.

There are some real brutes lurking in the quiet waters of Queensland's impoundments and don't let anyone try and convince

you that a 1.2-metre barra doesn't have the power of a Queensland State of Origin forward pack or the speed of NSW's backline. If they do, you'll know they have played only minor league.

Each year I fish a river somewhere in the Northern Territory... it's a three-week ritual that for the past 15 years I have shared with three good mates.

Due to other commitments we couldn't justify the long haul north for this trip, so we changed tack to check out some of the stories about big barra at

Lake Awoonga, just 30 km south of Gladstone.

The biggest barra caught during our sorties to the NT stretched the tape to 1m (15kg) – fish this size and better were practically an everyday occurrence during the six days (February 18 through 24) we fished Awoonga.

We caught a boatload of barra from 80cm through to a metre... and several brutes that take the XPT to Brisbane down a scale or two. While much of our fishing was catch and release, we kept an 80cm

fish from the first day, just to see how it fared on the table. And it wasn't too bad! In fact we were quietly impressed with the eating quality, which we all agreed was as good as, if not better, than a Territory-caught freshwater barra, so we kept a few more to take home. We also killed one of the bigger fish (not intentionally, but all efforts to revive the monster were unsuccessful... it didn't eat too flash, even in fish cakes.

When fishing Awoonga, there are plenty of accommodation options:

caravan parks on the water, a public reserve... and there is the Willowgrove caravan and camping park on the Boyne River at Benaraby, just eight kilometres run from Awoonga Dam. Talk to the park owner and he will tell you that barra from Awoonga eat well because the bottom is predominantly shale rock... and I think he might be right as far as the smaller fish (around 80cm) are concerned... that's if you can find one that small.

Launching facilities are excellent and can be managed easily even with

small two-wheel drives. However, despite the large concrete ramp, things can still become a bit crowded during peak periods - December through February (particularly during the Christmas holiday break). At times like these, commonsense and courtesy are needed to keep things cool and on an even keel.

When you consider the escalating cost of accessing the far northern reaches of barramundi habitat in the Cape and Northern Territory, it's no wonder there has been an explosion

of interest in Queensland's flat-water options... hence the growing popularity of impoundments such as Awoonga, Teemburra, Tinaroo and Monduran to mention a few.

While for southern anglers it's still a fair haul, the roads are not as harsh on machinery and personnel.

Accommodation is also more varied with hotels, caravan parks and motels offering soft options all within easy striking distance of popular impoundments.

Fishing impoundment barra was a new experience

for myself and mates Brad Baldwin, Mike Parker and his son Chris, although Mike and I did pull a lure through Teemburra Dam on our way back from fishing Hinchbrook a few years ago. It was in June and the mornings and late evenings were bloody cold... we were not all that enthusiastic and the result was a true indication of the effort invested.

When we launched at Awoonga, we were armed with a map downloaded from the Queensland tourism website and a few