

P-2: Fishing The Islands Off Sarina

In Central Queensland

As fuel prices hit new and unsustainable levels, our two favourite fishin' pensioners (not to say our 'two silly old farts' as they were so unkindly christened up north) Neil Dunstan and his mate John Turnbull, reckon we all need to re-think our fishing trips, holidays and adventures. Case in point, they say, is central Queensland's Northumberland Islands. Not as far as Boroloola NT, as pretty as Hinchinbrook, miles "fishier" than the Whitsundays - and hell of a lot closer than them all. In this Two Part Series, they put up a convincing argument. Neil Dunstan report & pics.

Since last October, my mate John and I have been trying to organise a return to our interrupted trip around the local islands off Sarina in central Queensland for an article to demonstrate the potential of our local area.

It is now June and we have only just managed to finish this expedition due to numerous reasons, the main reason being the longest run of bad weather we could both remember. As well, we both had family dramas to attend to, and to top it all off, my mate John was diagnosed with cancer which required surgery and extended chemo therapy - but hopefully, that is behind us now, and we can continue on with our adventures.

The weather forecast for the 4-6-08 was for calm seas for the next four or five days, so we decided on the spur of the moment to go the following day.

Normally, we would try to get a decent forecast, along with small making tides, as we do not like to fish on the back of the moon, but this time it was monster 6.5 metre tides and getting smaller, ie on the back of the moon! But we decided "Bugger it - if the sea was calm, we would go, come what may!"

We left Sarina inlet at 10.00 am on Tuesday 4-6-08 with a pea soup fog and visibility down to 50 metres, but the water was dead calm. Using the GPS, we found the red buoy in the



Neil's mate John Turnbull is a former professional coral trout fisherman - (Neil reckons he can catch trout in a bathtub). As the pic shows, John doesn't miss 'em. Note finger stalls, hallmark of the top handline pro fishos.

mouth of the inlet, which meant that for the next ten n. miles there was nothing to run into except other boats.

I then brought the boat slowly up to planing speed and continued on with John keeping watch while I concentrated on the course. One of the main problems with the very large

night time tides of six and a half metres is the large amount of rubbish that comes down the creeks with the run-out tide, and we often see whole trees floating along. To hit one of these at planing speed is not a good idea.

We eventually broke out of the fog about nine n. miles out, and increased speed as we could now see Cullen Island, and on rounding the island, headed for Jack Rock about twenty eight n. miles from shore.

We started fishing but there was not much doing, probably because the run was very strong due to the previously mentioned big tides, but as we said, we go to sea when the sea is smooth and bugger the tides - and out here the sea was as smooth as.

We then trolled for quite a few miles looking for some spanish mackerel which arrive around this time of the year, but nothing happened, so a bit of bottom fishing around Minster Island was tried.

A nice spotted cod plus some stripey bass, a coral trout and a couple of venus tusk fish were the result. With enough in the ice box for tea, we then went out to Beaver Shoal to try a few spots which had produced for us some years ago, but we only caught flathead, so we gave that a miss, and trolled all the way down to the southern end of the Beverlies to Digby Island which is a safe anchorage in most conditions, if a bit rolly.

Neil Dunstan rests the GT on the BarCrusher's gunwale as both fish and fisherman catch their breath - before the GT was returned to the briney to fight another fisherman, another day. GT's this big on Neil's light tackle is seriously tough, exciting fishing - especially without a rod bucket, eh Neil ?!X?!

