

Staying Close To Home: Curlew Island

In Central Queensland

Our two favourite pensioners, Neil Dunstan and John Turnbull have had life's usual share of hassles lately - in health, wealth, family and weather - as you do. So the lads were catching some serious 'blue water fever' and just had to get out on the blue to put things back into perspective. Firing up the Barcrusher 530's 115 hp Suzie, they set out for a three day session at one of their favourite destinations.

Neil Dunstan report & pics.

When my mate John and I did a trip to re-explore some of the fifty odd islands out from our home at Sarina Beach recently we did a quick run down to Curlew Island for a look around before we made our way home at the end of that expedition. As we caught quite a few good fish and tangled with some whoppers, we decided to go back one day and check it out a bit more thoroughly.

That trip was done at the end of last wet season and we usually reduce the number of long duration trips once the wet season arrives mainly because it is too hot for us old blokes in the summer.

Maybe we are getting soft but I don't have an aircon on the boat! So the boat didn't do a lot of work during the wet and we usually just did day trips to the closer islands etc in my 4.45 metre Quintrex dory. As the wet season was drawing to a close I mentioned to my mate John that it should be a good time to go back to the area and try it out for a longer period than before; the water temperature would still be quite high and the fish should still be pretty active. John was keen to give it a go and as he had been enduring chemo for cancer for the previous couple of months, he was starting to feel better and reckoned he would



Above: Neil with a rare (and protected) hump headed or Maori wrasse which enjoyed his fleeting seconds of photo fame - before being returned back down into the depths.

Right: Neil's mate John Turnbull shows how the pro coral trout fishos do it - complete with fingerstalls. It's all about stopping the trout's headlong flight back to "the bricks" - and the old timers reckon you can do it better with handlines than a rod 'n reel.

be right - so arrangements were made to go on the first bit of calm weather available.

Usually we try to get a good set of tides such as small runs with a making moon but as we were both suffering from the dreaded blue water fever it was decided to go as soon as the weather was suitable. So when it looked like a few days of ten to fifteen knots was coming, we got the boat fuelled up (etc) ready to shove off on Wednesday.

We were as keen as mustard, having only had toy trips in the tinnie for the last couple of months.

The Curlews

The Curlew Islands are part of the Guardfish Cluster which are made up of Curlew Island, Hirst Island, Treble Island, Dinner Island, Bluff Island, Fairfax Rocks, Wallace Island, Tenonee Peak and a number of rocky outcrops such as Henani Rock, Pearl Rock and others particularly on the southern side of Curlew Island. They lie in a group in a south/easterly direction between thirty and thirty six nautical miles from Sarina Inlet.

These islands, along with the Beverly Group and the Percy Islands to the south east, make up the Cumberland Islands which are approx forty nautical miles south of the Whitsundays, and number over

