

# Grant's GUIDE TO FISHES

*"The Fisherman's Bible"*

A brief review by Editor Peter Webster

**G**rant's Guide to Fishes has become an Australian institution in fishing circles - its subtitle *"The Fisherman's Bible"* was coined by its many loyal followers and readers years ago.

It has its origin almost 50 years ago, with the first edition produced in 1965, and since then, 116,500 copies have been produced, making it arguably the longest-running and best-known book on fish identification in Australia. Although originally Queensland-centric, it now covers all commonly-caught fish across Australia. It has:

- 1078 fish, sharks & rays
- 1007 superb colour photographs, many full-plates, and all bled to the page edge for maximum size

I must admit, after many years of studying all manner of marine and fishing books produced by some of the best authors in the world, the task of producing a meaningful review of Ern Grant's Twelfth Edition of his classic **Guide To Fishes** was daunting, to say the least.

Over 115,000 copies of this book have been sold in the previous eleven editions, and beyond that, between Library readership and copies being passed down from father to son, or between mates, I'm sure there are very few keen fishermen in Queensland at least, who have not at some stage, picked up and read some of the book.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, it was dedicated to Queensland fishing and Queensland fish species, as Ern worked for the Qld Government, and they funded the original publication. But over the years in different editions - especially from 1993, when Ern published the book in his own right in what has now

## THE BOOK SHELF



become its definitive form, it's proven to be of immense value to fishermen all over Australia, as so many species identified and analysed in the Guide To Fishes are common to all states and fisheries around Australia.

Sure, there are the well-known state or parochial descriptions of fish that would appear at first blush to be different, but in his methodical, painstaking way, Grant has not only identified the different species, but looked at their genetic background, family structure, habitat and likely areas they'll be found.

This Twelfth Edition has many upgrades that render it quite different to even the more recent

editions.

The writer has two Editions (Five and Eleven) actually, and even compared to the later edition (#11), I can see how the indexing has slowly changed for the better.

In particular, the creation of their brand new **"Guide to the Guide"** right upfront is terrific; they've now listed 80 of the most common sorts of fish in a pictorial guide (8 fish to a page) that enables the reader to quickly cut to the chase, identify the type of fish they want to follow up - and go straight to it.

Before this edition, it was fairly hard to look up and compare that fish you've got in the fish basket, with what you're trying to identify through the Guide To Fishes when you had to (a) either know what sort of fish it was, and go via the index, or (b) just thumb through the pages - all 880 of them.

Now it's really quite simple - if you're looking for a "bream" type fish, readers now take a quick look through the new pictorial Guide, find the type of fish

they are after, note the page it's on, and go straight to it.

However, I still believe that the underlying genius of this 880 page (!! 46mm thick, 2.5kg, 250mm H x 178mm W encyclopaedia is more about the absolutely staggering amount of fishing lore and knowledge that Grant imparts in his succinct, often humorous, and incredibly interesting descriptions of each species.

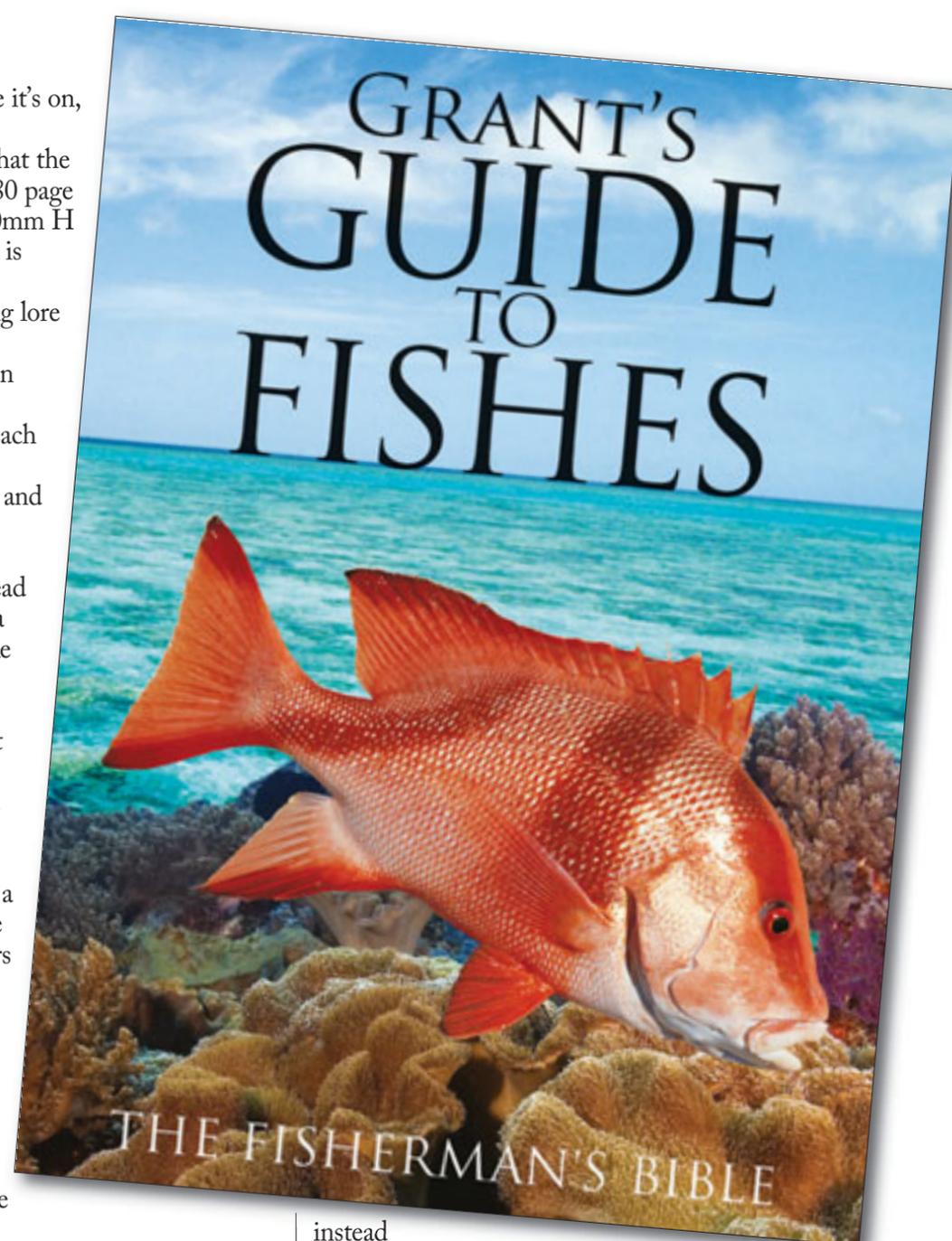
That the man has caught and photographed so many thousands of fish almost beggars belief; but as you read through the book (and it's a great back-porch read, make no mistake) the reader is drawn into a series or anecdotes and episodes that have occurred in this ichthyologist's amazing life.

For people who have not seen it or read it, it is extraordinary in that this is a scientific encyclopaedia, the real deal - but over the years in different editions Ern's inherent warmth and interest in his fellow fishermen shines through on almost every page; it becomes a delightful read to enjoy, relax and possibly take in one of your favourite ales as you're doing it.

I can't think of another encyclopaedia of this technical calibre that you can actually read for enjoyment - and with 880 pages of knowledge to absorb, in a very easy-to-read manner, believe me, there's wonderful value in this book.

I've been reading it now on and off for so long, I don't even know when I began, but I still find myself drawn back to it time and time again when things happen, or I want to check something.

For example, there's a great deal of interest at the moment in yellowtail kingfish, and Neil Dunstan's been very excited about his bluebone species or "blueys" as they call them up in central Qld. Once again, I found myself drawn to reading my Guide To Fishes to be absolutely certain that we had identified the species correctly. Typically, and before I knew it,



instead of being just a quick three minute reference check, I spent an hour and a half, simply reading and enjoying that section of the book all over again!

It's definitely addictive reading, and I can think of no greater compliment to pay to a man I believe is truly described as one of the Australian fishing world's living treasures.

ISBN: 978-0-646-14106-0

Format: Hardback, 880 pages, 2.5kg. 25cm long, 18cm wide and 5cm deep

Email: [erngrant@aanet.com.au](mailto:erngrant@aanet.com.au)

Phone: 0466 401 440

Web: [www.grantsguidetofishes.com](http://www.grantsguidetofishes.com)

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