



Left: Google Earth view of the massive Yamba (left) Illuka (right) entrance to the Clarence River and the complex hydrodynamics involved in stabilising the entrance for the big commercial fishing fleet based here. That said, it is still one of the toughest bars for recreational anglers, and needs to be treated with the utmost respect.



Left: Well driven small craft, with suitable power and agility, can handle most bars - especially returning back in. The trick is to learn how to 'hitch hike' on the back of a wave - and NOT be tempted to drop over the front of it before the craft is back safely 'inside'. Oh - and please, no heroics, just wear the life jacket, okay? Going out - and coming back in.

Once You're Committed, There's Nowhere To Hide

Special Summer Boating Report By F&B Editor, Peter Webster

"Summer time, and the livin' is easy . . . fish are jumpin' and the sugar cane's high!" and if you'll forgive the adaptation of the Porgy and Bess classic to Australian standards, the fact is, summer time is here!

This is a fantastic time to have a boat and go boating – especially in the temperate southern parts of Australia under the northern tropics.

For boatowners south of Rockhampton on the East coast, and Exmouth in the West, January is the start of some of the best boating time of the year.

For our far northern readers, the wet season should have started in earnest, although typically, it seems later than usual this year. Normally, from December onwards, the temperature becomes hot and humid, with frequent thunderstorms and very often cyclonic activity.

To a very large extent this also applies further down south, because summer is often a fairly

tumultuous weather period, no matter where you live or go boating.

So from the outset, we should acknowledge that even though places such as Coffs Harbour and Batemans Bay are not really going to plan on cyclonic activity this summer, as we all remember from the tragic Sydney to Hobart yacht race back in '98, the opposite can happen here when gales - verging on cyclonic - can form in the Tasman Sea and create massive, almost uncontrollable sea conditions.

The point is that even though we southerners live in the more temperate zones without the regular and cyclonic patterns our northern Australia colleagues have to work with as a matter of course, weather conditions down here can also be extremely subjective at the height of summer.

In turn, this has considerable bearing on a major feature of summer boating traffic – how we

get in and out of river and lake entrances, which for much of the Eastern Seaboard are protected by sandbars in their natural state, and commonly, rock walls installed by governments over the years.

Rock walls such as those found in Narooma, Moruya, Port Macquarie, Ballina, Yamba Illuka (see pic at left), Tweed Heads, (etc) are all designed to provide a safer passage for transiting skippers in small craft, as well as the more regular commercial fleets that ply these ports.

This summer, thousands of "small craft" (that is, in the eyes of the authorities, anything in the trailerboat sphere) will venture out to sea across dozens of entrances scattered up and down the coastline of Australia. Ninety percent will do so safely, but just as surely as the sun comes up each morning, a percentage will (at best) scare themselves witless going out or coming back in, and at worst, end up in the suds.