



## Southern Brisbane Sportfishing Club Inc.

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# Newsletter

## December, 2004

### Next Meeting

***THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON MONDAY 6 December, 2004 at the Neighbourhood Centre, Mansfield Walk, Beenleigh (between the roundabout and Crete St).***

The venue can be accessed for off street parking via Kent Street (behind the Police station), or via James Street, just up from the Court House. Otherwise, park in James Street and walk behind the Gold Coast City Council branch office.

**NOTE:- We have a Bar. *Merry Christmas – Special “Colour” Newsletter follows.***

## **MEMBERSHIP FEES NOW Overdue! Please Pay.**

Single membership is \$55.00 p.a. - Family Membership is \$75.00 p.a.

### NEXT TRIP

**4-5-6 FEBRUARY 2005** – Bribie Island - Details to be provided separately.

Trip Captain – to be decided at the 6 December meeting.

**Guest Speaker:** John Cumberland will be the Guest Speaker at the December meeting, and his subject will be ***Barramundi Fishing in Accessible Stocked Catchments.*** Those who attended the special trip to Lake Awoonga from 13 to 20 November picked up a lot of information, including info about Lake Monduran, which is an hour closer to Brisbane than Lake Awoonga. John will lead a discussion designed to share this info with all members, for future use on individual and club trips.

**Future Trips:** See list below – last page of Newsletter. This is the 2005 Trips Calendar as it currently stands.

**Committee Members:** See below – at end of Newsletter.

**Trip Report:** Full details of our most enjoyable recent trip to Lake Awoonga will be revealed during the presentation to be led by John Cumberland at the December meeting. Come along and LEARN.

**Special Report: If you like to fish, you'd Barra join a Sportfishing Club!**

If you are ever unfortunate enough to be afflicted by a serious disease, you can rest assured there is at least one Association you can join to get help with it. And in that association you will find an absolute goldmine of information, and heaps of practical support.

So it is with Sportfishing Clubs. And whether you are a member or a prospective member, it is worth remembering the benefits of membership.

Just as an example, the November 2004 SBSFC special trip to Lake Awoonga chasing Barra illustrates many of the advantages of ANSA affiliated Sportfishing Club membership. They include:

1. **General Information.** Being a newcomer to the SBSFC I had never even heard of Lake Awoonga, let alone that it has loads of BIG Barra in it. This newfound knowledge is invaluable to me. On two previous occasions I have spent several thousand dollars (each) on fishing trips to the Drysdale River, on the coast North of Kununurra, primarily to chase Barra. The trip to Lake Awoonga cost a mere fraction of the Drysdale trips.

Take the travel costs. You can drive the 600 Kms to Awoonga in a Subaru Outback (towing a boat) for about \$60 each way in fuel costs. (Make that \$150 each way if you drive a Landcruiser or similar.)

Of course, we all know the real cost of driving a Subaru or similar is at least 30 cents per Km, of which fuel is only 10 cents, but we can always delude ourselves into ignoring the other 20 cents per Km. Make that 75 cents per Km all up, of which fuel is 25 cents, for your Landcruiser or similar.

And you can easily tow your own boat to Awoonga – not so easily to the Drysdale or the Gulf!

Add between \$25 and \$42.50 per night for accommodation, an hour's boat fuel per day, and you just about have the full holiday cost at Lake Awoonga. So that bit of typical General Information is worth **big** savings to club members. This is only an example – other similarly valuable info is provided at virtually every club meeting.

2. **Location Specific Information.** Other club members have invariably fished each trip area, so they know the ropes and can advise you in advance. The Trip Briefing Sheet typically contains maps, details on where to stay, where to put your boat in, how to avoid being locked out of the boat ramp until 7 am whilst still being able to fish after dark, what gear to take (e.g. Red Claw traps, Shrimp Traps, Crab Pots), and which tackle is best.

3. **Safety.** Boating in unfamiliar waters can clearly be risky. The risks are greatly minimised if you are with others who know the area. If you need a tow, or if you have an accident, it is great to have mates nearby who can help out.

4. **Insurance.** Most of our annual membership fee goes to pay for the ANSA insurance policy. That policy provides accident and public liability insurance which the individual fisher could never afford to put in place as an individual. It is an important club membership benefit.

5. **Skills Training.** Whether it be fishing techniques or boat and trailer maintenance info (see article further on in this Newsletter), club Guest Speakers provide specialised training and information that fishers would normally find difficult to access. These can be invaluable.

6. **Camaraderie.** Any fishing trip is made that much more enjoyable by the company of like minded mates, both on the water and off. It is good to have a second person in your boat, for all sorts of reasons, and group meals and BBQs are always memorable parts of every trip. Of course, a thick skin also helps at times! Even having company and a co-driver for the trips to and from the fishing spots is a big advantage.

7. **Cost Sharing.** Cars and boats cost about the same to run with one passenger or two, and accommodation costs can invariably be halved if you have someone to share with.

8. **Conclusion.** So, if you belong to a sportfishing club – stay with it. If you are considering joining, jump in! You'll be very glad you did.

**SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US:** In Caloundra, the locals have a saying: Fishing club members arrive

with a clean shirt and a fifty dollar note – and never change either!

### **CHANGED YOUR WHEEL BEARINGS YET?**

At our October meeting, the Guest Speaker was **Andrew Weekes**, a Mechanic friend of Dave Weston. His topic was: “So you think your Trailer Maintenance is up to scratch, eh? Well let me tell you a few things.....”

Andrew did a great job – and he put the wind right up your Newsletter Editor.

So, before towing my boat the 1,200 Kms to Lake Awoonga and back, I decided to fit new wheel bearings to my boat trailer. Andrew had made it look easy, so I had a go at doing it myself. In the process I learned some things which other club members may find useful.

Incidentally, when I pulled my five year old wheel bearings off I found that some salt water had got past one of the marine seals, in spite of the Bearing Buddies being packed full of grease. Corrosion had begun, so it was only a matter of time until that bearing seized up. Thanks, Andrew, for the timely warning. My trip to Gladstone and back just MIGHT have been a disaster, but for your advice.

The first piece of useful info I discovered is that you can buy new marine bearing kits very cheaply from **Active Fabrications**, 63-65 Logan River Road, Beenleigh – Phone 3807 6666. My Holden bearings cost me just \$9.35 plus GST (\$10.29) per complete kit, including the marine seal. When you see what you get in this kit, that is an unbelievably low price. That’s just \$30.86 for three sets (I bought a spare set to carry with me).

Of course, changing the bearings wasn’t quite as easy as Andrew had made it look. For example, I wasn’t sure how much of the bearing to knock out of the hub. So I asked the guys at Active Fabrications a few questions – and they went pale and suggested I get some professional help (with the bearings, you smart arse!).

That’s when I gleaned my other piece of very useful info. **Mark**, proprietor of **R.T.L. Trtrailers**, 79 Boundary Street, Beenleigh – Phone 3287 4241 – is a very handy person to know. He very obligingly and skillfully repeated for me the demo that Andrew Weekes did, actually packing and fitting the new bearings in the process. When I asked him how much, he said: “\$10 will do”. I happily gave him \$20, of course. So, guys, replace your bearings – and help is at hand if you need it.

Incidentally, Mark builds trailers to order, and I suspect his prices might be very competitive. He also does trailer repairs. Keep him in mind.

**A REAL FISHERMAN.** One day a man came home and was greeted by his wife dressed in a very sexy nightie. "Tie me up," she purred, "and you can do anything you want." So he tied her up - and went fishing.

### **GETTING BARRAMUNDI FISHING INTO PERSPECTIVE.**

Is your glass half full, or half empty? Barra fishing trips can be reported in two very different ways.

At Lake Awoonga recently I fished for over thirty hours and had only two hits. One failed to hook up, so I only landed one fish in five days of fishing.

We all fished for at least six hours each day, casting continuously. During one period of boredom I counted how many casts I made in five minutes – surprisingly, it was ten. So 30 hours of casting amounts to at least 3,000 casts.

3,000 casts for one fish!

Doesn’t sound all that tempting, does it? Like watching paint dry – or fishing for big Jewfish.

**That’s the ‘glass half empty’ version. The ‘glass half full’ version goes like this.**

Most fished Saturday afternoon on arrival. We all fished for two 3 hour plus sessions each on Sunday and Monday, and again on Tuesday morning, but we were really just checking the lake out at that stage – gathering info from talking to the Rangers and other fishers in the caravan park, and then checking out their advice on the water.

On Tuesday evening, just on dark, the big one hit my lure completely without warning. It took the lure in less than two feet of water and, on feeling the strain of the line, immediately headed for deeper water.

It was spectacular, to say the least!

For the first twenty metres it splashed furiously across the water, rather like a turbo-charged pelican taking off. That run climaxed with a tail stand, and then the fish dived like a submarine under attack. I wondered if it would stop before it spooled me. .

Using 20 lb mono line and a 35 lb mono leader, I was fishing light by Lake Awoonga standards – the rangers use 30 lb line with 60 lb leaders. Hence, I wasn't sure that I had the gear to stop this fish.

There are plenty of stories around Awoonga about 'horses' taking off with lures on very heavy gear, and simply never coming back.

When it finished its initial run, this fish 'dug in' in the deep water. The 20 lb line could not persuade it to come anywhere near our boat, and every couple of minutes it nonchalantly took a bit more line off my reel, even though the drag was set as tightly as I dare. Did I have the fish, or did it have me?

After what seemed like about twenty minutes I decided discretion was the better part of valour, so we pulled up the anchor and started the motor. It was safer to take the boat to this fish than to try to get the fish to the boat.

When the fish finally surfaced it was totally exhausted. It lay placidly on the surface whilst my mate slipped the big Environet under it. I thought the aluminium handle on the Environet might fail as the fish was lifted over the side of the boat.

It weighed in at 22 lbs, and measured 92 cm. I was absolutely delighted to have caught such a fish, which turned out to be the biggest caught by our group that trip.

For the rest of the week, every cast carried with it the expectation of another similar 'hit and run' by a huge Barra. They strike so suddenly and unexpectedly that you have to be fully prepared immediately your lure hits the water, every time.

And they can take the lure as it hits the water, halfway back to the boat, or just as you are about to lift it out of the water. Years ago I watched a big Barra 'stand' vertically in the water a few feet below my lure, which was stationary at my feet after being trolled across a thirty metre wide gauge. I had nowhere more to wind it in, so I did a little figure of eight with it – and the Barra struck at it as soon as it started moving again. Sadly, he hit the lure but missed the hooks.

In fact, my second strike at Awoonga this trip occurred as I dropped the lure over the side to check the drag on my reel before I cast. I saw the fish – it was only a few feet from the boat. On another occasion, again very close to the boat, I got a strike on just my fifth cast in an area where there were no sticks visible above the water, and we really had very little expectation of catching a Barra.

**My point is this. Once you have had a big Barra take your lure for a spectacular run without warning of any kind, there is a tremendous sense of expectation with every cast. You simply never know whether or not this cast will be the one.**

This sense of expectation keeps you going, cast after cast, even after your casting arm and shoulder begin to ache.

Of course, catching fish is only part of the enjoyment. There's also the fun of 'messing about in boats', navigating unfamiliar waterways, watching the beautiful sunsets, watching the passing array of beautiful bird life (144 species live on and near the lake), enjoying the beauty of the dawn as you sit on glassy water, challenging the elements as you cross open sections of water in strong winds – there's just a never ending series of reasons to be there.

On the trip home, I was thinking through all this, and wondering whether or not one big Barra was 'enough' for a week's fishing. Most of us only boated one or two Barra for the week, with perhaps three or four strikes or hook ups each on top of that. Was that enough to justify going on this trip?

Then I asked myself: 'How long since each of us caught a big Jewfish?' (In my case, never.)

Very similar in size and appearance, the Jew is every bit as elusive as the Barra – probably more so. In fact, 'hunting' wild animals always involves lots of time and patience. Some birdwatchers [the sub-species is called Twitchers] travel thousands of miles and spend days on end just to see one particular type of bird in the wild.

My thoughts then went back to my second fishing trip to the Drysdale, a river that is virtually 'alive' with Barra. On

that occasion I caught more Barramundi than anyone else on the trip, yet my count was only 13 Barra in nine full days of fishing. The biggest one I caught was 25 pounds – barely larger than the 22 pounder I caught at Awoonga.

By the way, just before we left Lake Awoonga someone from the caravan park caught a 25 **kilogram** (55 lb) Barra which measured 114 cms. So Lake Awoonga certainly has some huge fish there for the taking.

Did you know a Barra in Lake Awoonga reaches its legal size of 58 cm (3.5 Kg) in just one year from its release as a fingerling? And they continue to add 3.5 Kgs per year from then on. So a 22 lb fish is about three years old. A 25 Kg fish has eluded millions of lure casts for about seven years in an environment where there are no ‘other’ predators (once you are too big for a Pelican to eat) and an abundance of Garfish and other food.

Incidentally, our group caught enough Red Claw Crayfish for us to have them as an entrée most nights before dinner.

Of course, up at the Drysdale we caught a lot of other fish as well – 23 species in all. But we also ‘caught’ a lot of other things that weren’t nearly so pleasant. Like millions of mosquitoes – some disease carrying. And heat so bad it gave me a terrible heat rash after about a week, and badly burned my lips if I didn’t wear a Bandana tied across my face all the time, and made the Tinnie too hot to sit on.

Most nights were too hot to sleep, and if you slept you woke up in a pool of perspiration in the morning – no air-conditioned cabins up there! Plus lots of crocs – a novelty at first, but later on just a constant threat to your safety. Not to mention the abundance of bloody big sharks, which were very partial to a meal of hooked fish.

By comparison, the fishing at Lake Awoonga was very comfortable indeed. Virtually no mossies whilst we were there in November. Air conditioned accommodation, cool nights, no salt water spray, no mud or debris in the boat, no smelly bait – positively genteel! The boat needed almost no cleaning after a week’s fishing – that was a first.

Sadly, the concensus view amongst our members was that the Lake Awoonga caravan park was about the worst managed park any of us had ever stayed in, and grossly over-priced. One could make many well founded criticisms of the Lake Awoonga caravan park – it is a real comedy of errors, in its layout, its construction and its management. It succeeds only because of its proximity to a big lake stocked with big Barra.

Indeed, the Lake Monduran caravan park looks much nicer, much better managed, and is an hour closer to Brisbane. The four cabins are brand new, and quite a bit cheaper.

Lake Monduran also has plenty of big Barra, and is stocked with Bass as well. It is a huge lake, and probably less vulnerable to disruption of fishing by strong winds. Our club is seriously thinking of going there next year instead of Lake Awoonga.

On balance, it is unrealistic to expect to catch a LOT of big Barramundi anywhere. Having said that, there is a great deal of luck involved with the timing of such a trip. During a week long trip in November 2003, John Cumberland and Neil McNeil say they caught almost no Barra in Awoonga until the Saturday morning they were leaving. **Then they boated five each in one session.** One was 25 Kg, and another 22 Kg.

Frankly, I thought it was all worthwhile, and a very enjoyable week’s holiday at a very affordable price. I’ll be going back up there with the club next year – preferably to Lake Monduran.

## NEWS FROM ANSA AND OTHER CLUBS

### ➤ **Smart fishing starts online!**

Test your fisheries knowledge and take the new fish quiz on the DPI&F Fishweb site. Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/extra/asp/fishquiz/fishquiz.asp](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/extra/asp/fishquiz/fishquiz.asp)

### ➤ **Fishing survey to be cast into Queensland households**

Approximately 25,000 households will be surveyed over the next two months as part of the [Recreational Fishing Information system \(RFISH\)](#) monitoring program, to help build a comprehensive picture of recreational fishing in Queensland. Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3742&db=media>

## ➤ Anglers urged to follow freshwater regulations

DPI&F is encouraging freshwater anglers to keep up to date with the latest fishing regulations to ensure Queensland's freshwater fisheries and habitats are protected and conserved.

Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16242.html](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16242.html)

## ➤ Reminder to play it safe in the water this summer

As the weather heats up in North Queensland and water-based activities become more popular, DPI&F officers have issued a reminder for people to take the necessary precautions to make their activities as enjoyable as possible.

Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16225.html](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16225.html)

## ➤ New campaign urges caution in croc country

Environment Minister Desley Boyle has launched the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's "Croc wise in croc country" education campaign for 2004, with a reminder that fishers who ignore crocodile warnings are putting themselves at risk.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3454&db=media>

## ➤ Reaper Cheat Inflatable Rashie (The New Inventors - ABC TV)

The Reaper Cheat Inflatable Rashie is a rash shirt that can inflate and act as a life vest when necessary, offering you more than just protection from the sun.

Visit [www.abc.net.au/newinventors/txt/s1211418.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/newinventors/txt/s1211418.htm)

(Great idea, but they cost \$150 each at this stage.)

## ➤ Mud crab fishery recognised for environmental practice

Queensland's mud crab fishery has been acknowledged as ecologically sustainable following extensive consultation between DPI&F and the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage.

Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16305.html](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16305.html)

## ➤ Moreton Bay Marine Park zones to change

People are being urged to have their say on a proposal to amend zoning and boundaries in small sections of the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3443&db=media>

## ➤ Finding the best way to protect Queensland's water

The Queensland Government has embarked on a major initiative aimed at finding the best ways to protect Queensland's priceless water environments and every Queenslanders has a chance to be involved.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3650&db=media>

## ➤ The grand old art of fish counting

How do the Territory's fishery managers know from year to year how many barras are in the river systems? The answer is simple. They count them .... and to do that they use a BARRA-CADE!!

Visit [http://kakadu.nt.gov.au/servlet/page?](http://kakadu.nt.gov.au/servlet/page?_pageid=155&dad=portal30&schema=PORTAL30&type=site&fsiteid=173&fid=172484&fnavbarid=113294&fnavbarsiteid=173&fdisplayurl=)

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## ➤ Net widens for suspected fish law offenders

The Queensland Government has secured unanimous support in State Parliament to allow intelligence obtained by boating and fisheries enforcement to be shared with other enforcement agencies and government departments.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3654&db=media>

## ➤ More Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers

The State Government has announced one of its largest annual intakes of new recruits for Queensland QBFP with 11 new officers for bases along the east coast.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=3822&db=media>

## ➤ Flathead fish survival project begins

Queensland fisheries researchers are joining with Tasmanian scientists in a major project studying flathead survival after capture and release. Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16306.html](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16306.html)

## ➤ **When it comes to choosing fish for ornamental ponds, DPI&F is encouraging people to choose native fish.**

Visit [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16316.html](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/news/NewsReleases/16316.html)

### **THE EFFECT OF BAROTRAUMA ON FISH SWIM BLADDERS AND FISHERIES IMPLICATIONS.**

The term “barotrauma” refers to the injuries sustained by a fish when subjected to dramatic changes in pressure. Most notably, rapid reductions in pressure are experienced when fish are caught at depth and hauled to the surface (depressurisation).

Expansion of the swim bladder is a common occurrence in fish caught at reasonably shallow depths (<15m) and while it is not a lethal symptom of barotrauma, released fish can often be seen floating for up to 24 hours after being released, making them more susceptible to predation and increased water/air temperatures.

Eventually however, for fish that survive these periods of increased threat of mortality, gas is slowly expelled from the swim bladder and they are able to resubmerge.

As a result of size and bag limits being introduced into most recreational fisheries, many undersized, excess or unwanted fish are released every year.

The survival of these discarded fish has previously been given little attention with most catch and release programs simply relying on the assumption of 100% survival of released fish. In recent years however, quantifying Post-Release Survival (PRS) of released line caught fish has become more of a focus for fisheries scientists, in order to gain higher accuracy of stock assessments and to help in the sustainable management of Australian line fisheries.

Post-Release Survival of released fish has been shown to be determined by a whole suite of stress related factors including hooking damage, hooking location, hook shape, capture and handling time, and also importantly, barotrauma.

This study will aim to determine the pressure decrease that will lead to swim bladder bursting in a suite of tropical reef fish and also various local (Moreton Bay) species. This will in turn give an indication of the depth at which severe barotrauma occurs for each of the species and also the resilience these fish have to the stresses of capture from depth when they are hauled to the surface by fishers. Accurate estimates of post release survival (PRS) of these fish are critical to developing successful management strategies.

Acquired knowledge from this study will contribute to predictions of PRS rates for each species, which will ultimately lead to more accurate stock assessments and hence improved manageability and sustainability of the fisheries which these species support.

#### **How you can help:**

I will need 5-10 different species of fish from the Moreton Bay and surrounding waters, particularly **Bream, sweetlip, snapper, trevally and whiting**. For each species I need about 15 fish of a range of different sizes, preferably caught at shallow depth (<15m). Fish need to be intact, and can be fresh or frozen but either way they should be put on ice straight after capture. I will also need details on where the fish were caught and the depth.

I am more than happy to go out on the water with any anglers to do some fishing myself, in fact from my perspective it would give me some good experience as I have not been out into Moreton Bay before, so any anglers who may want some company, please don't hesitate to contact me.

This research project is being conducted as an honours project at the University of Queensland in collaboration with researchers from Dpi (southern fisheries centre), Deception Bay, as part of a larger research project on Post release survival of released line caught fish. For any questions or queries regarding this project please contact:

Olivier Bittar

Ph: (07) 3721 8310

Cell: 0410 360 474

Email: [Olivier\\_Bittar@hotmail.com](mailto:Olivier_Bittar@hotmail.com)

#### **FUTURE TRIPS:**

**Please refer to the 2005 Trips Calendar attached.**

#### **For general enquiries about trips:**

Contact the nominated Trip Captain, or

John Cumberland:

Phone (07) 3801 1110

Mobile 0421 281 805

Email [cumberlandj@powerup.com.au](mailto:cumberlandj@powerup.com.au)

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