



Southern Brisbane Sportfishing Club Inc.

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Newsletter

June, 2005

Next Meeting

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE AT 7:30 PM ON MONDAY 6 June, 2005 (even if it's a public holiday) 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. Please remember the gear swap table at the meeting – bring your swaps or items for sale, especially fishing magazines.

MEMBERSHIP FEES – Great News! – No increase in fees this year! Join at the June meeting and you will be paid up to 30 June 2006. All members are expected to renew for 2005/6 at the July meeting please. Start saving NOW!

Single membership is \$55.00 p.a. - Family Membership is \$75.00 p.a. (Same as last year, thanks to the negotiating skills of the ANSA Committee in respect of the insurance premium for the 2005/6 year).

JUNE TRIP

MORETON BAY SNAPPER: On Sunday 19 June the club trip is chasing Snapper – or Squire, at least – in Moreton Bay. We launch from Raby Bay (to be confirmed at the 6 June meeting), and fish that area if Moreton Bay is too rough. **John Eldred is the Trip Captain**, and if anyone can show us how to catch Snapper, he can. Trip Sheet available at the 6 June meeting. For details, phone John on 3344 2605.

Guest Speaker: Our Guest speaker will be Duncan from Fishhead/Redland Bay Tackle, talking on 'Moreton Bay Snapper'. We're told Duncan does a very good presentation – DON'T MISS IT!

Acknowledgement: This Newsletter was kindly copied by Kay Elson's office at no charge to the club.

Fishers Caught in Poverty Trap

Many thanks to those who donated to the Opportunity International appeal for funds to build fishing boats for Indian Tsunami victims. We only raised \$50, but every little bit helps.

COMPARING FISHING CLUBS

The Burrum Heads long weekend trip last month with Brisbane SFC was very pleasant. David Rawlins, Garth Dale and Ray Bricknell represented SBSFC. Garth and Ray took their tinnies, and the weather was calm enough to allow Garth to venture out to "The Eight Mile" reef on the Sunday in complete safety in his 4.2 metre boat.

Not a lot of 'keepers' were caught, but everyone took home a feed of fish. David Rawlins had a lot of fun with a 3.1 Kg, 64 cm Golden Trevally caught on a live Yabbie in the mouth of the inlet from Ray's little 3.7 metre tinnie, and Garth got a kick out of catching five school Mackerel at the Eight Mile reef. Perhaps surprisingly for Mackerel, they were pulled off the bottom using live Herring as bait. David Rawlins also proved to be a whiz at catching small Flounder in 'Flounder Ally' on the drift, using live Yabbies, and was able to keep three 'legals' for the table.

One of the Brisbane Club guys, Steve, managed to pull a 2.5 Kg 'Mother-in-Law' fish (Painted Sweetlip or Slatey Bream) off a reef using 1 Kg breaking strain mono – quite a feat! His fishing partner, however, delivered the quote of the weekend during drinks at the end of the day: "Watching someone catch a 2.5 Kg fish on 1 Kg line is definitely not a spectator sport." (Picture below.)



Dave Marsh, highly organised Treasurer of the BSFC, caught the biggest fish of the weekend – a Spanish Mackerel which weighed in at 14.5 Kg. He generously gave all who wanted them some fillets to take home. (Picture on right at top.)

Speaking of weighing in prompts your Editor to make a few observations about the differences between the two clubs – BSFC and SBSFC.



The Brisbane club has a very different 'persona' to our club. About two thirds of their trips are offshore, and hence their boats are generally bigger than those of our members – though both clubs have their exceptions, of course.

And the Brisbane club puts much more emphasis on competition – friendly though it is – than our club does. They still willingly share info with one another, and have great camaraderie, but their focus is largely on winning competition points. Hence, they tend to fish with very light lines, down towards the 1 Kg and 2 Kg class, in an endeavour to maximize the points they score from any given fish caught. And they all use mono, because braid can't be accurately classified, I'm told..

This emphasis, it seems, also influences where they fish. If you want bigger fish, you generally have to go offshore – and so they do. Fishing offshore has another big advantage when you are using very light line. That is, once you get your fish clear of its 'home structure', and out into the open water, then if you are patient enough you will probably get it to the boat. Unless it is a shark! And unless it takes enough of your light line to allow it to finish up swimming around the anchor rope of an adjacent boat – or an adjacent fisher's line.



Of course, fishing offshore these days implies GPS navigation, and so your Editor was amazed to see a laptop computer produced on the first night – on a fishing trip! This was to allow ease of entry of the appropriate co-ordinates of reefs into the GPS equipments.

Incidentally, if you decide to get a bigger boat and do more offshore fishing, make sure you get a bigger cheque book to go with it. Apart from the cost of his 5.35 m fibreglass boat (and trailer to match), Dave Marsh's 175 HP outboard used 120 litres of fuel in one day's fishing – at \$1:20 per litre. Of course, a lighter offshore tinnie with a 40 HP outboard will also do the job, as was demonstrated by Jeremy Arnold, Brisbane SFC President. He only used about 25 litres of fuel in his 4.5 m centre console on that same day, travelling around 50 km. Dave Marsh went chasing fish on a second reef some considerable distance from the Eight Mile.

Then came time to weigh in the fish – and out came the club's electronic weighing machine, which cost the Brisbane club a cool \$1,000. The fish had to be weighed by a different person to the Recorder, and the weights were noted down to three decimal places. Serious stuff.

Fortunately, all this emphasis on light line fishing and recording for points is done in a friendly, non-competitive atmosphere. The SBSFC visitors were made to feel very welcome, even to the extent of being invited to share in the free BBQ put on by BSFC on the Saturday night.

Incidentally, sleepy little Burrum Heads – 20 minutes north of Hervey Bay – has been 'discovered' as a place to live. The last remaining vacant waterfront house block can be bought for a mere \$1,050,000! And there are fairly ordinary looking houses for sale for around \$1 million - one of the few 'flash' houses in the town will set you back \$1.5 million. The place looks like an embryo Hervey Bay, and is developing quite a nice feel to it. So get in quickly if you want to secure your retirement dream home at Burrum Heads, which appears to have little to offer other than water views and fishing. And the fishing is no better than around the Gold Coast, if our weekend there is any guide.

Your Committee is trying to organise a joint Brisbane and South Brisbane weekend trip to Jumpinpin later this year, with overnight accommodation on Houseboats down at the Pin. Should be a great weekend if we can pull it off.

SOFT PLASTICS BEST FOR PREDATORS

Here's a bit more evidence to add to the debate about Soft Plastics and Hard Bodied Lures Vs Real Bait. Four club members braved the forecast 20 knot wind on Saturday morning 21 May to give the mouth of the Brisbane River another try. Due to the early onset of dementia, they all got out of bed around 2:30 to 3:00 am, and both boats were in the water by 4:45 am. Run in tide. Bloody cold it was, too.

Both boats headed down to the area where the reclamation dredging is going on, with not much luck early on. Garth Dale caught and released a barely legal Flathead on a 4" Powerbait, and Ray Bricknell boated and released an almost legal Squire, hooked whilst slowly retrieving another 4" Powerbait. Dean Rosolen caught a small Taylor on a hard bodied lure.

Then, about 9:30am, on the early part of the run out, John Eldred struck it lucky. Two casts with 4" Powerbaits produced two legal Squire. One was 47 cm and weighed 1.1 Kg, the other 51 cm and 1.6 Kg.



Notice that all three species caught on soft plastics and lures were 'aggressive predators'. No need for live bait to catch those buggers!

FISHING AN INTELLIGENCE TEST?

Remember the story about our Boat Ramp Bream Competition on one of our Tweed River trips? You may recall that several of SBSFC's finest tried every conceivable form of soft plastic and real bait, but could not hook even one of the blighters. Then John Cumberland, who was making the sandwiches for lunch at the time, gave his son Andrew some COOKED chicken skin – and Andrew killed 'em from then on!

Well, I am becoming convinced that fishing is an intelligence test – for the fish.

Flathead and similar bottom feeding predators – e.g. Flounder, surprisingly enough – are clearly stupid. They are such opportunistic feeders, lying hidden by sand on the bottom in shallow water, they will literally eat anything that moves overhead. All the fisher has to do is be lucky enough to pass the "anything" over the top of the waiting predator and, BANG! – he's on.

Bream, at the other end of the scale, are notoriously cautious feeders. Chris Eldred told us all only recently how the Bream under the jetties give you just one chance. Catch or miss one, and that's it for that jetty for the next hour. We all know from experience this is true.

Well, consider this scenario, and see if you agree with my *intelligence test* hypothesis.

I was at Urunga, fishing just off the rock wall near the mouth of the Bellinger River. The Bellinger and the Kalang rivers share the same mouth, but still the sea washes the sand in faster than the rivers can flush it out. The unmarked channels

are a 'moving feast', and hard to find. Lot's of walking your boat on a rope whilst you learn where they are.

It's mid-morning. Second week of May. Rising tide. Close to the top. No Blackfish anywhere to be seen – they've not yet come in to spawn. Water about three metres deep. With Polaroids you can see the Bream below your boat about two metres down. Clearly feeding on whatever the current brings along.

Hundreds of them – all along the rock wall. All 'just under-size', of course. "The big Ocean Bream haven't come in yet, mate", the locals say, looking very knowledgeable. "We get some monsters along this wall a bit later in May".

Hoping there might be a few legal Bream amongst those I can see, I set about trying to catch the little buggers.

At first they are quite difficult to catch. Unweighted live Yabbies (pumped a few metres away) are treated with great suspicion. Only after the Toads and Butterfish have had a go at it would the Bream take any part in the action – if there was any Yabbie left. Sometimes a live Yabbie, thrown in without a hook, could swim around on the surface for up to a minute or two with impunity. The Bream inspected it again and again, from as close as a foot away, but wouldn't attack it. Clearly, to them this was a suspicious object – you simply don't get live Yabbies swimming around this far from the sand banks in normal circumstances. Put a hook in it, and your Yabbie is guaranteed impunity from attack!

My old fallback bait – and that of John Cumberland also – is chicken breast. I never leave home without some. Remember the sad story of when I had a school of huge Bream under my boat at Urunga and all the bait I had was Green Weed? Those Bream were totally spooked by any form of soft plastic, so all I got to do that day was look at them and drool. That day I resolved never again to go fishing without at least some form of bait in the boat.

OK – so how was I going to overcome the inherent caution being displayed by the Bream on this occasion? The answer, it turns out, was Burley. Not the crap that the chain stores sell via Rex Hunt's promotion of his burley bucket and burley pellets – which turn into a glutinous mass when submerged in his plastic burley 'cage', even in strong current. In that promo, Rex says: "If you don't burley, don't bother to fish!" Well, that really depends on where and how you are fishing, doesn't it? Not much point drifting (or similar) and burleying.

But it is certainly standard practice when fishing for Blackfish to throw a scoop of burley into the water around your float on **every** drift. That burley typically contains only sand and finely chopped green weed (sounds like a recipe, doesn't it?).

On this trip, primarily a Nigger fishing trip for me, I decided to beef up my burley with some bread and whatever else came to hand – like the fat trimmed off my sandwich meat. I also threw in a handful of some proprietary burley mix I was conned into buying off a chain store shelf, and probably won't ever buy again. And some of Rex Hunt's useless burley pellets. And some chopped up dead Yabbies from the previous day. A real 'brew'.

Of course, all these 'extra ingredients' did nothing for the Blackfish – but they certainly appealed to the Bream. I even had one decent 'down' on my cabbage weed, most un-Blackfish like, and I think the cabbage was taken from the hook by a confused Bream in fierce competition with his siblings.

So I started throwing a scoop of burley in on top of my unweighted Yabbies. And in no time flat I had caught four Bream – all about 15 to 20 cm long. The legal size in NSW is 25 mm, with a bag limit of 20. In your dreams! You do not get to feel a bite – the technique is to watch your slack line. As it starts to go taught you just put a bit of weight on it, and you're on.

The next day I developed the technique a little further. I actually found that a tiny cube of chicken on a whiting hook caught a fish almost every time the burley cloud passed over the bait. Sometimes they got away with the bait, of course. I caught so many small Bream – one every bait – that I eventually tired of throwing the little buggers back. Along with the small Toads that sometimes got to the bait first. The Toads and Butterfish are much less timid than the Bream – I guess that's the only way they get anything to eat. 'Spoils to the brave!'

By the way – notice that these Bream were not spooked by their mates being dragged from the water, kicking and screaming, before their eyes! Not like the better educated jetty Bream.

I actually ran out of chicken, even after cutting the small pieces into two. But I had a few dozen live Yabbies – having been taught by 'The Champ' (David Rawlins) how to pump more Yabbies from each hole. So I started putting live Yabbies on the same unweighted whiting hook. And the catch rate went down dramatically (which explains why I caught only four the previous day). But put a small piece of Yabbie on the tip of the hook and – BINGO!

So, obviously, you need to blend the appearance of your bait in with the little scraps in your burley. If the bait is too big, it is obvious to the fish that it is not part of the burley mix. It's that simple.

So I come back to the headline for this article: ***I think fishing is an intelligence test for the fish!***

And, as a consequence, I suspect the only fish we fishers catch are the stupid one's! (Or the juveniles trying to get a feed before their elders gobble up all the food.) Unless we become EXTREMELY GOOD at blending our bait (real or Urban Myth) in with the surrounding tucker.

What say you? Would any member like to put forward a dissenting view – in the form of an article for the next Newsletter (which will be edited in my absence by Ross Williamson (ross@climaxaus.com). Come on guys – have your say.

Footnote: As you all know, I have been down at Urunga on the NSW Central Coast (just south of Coffs Harbour) on a five day fishing trip. And it's

amazing how much info you pick up from the locals when you launch from the same boat ramp for two or three consecutive days.

Unfortunately neither the Blackfish nor the big Ocean Bream had yet come into the river to spawn. The extended period of warm weather seems to have delayed the lowering of the water temperature in the rivers, and I understand that the lower water temperature is the signal to the fish to come in.

As for the abundance of undersize Bream, it is almost as though the 'near adult' Bream were hanging about near the river mouth waiting to go out to sea with the 'grown ups' in the next few weeks? I wonder? There were THOUSANDS of them all feeding along the rock wall just inside the river mouth. And further upstream, in a quiet little creek about five feet deep, I came across the 'Bream Kindergarten'. About 50 to 75 cms long, you would wonder how they could have the gall to tackle a live Yabbie half their length. But they did – with gusto.

Chumline or Chumpline?

It never ceases to amaze me how marketers get away with selling products which simply do not achieve their stated purpose – like the Gold Coast based Mozzie Trap which sells for hundreds of dollars and catches everything airborne except mozzies!

I found such a product on the shelf of Woolworths Beenleigh recently, and decided to give it a try. It is called Captain Gordon's CHUMLINE. It is marketed out of South Africa by a Captain 'Flash' Gordon. He reckons 'anything more effective is illegal'.

The stuff comes in a pressure pack can, and you are directed to spray it on whatever you have on the business end of your line – soft plastics, hard bodied lures, bait – even live bait! (Shake the can first, it says.)

It coats your bait, lure, etc., with what looks very much like the spray pack foam used these days to fill voids around service openings on building sites. And here's the rub!

As soon as you drop it in the water – even right alongside your boat – it comes adrift from the bait and floats on the surface as a gelatinous blob. And, whereas the local Bream were eating bread with gusto, they would not eat this crap.

Well done, Captain Gordon – your nickname might be Flash, and your international marketing might be flash, but your product appears to be a clear case of selling under false pretences. Be warned members – save your money.

Handy Hint – Yabbie Pumps

For those members who still like to use bait – especially live bait such as Yabbies – here's a Handy Hint worth knowing about.

If your Yabbie pump loses its suction and needs a new washer, there's no need to buy one. Simply find an old Thong (the footwear variety), and cut a piece out of the sole using the end of the Yabbie pump. Just rotate the pump back and forth until it cuts through the sole.

The resulting washer is a perfect fit for your Yabbie pump, and will work at least as well as any bought washer.

If you have any handy ideas like this one, email them to the Editor so we can share them with other members.

TOP NEGOTIATOR

A year or two back your Editor went into Cash Converters in Beenleigh to buy a cheap second-hand mobile phone charger. Whilst the guy was searching through their cardboard box of assorted chargers for the right one, I went for a stroll around the shop.

I found a Blackfish Rod and Alvey Reel combo which were significantly better than the ones I had. The price was less than I would have paid for either the rod or the reel new, so I bought it.

Then, a few weeks back, I was kitting up for the Burrum Heads trip. Greg Mifsud kindly sold me a brand new light game reel he had bought as one of a pair from the USA for \$60 each, so all I then had to do was find a light game rod to put it on. So I wandered back into Cash Converters 'on the off chance'. Sure enough, they had one. True, it was one Noah had used when catching species to put on the Ark, but it would do – and it was cheap at \$39.95 with a reasonable looking spinning reel on it.

Alongside it in the rack was a nice looking spinning rod and reel combo which looked just right for Jewfish. It also looked cheap at \$49.95. So I thought to myself: "If these guys will let me have both of these for \$80, I'll buy them both."

So I fronted up to the counter and made my offer. The girl behind the counter took it in her stride. "So you're offering \$80?", she said. "OK – let me check."

"Aha!", I thought, "they must do deals like this all the time." At that stage I was feeling pretty pleased with myself for being so clever as to make this offer.

She went to a calculator and keyed in the figures. Then she came back and said, without smiling: "You can have them both for \$62.93 – perhaps you didn't notice we are having a 30% Off Storewide Sale?" Funny – I didn't feel quite so smug as I handed over my credit card.

EARLY WARNING – BOOK POTTSVILLE NOW FOR JULY

Our Luderick trip this year will be based at Pottsville. Lloyd Willmann and Ray Bricknell are going down on Monday morning 4 July, and we'll check out the Blackfish and other fishing in the general area during that week. There is beach and rock wall fishing as well as Luderick fishing at Pottsville. Brunswick Heads is just a little way North – well regarded as a Nigger fishing spot. We are trying to line up a member of the Pottsville Fishing Club as our Guest Speaker for the July meeting, to give us the drum on the locals' secrets.

Interested Members can come down for as many days as they wish, even down to a Day Trip on Sunday 11 July. Pottsville is only about 1 ¼ hours from Beenleigh. **But here's the rub:** This is a very nice, and hence VERY popular caravan park **all year round**. Hence, it will pay to book your accommodation NOW, even if all you want is a tent site. **Ask to be located close to van site 59, which we'll use as our base.** There will be a **Club Feast** Saturday night at the van park – **Choices Restaurant** across the road does great take-aways! So at least book to stay Saturday night. (Those who prefer can BBQ, of course).

The number for Pottsville Beach Holiday Park South is (02) 6676 1050. They have cabins available at this time – en suite and no en suite, and plenty of tent sites – but if you leave it too late they'll all be gone. **Better to book and cancel than to miss out by booking too late!**

SAND WHITING LIKE JEWFISH

Can you stand one more story from my week of fishing out of the Boambee Bay Resort, just south of Coffs?

I know you would want me to save the best story till last, so here it is. Keep in mind that, although I had caught heaps of fish during the first four days, there was only one solitary **legal** Bream amongst them. Not a single 'down' on Cabbage Weed, except for the one confused Bream.

On my last day, Friday, the weather forecast was for gales and rain. 40 Knot winds – too strong to stand still in on the headlands. No point going anywhere unprotected in my little boat. So I launched it in Boambee Creek, and went exploring upstream from the resort. We had had heavy rain overnight and, although there were only occasional light showers on the Friday, the creek was full of mud from the upstream catchment.

Not much point fishing in that soup. Worse than the Albert, and almost as bad as the Logan! I did try a half-hearted drift through a 12 feet deep hole I found with the sounder whilst trying to avoid the shallows which seemed to cover most of the creek (often less than two feet of water at highish tide – and sometimes with no discernible channel). I was actually concerned not to stay downstream of the boat ramp for too far into the run out tide, for fear of having to drag the boat back to the ramp through potentially soft mud. Been there, done that!

All I got out of that drift was a few picks, and a half eaten Blue Pilchard which I was dragging across the bottom trying to tempt a Flathead. The locals claim there are some **very** big Flathead in Boambee Creek, and also in Bonville Creek, which is wider and deeper (except for its silted up mouth). I

had bought the Pilchards to give a nice hole on the beach a try the previous day. One Taylor left a nice curve in one Pilchard, but somehow missed the last gang two hooks as he skilfully removed half the fish from them.

Back at the Resort I 'hung up my spurs', so to speak, and resigned myself to the fact that I wasn't going to catch a feed of fish on this trip. Just as well I enjoy fishing for the sake of it! So after lunch I went for an exercise walk out along the creek to the mouth, before facing the major task of packing up the boat and car for an early departure Saturday morning.

As I left the unit I noticed four strange looking things lying on the tiles in the entry way. Boambee Bay Resort has the largest earthworms I have ever seen in my life. They are absolute giants! Four of them had washed out of the garden in the heavy overnight rain on the Thursday night, and there they were on the tiles outside my unit door. Without exaggeration, they measured 200 to 225 mm long, and 5 mm in diameter. In all other respects, they looked like normal earthworms.

Being well trained as a nature lover by my wife and 'Injured Wildlife Carer' daughter, I picked up the four worms and placed them in the garden bed. Even though they looked dead – or close to it – I covered them up with some damp mulch. More on that later. Then, off I went down to the creek.

The tide was still running out, but was getting pretty low. The flow had cut a deepish channel along the sandy shore. The sand was sloping down into the channel at its maximum natural angle of repose (I put that bit in for our resident Consulting Engineer, Dave Weston). At the edge was a little vertical bank about 200 mm high.

As I walked back along this bank, it reminded me of a similar sand bank I had watched my father catch some very large Summer Whiting off when I was a kid – which is before a lot of you reading this were born, by the way. Then, having been a Civil Engineer in my former life, I began to develop a theory.

If, as the locals claim, this creek contains 'Whiting as big as Jewfish', those whiting are probably now down here at the mouth, to get away from the fresh water and mud. And the run-off in the catchment will have washed quite a lot of earthworms into the creek. So, guess how the Whiting must be filling in their time right now? Dining out on earthworms!

Well this theory was so good, I just had to test it. I scampered back to the unit to get a rod with a whiting hook on it, and (of course) I might as well grab one of those poor, dead worms I put in the garden.

What worms? The bloody things had all disappeared down into the soil – I saw the tail of the last one disappear as I brushed aside the mulch I had put over it. 'That's gratitude for you', I thought, greatly disappointed.

Not to be beaten, my calculating brain reasoned there must be other worms stranded in similar places to my unit entry way –

and sure enough, I found two. I declared them clinically dead, so that my wife would not be upset at my using them for bait, and off I went back to my 'Whiting Heaven' sand bank.

Don't get ahead of me, mind, but can you just envision several huge Sand Whiting in my keeper net hanging from a stick off the side of the sand bank? I had turned sixty-seven the previous day, and this was surely destined to be my birthday present?

Well, I won't keep you in suspense. I did just six drifts walking along the bank – and how many Whiting do you think I bagged?

Not one bloody bite!

Which says something about 'fishing the conditions', doesn't it? I mean, it really was a great theory.

P.S. For you nature lovers – and my wife – the two worms were then returned to the garden bed – one was just a little shorter than it had been, but worms can apparently handle that – and later in the day I checked to find that they, too, had survived and disappeared into the soil. I guess you'd rather hear that I saved two worms than that I caught six giant Sand Whiting anyway, wouldn't you? Maybe that was my birthday present?

MINIMUM SIZES FOR TAGGING.

According to Bill Sawynock at Info Fish, there is a minimum recommended size of 200mm for tagging of fish. Some fish get tagged below that size, including Snapper, and they seem to survive OK. Only gun tags should be used on the smaller fish below about 250mm. (Thanks to John Cumberland for this info.)

SPECIAL DEALS

If any member comes across any special deals on goods or services which you think might be of interest to other members, please let your Editor know, and I'll include them in the Newsletter. Even good sales will do, if they extend across the last week of the month.

GEAR FOR SALE & WANTED

As a service to members, future editions of the Newsletter will contain a small section of For Sale & Wanted Ads. Only paid up members may use this facility. Ads should generally be restricted to fishing and boating related gear – but no value limits apply. To place an ad, simply e-mail or give the ad contents to your Editor.

News from Other Clubs & Newsletters

Commercial Fishing Ban Gains Support (SA)

Source: 13 April 2005

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200504/s1344624.htm>

Thousands of recreational anglers are backing a proposal to ban commercial net fishing in Saint Vincent Gulf, off Adelaide. The Legislative Council is due to vote on a private member's bill by Democrat Ian Gilfillan proposing a ban to help boost fish numbers. Mr Gilfillan says a petition with 16,000 signatures from recreational anglers supporting his bill is proof of the public's support for a commercial netting ban. "I can tell you my arm's getting tired. I've never had the pleasure of holding such a bulky petition ever in my 20 years in Parliament," he said. "This is a very significant indication of public feeling." **SBSFC Editor's Footnote:** All commercial fishing has recently been banned in the Bellinger and Kalang Rivers, which disgorge to the sea at Urunga, and the recreational fishing is better already as a result.

FAO Says Overfishing has Reached Crisis Proportions (International)

Source: SeaSpan, from the Pew Institute for Ocean Science

<http://www.pewoceanscience.org>.

18 April 2005

A new report from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the state of marine fisheries worldwide says that 52 percent of the oceans' wild fish stocks are fully exploited. Of the rest, 23 percent are lightly or moderately exploited and still offer some scope for further fisheries expansion, 16 percent are overexploited, 7 percent are depleted, and 1 percent are recovering from depletion, meaning they have no room for further expansion. To download the 200-plus-page report, go to:

<http://www.fao.org/icalog/inter-e.htm>

Throw the Big Fish Back (International)

Source: 16 April 2005

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342804.htm>

Jeremy Jackson from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography has been studying fish populations and he gives this horrifying statistic: 90% of big fish in the oceans have disappeared in the last 20 years. Time to change fishing practices? We've all been taught to throw the little fish back because they have not yet reproduced. That's all been turned on its head with the discovery that the big fish should be left because they have the best chance of breeding successfully and restocking the sea...

Full story:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342804.htm>

To listen to this story go to:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/>

Farming the Seas (USA)

Source: <http://www.habitatmedia.org/FARMING/index.html>

April 2005. Will fish farming avert a global crisis? Or speed its arrival?

Farming the Seas explores what's at stake for us all as the aquaculture, or fish farming, industry spreads across the globe. The film highlights ground-breaking efforts by scientists, communities and industry to develop viable, sustainable operations.

Farming the Seas, a documentary that examines the "explosive problems and bountiful potential" of aquaculture, will be airing on PBS during April.

The film, narrated by Peter Coyote, is a sequel to the award-winning Empty Ocean, Empty Nets, that aired as an Earth Day

PBS special in 2002. For information on airdates and times or to purchase copies of the show, please visit <http://www.habitatmedia.org> and <http://www.pbs.org/emptyoceans>

The website at Habitat media has extensive online transcripts with NGO, Industry and researchers interviewed in the documentary

<http://www.habitatmedia.org/FARMING/index.html>

Australia a Step Closer to a National Approach to Tackling Introduced Marine Pests (Australia)

Source: Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Minister for the Environment and Heritage

<http://www.maff.gov.au/releases/05/05086wtj.html>

15 April 2005. The Australian Government has signed an agreement with Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory supporting a national approach to protecting Australia's waters from introduced marine pests, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Warren Truss, and Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell, announced today.

Mr Truss, who signed the agreement in Darwin at the 8th Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council meeting in Darwin (15 April 2005), said that South Australia had also signalled its support, and would be signing on shortly.

Mr Truss said he and Senator Campbell looked forward to the other States also coming on board.

"The Intergovernmental Agreement on a National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions represents a significant milestone in protecting Australia's marine industries and environment from invasive marine pests," he said...

Full media release:

<http://www.maff.gov.au/releases/05/05086wtj.html>

The Uncertain Life of a Squid (Australia)

16 April 2005 Source:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342803.htm>

Squid migrate long distances in great numbers, but the life of a small squid can be dangerous and short, as they provide the fuel for the migration of larger members of the group. George Jackson from the University of Tasmania has been studying these fascinating animals and he has found that if you warm up a squid it will grow faster. So, what will happen as the planet warms up? Could global warming be conducive to increasing the world's squid population?

Full story:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342803.htm>

To listen to this story go to:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/>

What's Happening with Whales? (International)

16 April 2005 Source:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342806.htm>

Over the last five years, American researchers have been looking at DNA variations, and believe that the numbers of whales in the North Atlantic (in the past, presumably?) may have been up to ten times larger than anyone had previously thought. Their next project will be to survey the antarctic Minke whale population *and to continue to check DNA of whale blubber in Japanese markets to keep track of the illegal whale trade*, which is not limited to Japan...

Full story:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s1342806.htm>

To listen to this story go to:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/>

See also: Studies Reveal More on Whales, Whale Hunting, Whale Populations

http://www.seaweb.org/resources/86update/86update_listserv.html#1

Disused Oil Rigs are Havens for Marine Life (Gulf of Mexico)

16 April 2005 Source: New Scientist

<http://www.newscientist.com/channel/earth/mg18624954.100>

In the 1990s, Greenpeace famously likened the dumping of old oil platforms in the deep ocean to throwing empty beer cans into the sea. But a report published on 8 April supports claims that disused oil platforms can become havens for marine life - at least in the warm, shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico, where 3600 rigs are in place off Louisiana alone. Paul Sammarco and Steve Kolian of the Eco-Endurance Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, argue that in the calcium-rich waters of the gulf, corals rapidly colonise the rigs which then become home to myriad fish and other creatures.

"Platforms create reef habitat that would otherwise not exist over tens of thousands of square miles," they say in the report at www.towersoflife.com/ecorigs.

Regulations in the US call for old rigs to be brought ashore and dismantled, unless they are retained through a "Rigs to reefs" programme introduced in the late 1990s. But Sammarco says that only "tens" of the thousands of decommissioned rigs have been retained under the programme.

While Greenpeace accepts that some rigs might work as reefs, Simon Reddy of Greenpeace UK says, "We want all platforms to come ashore initially."

Indonesia Plants Mangroves on Aceh Coast (Indonesia)

18 April 2005 Source:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200504/s1347188.htm>

The Indonesian Government has launched a massive four-year operation to plant mangrove trees along the coastline of tsunami-devastated Aceh province.

Forestry Minister Malam Sambat Kaban was quoted by the state Antara news agency as saying that the December 26 tsunami destroyed more than 350,000 hectares of mangrove forest in the province.

Speaking to the press after launching a mangrove reforestation project in Lam Nga village, Aceh Besar district, Mr Kaban said the Government planned to plant a total of 150,000 hectares of mangroves along the coast.

He said the project was expected to be completed in four years' time.

The Minister said he hoped it would encourage local communities to put similar projects into action.

Experts say coastal mangrove forests could help reduce the impact of future tsunami waves by absorbing some of their energy.

They say the extensive destruction of Aceh's mangrove forests was partly to blame for the massive infrastructure damage inflicted by the December 26 waves, which killed more than 160,000 people in the province.

Mr Kaban said the country's mangrove forest coverage had drastically shrunk since 2000.

Then, mangrove forests accounted for 9.3 million hectares. Today, only 2.65 million hectares remain.

USA Regulators Consult Recreational Fishers

NOAA Fisheries Meets with Recreational Fishing (USA)

Source: <http://www.ibfn.org/news/newsarticle.asp?a=419>

8 April 2005

NOAA Fisheries invited a "who's who" of recreational fishermen to St. Petersburg, Florida to discuss the plan for protecting US fisheries. The Saltwater Sportfishing Partner's Meeting followed the release of the 2005 NOAA Fisheries' Strategic Plan, linked below.

The group took turns delivering speeches, and having question and answer sessions with other representatives of NOAA, fishermen, and fishing organizations from California to Maine.

There was open, and sometimes emotional debate, between recreational fishermen about research, economic impact, a national fishing license, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and even the commercial status of the important Striped Bass ...

Full article: <http://www.ibfn.org/news/newsarticle.asp?a=419>

To download the 2005 NOAA Fisheries' Strategic Plan:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/recfish/Fisheries_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Fish: Great Lateral Thinkers (UK)

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Science/Great-lateral-thinkers>

16 April 2005

Fish do not deserve their reputation as the dimwits of the animal kingdom, according to new research published today. Far from being instinct-driven dunces with a three-second memory, researchers from Edinburgh and Oxford universities claim fish are great lateral thinkers.

Their study shows fish not only use different sides of their brains for different tasks, but also process information on their environment so efficiently they can do it without looking.

Dr Victoria Braithwaite, of Edinburgh University's school of biological sciences, said the study proved how sophisticated the fish brain truly is. The data is the first to show how fish use non-visual senses to process information preferentially...

Full article: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Science/Great-lateral-thinkers>

SBSFC Editor's Comment: They needed research to find out fish are smart? Don't they read our Newsletter?

Funding Lure for Recreational Fishing Projects

(Australia) 10 May 2005

Source: <http://www.mffc.gov.au/releases/2005/05077m.html>

The important contribution recreational fishing makes to local communities is recognised in the Budget, with \$15 million being provided over three years for a community grants programme.

Australian Fisheries and Conservation Minister, Senator Ian Macdonald, said the funding was a reflection of the contribution recreational fishing made to our nation's social and economic well-being.

"The Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme will honour a Howard Government election commitment to provide grants of up to \$100,000 to community groups for local projects, while boosting the growth of an important regional industry," Senator Macdonald said.

"Ladies' Bass" Recaptured

A Lake Somerset Bass tagged at 250 mm in January 1994 by Barbara Nissen was caught (and released) 11.3 years later in April 2005 by Tania Clark, measuring 400 mm. It

had grown at only 13 mm per year. This is the second longest time out on record for a Bass. It must be a shrewd customer, and it clearly likes the ladies.

Another tagged Bass has been caught in the Brisbane River, having gone over the spillways at Lake Somerset and Lake Wivenhoe. In 7.4 years it had grown from 370 mm to 440 mm, a mere 9 mm per year.

By contrast, a tagged King Threadfin Salmon caught in the Norman River had grown 174 mm a year, from 330 mm to 870 mm, in just 3.1 years out.

A 430 mm Giant Trevally tagged at Shoalwater Bay on 2/4/2005 was recaptured 37 days later at Bustard Head. It had traveled 270 Km in 37 days out – that's 7.3 Km a day. And it had grown 10 mm.

(Info courtesy of Suntag News, via John Cumberland).

Change of Rules governing use of scales. New rules for use of scales and the certification of scales were agreed upon at the last ANSA National AGM. The new rules afford members more flexible criteria for the use of scales, even when claiming National records. Members can access the new rules via the ANSA National Website.

Tokyo Protects Fish Poachers (Australia/Japan)

11 May 2005 Source:

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,15244109%255E30417,00.html

The Japanese Government has refused to allow Australian Customs officers to board three Japanese fishing boats believed to be poaching Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Ocean. The refusal has left protection officers aboard Australian Fisheries and Customs Patrol boat Oceanic Viking powerless to do anything more than shadow and monitor the activities of the three Japanese vessels.

This is the second time in three months the Australian authorities have been foiled as concern mounts over foreign trawlers plundering precious stocks of the valuable Patagonian toothfish in southern waters.

Federal Fisheries and Conservation Minister Ian Macdonald issued a press release yesterday morning anticipating that Japan would agree to Australia's request to board the suspect vessels. Senator Macdonald was unavailable for comment when the request was refused...

Full article:

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,15244109%255E30417,00.html

Jellyfish See World Through Complex Eyes (Queensland)

12 May 2005 Source:

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/news/stories/s1366938.htm>

Box jellyfish, which have no brain and only a basic nervous system, are enjoying newfound evolutionary status with research revealing they have surprisingly sophisticated eyes. And it appears Australian jellyfish may have the most sophisticated visual systems of all.

Researchers from [Lund University](#) in Sweden studied a small Caribbean species of jellyfish, *Tripedalia cystophora*, found in mangrove swamps in Puerto Rico. They report in today's issue of the journal [Nature](#) that the jellyfish boast impressive optical apparatus: a total of 24 eyes clustered at each of the creature's four corners.

While 16 eyes are simple 'pigment pits' to collect light, the

remaining eight, a pair in each eye cluster, have complex lenses. Despite this complexity the position of the retinas means the images the jellyfish receive are blurred. But researchers believe the sophisticated optical set-up is designed to give jellyfish a wide field of vision to help them navigate, rather than to focus on prey.

Sophisticated stingers

"This research is groundbreaking. It really drives jellyfish up the evolutionary tree," says Dr Jamie Seymour, director of the Tropical Australian Stinger Research Unit at [James Cook University](#) in Queensland.

While he says all species of box jellyfish have a visual system similar in structure, Australian box jellyfish appear to have the most sophisticated eyes of all.

Seymour says recent research conducted in the waters of Far North Queensland by Dr Dan Nilsson from the Swedish research team suggests that Australian jellyfish can see "pretty much across the entire light spectrum". He says their vision even appears to outdo that of birds, which are at the top of the 'visual' ladder.

"Having said that, they are not capable of producing nice crisp images because the images are actually focussed behind the retina, which causes them to blur."

Seymour says Australian box jellyfish need superior vision "because they are active, visual hunters" compared to the Caribbean variety that live in murky waters and feed primarily on plankton. These Caribbean species use their vision mainly to position themselves in one spot in water currents to receive their food.

Fishers warned about catching Mary River cod

The iconic and endangered Mary River cod is to be further protected by new signs reminding anglers that it is an offence to catch (take?) this species.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=6502&db=media>

Good fishing ahead for Queensland's dams

A total of \$450,000 will be put towards enhancing and stocking 29 Queensland dams with native fish this year.

Visit <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/display-statement.pl?id=6563&db=media>

Permits set to improve fishing for north Queensland and Downs recreational anglers

In a bid to improve fish stocks, recreational fishers would need a permit to fish in [Koombooloomba Dam at Ravenshoe](#) and [Storm King Dam at Stanthorpe](#) under the Queensland Government's proposed changes to fisheries licensing and fee arrangements.

To Catch 10 Kg Salmon Escaped from a Fish Farm, Don't Use Bait or Soft Plastics! (Tasmania)

19 May 2005 Source:

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1372735.htm>

Mark Colvin: Australia's latest mass escape of farmed fish has raised new questions about the environmental dangers of aquaculture industries.

Up to 25,000 salmon and trout recently escaped from a

fish farm at Tasmania's Macquarie Harbour.

Locals have described the aftermath as looking like an abattoir after fishermen went on a catching drive and left blood and fish guts strewn around the area.

But conservationists, and traditional fishermen, say the incident points to a far more dangerous side to putting feedlots in our oceans.

Tim Jeanes: Tasmanian West Coast Mayor, Darryl Gerrity, says the scene was one of carnage, after recreational fishermen moved in for the kill.

Darryl Gerrity: It was awash with salmon that had been filleted, and it was quite disgusting and was a substantial mess. There's very little tidal movement in that particular area, and they're now starting to rot and smell, and is not good for the tourism image, and the green and clean image that we want to project on the West Coast of Tasmania.

Tim Jeanes: Mayor Gerrity says the danger extends beyond the immediate threat to public health.

Darryl Gerrity: There's not a lot of work been done on it, but when you've got 15,000 salmon escaped at 10 kilo each in Macquarie Harbour, that has some pollution and has got a limited food chain for the native fish, there are grave concerns.

Tim Jeanes: Not so according to the industry.

Pheroze Jungalwalla is the Executive Officer of the local Growers Association. He says research into escapee Atlantic salmon has found they don't generally attack other species.

Pheroze Jungalwalla: About three per cent had fish remains, and one per cent had invertebrates in their gut. The rest of the gut content was made up of either pellets or things like leaves, twigs, stones, even cigarette butts and earplugs, really indicating that these fish are very well accustomed to eating pellets, that's what they're accustomed to, and they really aren't very successful at foraging in the wild...

Full article:

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1372735.htm>

Acting Newsletter Editor – July Newsletter

Ross Williamson has kindly volunteered to edit the July SBSFC Newsletter whilst I am visiting my son in the UK. Please send your stories and info to ross@climaxaus.com . Thanks Ross!

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