

### Big Barra At Peter Faust Dam

I have just returned for a hastily arranged "exploration trip" to Peter Faust Dam ! ....where in the hell is that you might ask.

Well, the dam is also called Lake Proserpine and is situated an approx. 6 ½ hours comfortable drive south of Cairns, some 26 ks west of Proserpine, which sits another 50 odd ks west of Airlie Beach (the gateway to another fabulous destination the world renowned waterway - the magnificent Whitsunday's region).

I have heard stories for a few months now about monster barramundi living happily in the dam. Of anglers being smashed comprehensively by BIG barra in the sticks and after a visit to one of Cairns well known tackle shops and viewing a quick video of some recent action made a hurried (and extremely excited) phone call to my mate Terry Holman of Fish Hunter fame.



We've just got to get down there I demanded and after a quick conference with our respective loved ones - hell, we had to consider the consequences of abandoning our day jobs, the wife and kids at such short notice - and just to partake of some fabled fishing action. Well you all know how it is.

In what seemed like a blur we were packed and headed down there, towing Terry's comfortable 4.7m Custom Craft, a dozen rods loaded with 50lb braid, 60lb leader and dozens of big deep diving lures beefed up with extra strong trebles....we were told that we would need all of that gear and to be prepared for very heavy tackle losses...Hmmm!

On the way we picked up that legend of a fishing writer, John Mondora, plucked him from his cane farm (harvesting would finish while he was away) and the happy trio pushed on.

Now John has fished all over the world (next week he's on his way to Egypt to try his luck on the barra's even bigger cousin, the monstrous Nile Perch of the Aswan Dam) and has clocked up more hours on Lake Tinaroo than any other angler that we knew. His impoundment fishing knowledge would be invaluable to the likes of Terry & I who are predominantly coastal "creek" fisherman.

We checked into Camp Kanga (local camp / cabin accommodation) a short distance from the lake and were surprised to see that it was only 1.30pm. We had made good time. Even after dropping into the guys at Proserpine Tackle for a chat, local knowledge is everything, and even so called "experienced fisherman" should never tackle new waters with blinkers on.



After launching, checking drags (tightening up even further) selecting a range of deep diving lures, discussions on where to start - this is a huge body of water (When full it covers an area of 4,350ha.) - we commenced our exploratory troll. This afternoon was just going to be a "suck it and see" exercise as we hoped to meet up with the local guide next day and really start to enhance the steep learning curve required to fish this waterway in the limited time available to us.

WE HAD LITERALLY ONLY GONE 200 METRES WHEN JOHN'S ROD WAS ALMOST PULLED FROM HIS HANDS....SHIT, WHAT THE HELL...AND IT WAS ALL OVER.

That was obviously a fluke, a lucky pass, it couldn't be that easy to find these fish....we were amazed at the time it took to be hit by a monster and even though we lost it, expectations and excitement was building by the minute.

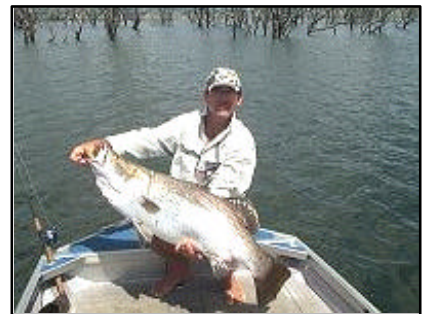
In the next few hours it went something like this:

- John - lost a fish estimated at over 20 lb
- Terry - landed a fish of about 15 lb (rats)
- John - lost an even smaller fish of about 12 lb
- Terry - landed a fish of well over 45 lb
- Terry - landed a fish of well over 40 lb



Now that was amazing stuff and back at camp nearly every angler group had similar stories of either landing, hooking up to or loosing monster barra of between 20 - 50 lb. It was hard to get to sleep that night I can tell you but its amazing how tiring a few beers can make you feel. I'm sure the draining effect of sheer anticipation and the adrenalin rush from witnessing the afternoon's action also helped deplete energy levels and it wasn't long before we heard a few shuffling noises, someone went to the loo, a door banged and it was 5.00am. The camp came alive in an instant and in about 5 minutes flat all boats were heading to the ramp in eager anticipation of what might come.

Now I have fished many places (not as many as JM mind you) and nowhere else in barra country has there been a feeling that another BIG fish was just around the corner. In most barra waters, from remote Cape York, the Top End and over to the Kimberley, anglers sense that should they drop a big one that they have blown their opportunity of maybe a lifetime. This is not the case in Lake Proserpine... YOU FEEL LIKE AT ANY MOMENT YOU COULD JUST HOOK UP TO AN EVEN BIGGER, ANGRIER, MEANER MOTHER than the one that just blew you away, dragged your favourite lure into the timber and busted that 50lb braid line like it was a piece of flimsy cotton.



It's a very strange feeling and is something that will / is drawing anglers from around the country and very soon from around the globe to fish this very special place - like moths to a flame, iron to a magnet, fisherman to that "holy grail". To fish a waterway where mum, dad and the kids (we saw an 8 year old lad land a 40 lb + fish) can try their luck and have an equal chance as that experienced trophy hunter wanting to add a world renown sportfish to his list of captures. Well, that is a very special place.

I'm not going to go into a blow by blow description on how we landed / lost / fought / screamed and swore at these beauties. I'll let John Mondora do that, look out for an article in one of the countries leading angler magazine over the next few months. But I will tell you that one morning three guys had 16 casts, hooked up to 12 fish...landed only FIVE.

We also landed five quality sooty grunter from 5 to 7.5 lb, all on big barra lures, and these fish are a prized capture in their own right.

I will tell you that the new Reidys lures worked a treat (I personally loved the gold / orange model as well as the grey ghost) while Terry had great success on the blue / silver scorpion. Other anglers caught plenty on DK's Scale Raza's. I will tell you that in this lake you can catch fish almost all day long but I still believe prime times are early morning and late afternoon. I will tell you that monster barra can be caught from the sticks as well as way out in the open - in 80+ foot of water mind you. And that you can fish from a 12 ft tinny up.



Note - this is a stocked impoundment ( to date almost half a million fish have been put in by the hard working fish stocking group since 1996) and is therefore able to be fished all year round. A bag / possession limit of one barra per person applies. Fish grown in totally fresh water are not the best eating but with proper preparation may appeal to some tastes.

As for me, I love to watch them kick away in defiance.

Fishing Cairns can arrange private charters to Peter Faust Dam based on the moon cycles, drop us an e-mail if this exciting new option appeals.