



Deano was all smiles after landing his best snapper at 8kg, just before everyone took an early mark.



Morgan Liu caught this cracker of a teraglin from the 42 fathom line.



Jimmy Murray with an excellent late season 29's pearl perch.



Deano, Sean and George with four superb pearl perch taken on a single drop in 65m of water at the Hards.



Tuddy was struggling to hold the 23kg jig-caught kingy after a torrid battle.

## Reflecting on peak offshore periods

WITH winter well and truly behind us, it is a good time to reflect on what has been our peak fishing period for rocky reef species, namely snapper, pearl perch and teraglin.

At home off Brisbane, the season started well with good early numbers of pearl perch on bottom basher rigs and some large specimens taken on floater rigs while working baits down deep in search of an early season snapper.

Ironically, in closer at the top end of the 29 and 33 fathom reefs, some of the best pearl perch seen there for several years have turned up.

In fact I went back recently and was very happy to find a few big ones still keen to play.

Happy days yes, but there were a lot of down days due to strong winds and there was a quiet expecta-



Offshore  
by BILL CORTEN

tion of more early season snapper after the farce of the suddenly announced six-week closure, but its benefits were unable to be defined this winter.

What did occur was the usual build up of fish in the areas where you would typically look in the early season, then in June, right on cue, the snapper came on with a bang and it was a month or more of good consistent fishing.

While the big fish were harder to come by on a regular basis, there were some big knobby snapper caught throughout the whole of winter with both the shallow and deep reefs producing some glory sessions.

One of the things that excite me about fishing is the thrill of working over new ground and finding good fish-producing structure, so when the snapper slowed off Brisbane, a trip to the Hards off Mooloolaba confirmed the snapper were still firing extremely well.

A couple of trips fishing the area with mates was a personal highlight of winter because the fishing was full on and once out there it wasn't that far (by my standards) to the next ridge of reef if I wanted to go a bit deeper and explore some more.

Commencing at a few starter marks that I had for a few years but had never bothered to sound out put us in the general area.

With the first spot a dud, it was while moving along the general line of the Hards that nice pinnacles started to appear on the sounder screen.

Backtracking on the GPS and raising the gain level of the sounder into full fish finding mode while using a small range, saw one particular pinnacle light up the sounder screen like a Christmas tree.

First drop saw good snapper come aboard on a mix of floaters and bottom-bashers, then the pearl perch made an appearance and it was a real mixed bag.

In 60-odd metres of water it was easy work and there was a variety consisting of parrot, Moses perch, gold-band snapper and teraglin.

Rather than anchor we opted to move about and as a result saw more of these small pinnacles and if they weren't loaded with fish they didn't fire and that became the rule of thumb for the day.

Setting some higher than legal minimum sizes worked well as there were plenty of quality fish and bag limits had to be complied with.

Even though it was close to the full moon it was easy pickings during the day and thoughts of a night trip were not even a consideration for future trips.

Let's face it, when the fishing is this good who

needs to sit out there all night.

Working out east of the Hards towards some of my favourite spots in a different direction to what would normally be taken, we again found some ridges we hadn't visited before.

And it was the ones loaded with the most biomass on the sounder that we stopped on for some sampling.

Again mixed bags of pearl perch, snapper and the occasional big teraglin were the bulk of species.

A personal best for Deano was an 8kg snapper and we were more than happy to take an early mark and head for home as there were plenty of quality fish in the box and we could always come back again whenever we wanted.

A return trip on George's big boat several weeks later on a different moon phase found the fishing to still be excellent.

But things were slowing down a tad from the previous trip and inquiries made of others who had done more fishing in that region than me confirmed the pattern to be expected.

We will definitely be keen to pay a return visit there next winter.

Back on the home reefs there was a nice late winter surge of snapper but they have tapered off at the moment, although there are some nice resident fish remaining for the time being.

The teraglin were very quiet this winter and while there was a strong run of them off the Gold Coast they did not show up off

Moreton until very late.

We haven't seen many small ones and they seem to like a dead bait almost as much as a livie.

They are a good fall back species when the barometric pressure is low.

The good news is that while Fisheries researchers have been getting far better than previous survival rates with released snapper and pearl perch, they are now into positive territory with the survival of some released teraglin.

It is early days yet and there will be more news on that further down the track.

Now that winter has passed we are having a good spawning run of yellowtail kingfish and plenty of amberjack thrown in as well.

Deepwater jigging and successfully feeding soft plastics at these species is a challenge and puts a lot of fun into a day offshore.

I will talk more on that next month and will leave you with a photo of Tuddy with a 23kg yellowtail king he caught on an FCL 270g jig during his first deepwater jigging trip recently.

The day out was a presie for his 60th birthday and he celebrated it in style with what is the biggest kingy I have personally seen caught around these warmer waters for a long while.

It is a shop record for a Fish Head Tackle trip so drop in and see the boys at Victoria Point and stock up on jigs. ↵