



Coronation trout can be found on rough reef country and not only are they spectacular to look at but tasty as well.



Foxy with a nice red caught on a pinnacle in 80m of water during a beautiful sunset.



These quality trout were caught on newly-found reef in 64m of water. Many of the better quality trout come from the deeper reefs that don't get fished often.



Nice pearlies can often be caught fishing the wider grounds of the Bunker Group reefs. This one fell to a hussar fillet using a paternoster rig.



The author with a school sized red caught in 80m of water east of Broomfield Reef (40km north of Fitzroy Reef).

# Fabulous Fitzroy Reef trip

**A**FTER a six and a half hour drive north of Brisbane we arrived at 1770 and slipped the boat into the water ready for a couple of days' fishing.

We headed in the direction of Fitzroy Reef with fantastic conditions and the weather forecast for the next two days was for it to get even better.

I have always been one for thinking outside the square and by this I mean looking in areas that aren't highly fished or spoken about in hope of locating trophy fish.

This doesn't work 100 percent of the time but for me nine times out of 10 the hard work is rewarded with some memorable fishing.

People often ask what makes me choose an area to start searching in and to be honest there isn't a great deal of thinking behind it other than a few simple concepts.

This will certainly depend on the species you're chasing and in this instance I will use the well sought after red emperor for my example.

Firstly my main goal is to stay away from the well-known reef areas and an example of this would be not to fish close to Fitzroy, Musgrave and Boulton reefs that are the easiest of the reefs to access.

These reefs have and always will cop a lot of fishing pressure and this lessens your chance of catching trophy fish and in particular red emperor.

Ideally you want water depths of at least 45m or more for the ideal red emperor grounds.

I can't stress enough that you need to stay as far away from the main reefs, which includes shoals and any areas highlighted on your GPS maps.

I select areas to search where it shows nothing of interest at all, but be prepared to put in many hours of sounding for very little



Offshore  
by GREG LAMPRECHT

in return at times.

It's the small isolated reefs that produce quality fish and this is exactly what you are looking for.

With this in mind I decided to head well north of Fitzroy and sound in water depth of around 60-70m, making my way up past One Tree Island, Sykes Reef and Wreck Island.

I had been sounding since late afternoon and about four hours later came across a small show in 68m of water.

There was very little structure on the sounder but certainly some fish life worth dropping bait on.

We all got bites straight away and it was evident that hussar were down there in large numbers.

Soon we had a few pulled to the surface where we cut big fillets off them and lowered them back down.

Hussar love eating hussar but the skin and flesh holds on well and the key is to let the hussar chew on the bait and give time for the other fish to barge in and have a go as well.

We started seeing a few red-throat hit the deck and it wasn't long before the first red emperor went into the Esky.

But there were some big critters down there that we couldn't stop and my guess would be massive cod or grouper.

We moved on and I continued sounding north, ending up wide of Broomfield Reef, which was an area I intended on spending some time looking around.

After hours and hours of searching I had found nothing in my desired water depth and decided to head in slightly and try to locate some reef to anchor on for the night.

I found a nice show in 48m of water and after a few drifts found the hussar thick.

But we persisted and caught a mixture of red-throat, red emperor and a red bass, which was returned to the water.

By then it was 1am and I was buggered after close to eight hours sounding, so we anchored up for some shut-eye.

At 5am I continued on searching ground east of Broomfield Reef and Wreck Island but once again found very little so decided to change the depth I was searching in to 70-80m.

It didn't take long before I found a nice piece of reef structure in 79m with some very large shows of fish on it.

There was a lot of bait holding on this spot also so I had high hopes that it would produce some nice fish.

Hussar were thick once again but among them were nice red-throat, maori cod, tomato cod, parrot, coral trout, and the odd good red emperor.

The conditions were magic and it was a complete glass-out with no current either.

I hunted around staying in between 70-80m of water and found small rises with fish on them through-

out the area.

We patiently drifted over these areas pulling the odd red emperor, hussar, parrot, spangled emperor, coronation trout, coral trout and a few big pearl-

ies. The fishing was slow but consistent and I had now marked about eight spots that we would come back to just on dark.

I was mindful that when night falls I would more than likely see the small fish or bait that inhabits these reefs become invisible on the sounder as they huddle the reef and rest for the night.

This can make what you thought was a fantastic spot look barren and can be frustrating when you're not fishing large structures.

This is exactly what happened to us, and all but one spot still had shows of fish on it as the sun disappeared.

As soon as our baits hit the bottom on this spot we hooked solid fish and had reds hitting the surface during a beautiful time of the day.

We pulled six reds and a trout followed by loads of hussar before I decided to move on and work my way south towards Sykes Reef.

After a few hours sounding I came across a little rock in 63m of water cov-

ered in life.

There was a lot of bait surrounding this rock and I could also see predatory fish close by feeding on the bait.

We started pulling some hussar, a nice red and spangled emperor before Foxy hooked a steam train that had him working hard.

It turned out to be a big high-fin amberjack and I soon followed with another one of a smaller size.

As it was getting late, I anchored up for some sleep and woke to a glassed-out sea and a beautiful sunrise.

The hussar were still chewing but it wasn't long before the old man pulled a cracking trout just over 8kg followed by Foxy with one of similar size.

A mixed bag of fish was pulled from this spot before things went quiet so we decided to head back to 1770.

The fishing certainly wasn't brilliant but with plenty of searching and lots of patience we caught some great fish in an area I had never been before.

With 17 reds, eight trout and a huge assortment of other fish in the box, I'd say it was mission complete and I hope this gives you some encouragement to think a little differently in hope of successfully catching quality fish.

Until next month, tight lines. ⚓



Just on sunrise the trout started to bite and this quality fish came off a pinnacle in 64m of water.