The Wilds of Wild Cattle Creek

Bob Brandis  June 2011 » Area Articles / Queensland / Central QLD / Gladstone /

The wild weather is starting to abate with calmer days and longer spells of settled weather expected this month. Last month there was the occasional day of slight winds and small swells but they were only isolated periods.

A few reef trips have produced some good sweetlip from the closer reef shoals and a few jewfish are being caught around Cape Capricorn. The beaches have been producing decent whiting and flathead and Curtis and Facing Island beaches continue to be productive.

There have been a few reports of bigger bream coming from those fishing the Narrows, particularly around Ramsays Crossing and Middle Creek. I expect the Narrows to fire up this month as the cooler weather brings out the changing of the guards.

I am hoping to get up into Black Swan and chuck a couple of grab pots out while I hunt for salmon on the gravel beds. Targinnie Creek is another good salmon haunt with the deeper reaches producing the goods. Deeper in the creek at the Three Ways there is a sand bar finger that reaches into the middle of the creek. This is a good spot to anchor up and hit the bar with your whiting gear. You might be surprised at how many solid thumpers you can pull in.

There are heaps of fishing opportunities in Gladstone even for those without a boat and Wild Cattle Creek is one such location.

Wild Cattle Creek separates Wild Cattle Island from the mainland near Boyne and Tannum. The creek covers about 10km but it is the Tannum end that is the most accessible, most interesting and most fished section.

The creek at the Tannum end is very shallow. In fact, apart from a couple of residual holes and gutters, it dries completely during the last half of the tidal cycle. From this location you can pick up most of Central Queensland’s iconic fish species.

A distinct channel leads from the bar up past the boat ramp and beyond. The channel only starts to fill with the incoming tide an hour or so after the tide actually turns. Up near the boat ramp, this run-in will commence as late as half tide and up in the tidal range.

So until then nothing much happens in this section of Wild Cattle Creek. This is when the kids and soldier crabs play wherever they like on the creek’s sandy bottom. It is also a great time to gather bait; soldier crabs are rife and yabbies are just about everywhere too.

Once the tide gets down a bit you can walk 100m or so up the sandy creek bed and pump your heart out. Usually you can pick up a few yabbies with every pump, but there have been times when they are hard to find. You could also use a cast net in the main channel and pick up some live bait.

Depending on the time of the year, you can bag anything from winter sea bream to grunter and jack. In the lead-up days to the new and full moons you can get some cracking big silver sea bream at the mouth of the creek on the last couple of hours of the run-in early morning. The secret is to find the rocky bottom that’s just inside the mouth, because that’s where they are.

The whole creek is not very wide so you can fish on the town side and almost cast to the island side. Being on the island side keeps you away from the human traffic through, which is usually conducive to better fishing.

Further along on the first turn in the creek there is another bunch of rocks near to the Millennium Esplanade. This is where the locals catch good bream at night as the tide fills, but you need to watch it here because salmon mix in with the bream at times. If there is a bust up or two on the bream gear, then add a heavier trace. Some good catches of salmon have been made here over the years.

In late June through to August and September the big breeding flathead move into the estuaries all over the region, and Wild Cattle Creek is no exception. The warm winter days that Central Queensland is famous for can be well spent drifting in the tinnie all around this section of the creek, flicking lures and yabbies.

Some of the flatties landed in Wild Cattle Creek in recent years have been around the 4kg mark. Toss these back because they are very average on the palate, and are females full of roe ready to mate. It’s much better to keep a smaller, tastier one.

During summer, along the mangrove-lined banks where the channel runs it’s possible to hook onto good grunter. Since the stocking of mangrove jack in the Boyne River a few years ago, the odd jack also pops up in these sections.

Just to the left of the boat ramp there is a decent hole that is a couple of metres deep at low tide. It’s a good spot to catch a bream or salmon among the logs at night on the really big tides. There have been some good little big-eye trevally here while waiting for the water to really start to move about.

This area is popular with the holidaymakers and locals at most times of the year, but for the uninitiated Wild Cattle Creek poses some serious safety hazards. Keep a vigilant watch on the water flow in this section of the creek, particularly right near the mouth itself. Many a swimmer has had to be rescued by lifesavers from being washed out to sea, and others have drowned before help could reach them. The run-in tide, while just as rapid as the run-out, is not so much the worry, as you will just end up further up the creek.
Another common trap is when people walk across the creek to wander up Wild Cattle Island only to return to their crossing point to find a river of fast-running water. A long wait is then in order.

The middle section of the creek area is around halfway through the creek and about 4km from the Tannum boat ramp, and around the same distance from Colosseum Inlet. This section is the last of the tidal sections coming from Colosseum that does not dry completely at low tide.

At high tide you can navigate the full length of the creek from the Tannum ramp to Colosseum Inlet. There isn’t much to see other than the tops of the mangroves lining the banks and the channel itself.

Images

Graham fought like blazes with his light whiting gear to bring this hefty shovelnose ray into the beach at Curtis.

You can expect bigger flathead this month in most creeks. Al brought this two in from the harbour side of Curtis Island.