

Champion of Fish Habitat – Luke Galea



Name: Luke Galea

From: Mackay, QLD.

Job: Supervisor of Waterways Team at Mackay Regional Council.

Loves: Trekking rainforest streams in search of sooty grunter, jungle perch and barramundi.

Luke Galea is well known in Central QLD for the awesome work he does helping support his local fishery in the waters around Mackay. Luke is involved in a number of projects that have made a significant difference in improving fish habitat.

“We undertake all kinds of projects that ensures our fishery remains healthy. Everything from improving fish passage so they can move throughout the river system and complete their life cycle to installing fish hotels as refuges for fish.”

“[Fish hotels](#) are artificially built snags that are designed to protect fish from the elements and predators and also attract sources of food. We recently installed fish hotels in the Goose Ponds Lagoons in Mackay which is a site relatively devoid of snags and other woody debris. Months later, a fish survey revealed that a good number of large barramundi had taken up residence at the hotels. Recently, the invasive pest fish “tilapia” have been found here and installing these log hotels is an attempt to help build the resilience of our native fish.”



A fish hotel during construction



A fish hotel being installed

Luke also works with his team at the council to improve fish passage.

“We have identified literally [thousands of fish barriers](#) in the Mackay area. Most of these barriers are man-made structures such as dams, weirs, poorly designed culvert crossings and bridges that prevent fish from moving to other parts of the river system to complete their life cycle. We are currently focused on remediating the highest priority barriers in our region.”

Some barriers can be removed all together or a simple drain can be installed to allow fish to pass. However, if the barrier is located in the river with a drop in elevation a fishway or fish ladder needs to be installed.

“Often next to a weir or dam wall, a fish ladder can be installed to allow fish to move upstream. The ladder is designed to slow the flow and allows both small and large fish to pass. Without it many species just can’t survive. [Improving connectivity](#) for species such as barramundi, mangrove jack and sooty grunter will improve our fishery immensely!”



A fishway installed at the Marian Weir on the Pioneer River QLD.

It must be hugely satisfying after completing a project to step back and watch fish moving into parts of the river they have not been to for decades. However, to get results like this takes team work. Luke advises;

“I would highly recommend to any recreational fisher thinking of becoming involved in fish habitat improvement to contact your local Ozfish group, fishing club or alliance. These groups are extremely valuable as platforms to have your collective voice heard! There is so much recreational fishers can accomplish if we group together.”



Luke with a cracker of a saratoga

RESOURCE LINKS;

[Fish Barrier Prioritization Report](#)

[Fish Hotel Report](#)

[Lagoon Wetlands Fish Community Monitoring](#)



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