

The Burrendong Easter Fishing Classic – more than just a fishing comp!

Living in Lennox Head a common Easter activity is to get wet and muddy at the Blues Festival but sometimes you need to break out of what you normally do – change the “status quo” as they say. So in 2017 after a couple of years of invites I made the trip to Lake Burrendong just out of Dubbo in NSW, for the renowned and iconic Lake Burrendong Easter Fishing Classic.

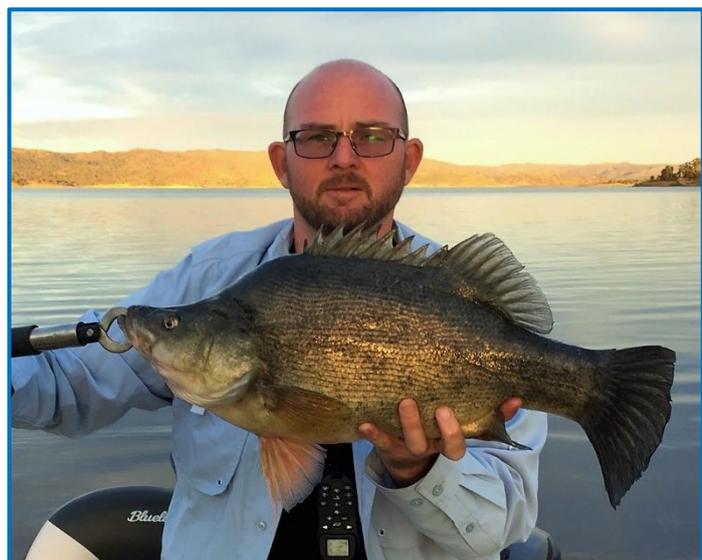


With a fairly full dam, it was obvious that we were up for a long weekend of good fishing and the best news was, we had a boat! My wife Paula invited my brother-in-law Matt, his wife Brenda, their trusty sidekick – a Staffie named ‘Alby’ and their new 3.5 metre tinny, which meant we could get amongst it on the lake and give it a run before they tow it around Australia on a planned two-year adventure.

The next two days we explored the lake, took advice from lots of people about Dam fishing, hooked onto but dropped 3 big fish and caught some reddies.. Thankfully it wasn’t beginner’s luck, but a common story being bandied around along with the age old claim....“It’s the rain, I swear it was fishing really well two weeks ago!”

But of course when you take out a fishing competition, like Julie Ratcliffe who caught a 69.2cm Murray Cod and Seth Shelton who hooked a 57cm Yellowbelly, not to mention young Shay Johnston who caught over 222 Redfin – there’s always another way of looking at it!!

So yes it was a weekend of fishing and socialising but it was so much more than just a fishing comp.



It was a bloody amazing experience!



The Lake Burrendong Easter Fishing Classic was quite simply mind-blowing and very different to any kind of community-driven event I have ever seen. No-one would have left without knowing that every cent goes straight back into habitat projects for the Macquarie River; a claim that is absolutely the mantra for this event.

It's run by the extraordinary Inland Waterways committee and led by the energetic and pseudo Mayor of Dubbo Matt Hansen, who never tires of sharing the story of the Classic's humble beginnings because it's a tale of legend.....the legend of a raffle in the main street of Dubbo that ended with one of the best run fishing competitions in Australia.



It was also the sense of camaraderie between the committee members that I admired. It was like watching a family celebrate their yearly reunion.....but with thousands to cater for. A task they have been doing with pride for 8 years now. And I also couldn't help but notice that this hard working committee – all avid anglers – didn't wet a line all weekend because there was no way they wanted the event to be

anything but a success. Hundreds of hours go into the planning, organising and executing....all those finer details that needed to be sorted beforehand, during and after...it was inspiring to watch.

I set up OzFish Unlimited 2 years ago to get recreational fishers in Australia wanting to look after our fish by fixing fishing habitat. My ultimate goal is to see every community across the country boast an OzFish group; an army of 'habitat warriors' who are committed to improving the health of their local waterway, fish habitat and help secure the future of their sport. But in my wildest of dreams, each of those groups would be a replica of Inland Waterways who I am proud to say are part of the OzFish family.



For me personally and on behalf of our OzFish board of Directors, it was a pleasure to support Inland Waterways and this event.. We managed to source funding from Bond Markets company FIIG to support the phenomenal work undertaken by the River Repair Bus and we are so grateful to gain the support from Colin Tannahill of Shimano Fishing for his backing of Inland Waterways' local habitat projects.



But if there was one moment I had to pin down as the most memorable, it was when I joined the committee in their yearly ritual of taking a sip of "River Water"!**#! to celebrate the end of another successful Classic. I was invited into a circle of true mates and had my glug of "watered down" wine while listening to many colourful tales from the weekend, basking in their enthusiasm for the event, for each other and the river they are working for.

If you've read this blog, I've got a feeling I might see you there next year and if you come you will be helping a bloody big effort to repair a river.

Craig Copeland, Founder and Director of Ozfish Unlimited



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