

## DOUBLE ISLAND FOR FISH & PHOTOS

Within 150 miles of Brisbane lies one of the most prolific surf, rock and light gear fishing areas in Australia. The locality I am referring to is the stretch of coastline extending from the Noosa River Bar to Double Island Point, a distance of some 35 miles, and a further 16 miles of calm water and semi-surf, known as Wide Bay, to Inskip Point standing on the southern side of the entrance to Hervey Bay.

At low tide one is confronted by a hard area of sand about 100 yards wide and extending to Double Island Point. This expanse of beach is bounded by multi-coloured sand-hills, 200 feet to 300 feet high, on one side, and the Pacific Ocean on the other. The continuity of the beach is broken only by a few high tide gutters and occasional runouts, which are caused by the fresh water seepage from the rain catchment inland from the beach.

A main attraction to people on their first trip along the beach is a permanent fresh water spring which bubbles up out of the sand and is aptly called "The Bubbler". The soft sand surrounding The Bubbler has claimed several vehicles whose owners were unlucky enough to drive into it.

The predominate<sup>ant</sup> fishing water on this beach exists from half to low tide when the formation comprises a series of gutters, spits and holes which may be found in abundance anywhere along the beach to Double Island Point. In common with most of our beaches high tide formations are more difficult to locate and sometimes one has to travel the full length of the beach to find such a gutter.

The fishing on this stretch is excellent all year round and in the winter, bait and the capacity of your icebox, <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ the only limiting factor to the number of tailor and bream that can be caught. Dart (swallow tail) are also plentiful in winter and are caught mainly on the flats. In summer tailor and bream are still present in diminished numbers, but whiting and the ever present dart still provide an excellent days sport for the enthusiast. At several places along this beach there are small submerged reefs within fishing distance, and at certain times of the year these areas can provide good catches of reef fish.

Natural bait is plentiful on the beach in the form of surf worms, pippies and garfish, the latter being netted for sale by the local fishermen. The pippies are so prolific at times that the beach looks like a large patch of white pebbles and fishing in bare feet at the waters edge can be most uncomfortable. Surf worms are so plentiful that even the inexperienced can catch enough for the days fishing; I did.

The main influencing factor is the weather. A strong South Easterly or North Easterly can make fishing on the beach very difficult if not impossible. This leaves one with the alternative of Double Island Point; (known locally as the D.I.P.), or the lagoons which lie in the shelter of the headland.

Double Island Point headland is a raised area of rock and sandy soil over 250 feet high and surrounded mainly by sheer cliffs. It has a circumference of approximately three miles, but of this, only half a mile is accessible fishing water. The whole of the headland is a Commonwealth Reserve and permission should be obtained from the light keeper before entering this area. On the highest point is the Lighthouse, standing 315 feet above sea level. The light is visible for a distance of 25 miles and is one of the major shipping aids along this section of the Queensland Coast. It is also an important weather station. From the top of the lighthouse on a clear day, a picturesque view of the surrounding ocean and mainland will make an inspection well worth while.

Regardless of the weather conditions, a lee side can always be found somewhere around the point. In a South-East blow, Flat Rock, on the northern side, provides excellent fishing for all varieties of surface and reef fish. During a North-East wind the southern outcrops abutting the beach provide the rock-hopper with numerous rock shelves and points from which to test his skill. The main baits used are whole garfish, whiting and mullet fillets which are usually floated out with the current. This method is used because the water in this area, in some places, is over 60 feet deep at a rod's length from the rocks. It is quite common to see large <sup>black</sup> ~~black~~ rays, gliding peacefully through the water and turtles, lazily swimming around the rocks, from the headland.

Lets take a look at a typical day's fishing in this area.

It was one of those clear still cloudless winter mornings when the water is like glass and it seems as if it is an effort for the waves to break on the outside bank.

We picked up an odd tailor at first and as the burleying of the scraps of seagarfish took effect, the tailor gathered in a school in front of us. The fish became so thick that they were snapping at the bait as soon as it hit the water. On several occasions we were in the process of retrieving a fish, when another tailor, seeing the hooked fish apparently chasing something, proceeded to chop off the swivel which was flashing through the water in front of its mate.

Our fishing was temporarily suspended an hour later when one of our party hooked into a whopper, so we retired from the water to avoid the risk of fouled lines, and also to give him a little encouragement and help. Half an hour later an arm-weary fisherman was very glad to beach his played out fish which proved to be a Yellowtail Kingfish (Amberjack) weighing 28 pounds cleaned. Ray said that he was very lucky to land the "Kingie" because at one stage

there <sup>were</sup> was only a few turns of line left on his 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Alvey side-cast reel.  
Good fishing on 300 yards of 15 lb. line?

After due admiration and congratulations we resumed tailor fishing but the school had moved or broken up, when we stopped feeding them, leaving only a few stragglers. This was too slow after the hectic pace of an hour before so we decided to call it a morning and returned to the Land Rover. The final tally came to well over a hundred fish, mainly tailor with an odd bream amongst them, and it ~~would take~~ <sup>took</sup> us until lunchtime to clean and fillet them all.

In the afternoon we headed for the point to see if we could catch a few of the surface fish which frequent the water around the rocks in calm weather. After an hour's spinning we had landed five small <sup>mackerel</sup> mackerel and were about to call it a day when I noticed a dark shape following my spinner. Do what may I could not entice him to take the metal lure. In desperation I grabbed my beach rod, already rigged with three 5/0 hooks, but only a 15 lb. line, and, baiting up with a blue pilchard, cast out to where the fish was last sighted.

The bait was about half way in on a slow retrieve before I felt something grab hold of it and commence to swim leisurely away. I let him go for about 30 feet before leaning back to sink the hooks.

Then he burst into life and made for the open sea. Much to our surprise he stopped after a hundred yards and allowed me to retrieve several yards of line before he again livened up; but this time he ran towards me and I was winding flat out with my 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Alvey side-cast reel to keep the line between us taut. He was almost to the rocks when he turned and I saw the beautiful silver and blue shape of a tuna as he shot out to sea again. But this time he did not stop at the hundred yard mark, nor the two hundred; in fact, it was about three hundred and fifty yards before I turned him again. We stood locked at this distance for the next half hour with neither of us gaining more than a yard or two of line. I was beginning to think that he had drowned when he finally started to give ground. He came in all the way a dead weight, with little fight, and it was not till I had him at my feet that he made a few dying surges.

It was an easy matter to gaff him and drage him up onto the rocks. As we had guessed at our first glimpse it was a Northern Bluefin Tuna which went 35 pounds when it was weighed several hours later.

Should you prefer fishing for a smaller class of fish or when rough weather makes the beach and headland unfishable, the lagoons would satisfy your requirements.

In the shelter of the headland lies half a mile of calm water lagoons from which several blue channels wind their way through the sandbanks to the waters of Wide Bay. Here the bream, flathead and whiting are plentiful all year round and it is quite an easy matter to fill a creel in a morning's fishing. At certain times of the year a small class of tailor invade these lagoons and provide excellent sport on light gear. On one occasion three of us caught over seventy tailor using white pilchard for bait, when we had intended to catch flathead.

The multi-coloured sand hills and the sandstone formation behind them make this area a photographers dream. As the first rays of the light strike the sandhills, a rainbow effect is achieved by the sunlight on the various<sup>s</sup> coloured sands and this could well be why the Wide Bay section of the coastline is called Rainbow Beach. If you should journey into this area do not neglect to bring your camera as well as your fishing rod.

Perhaps the remoteness of civilization is the main reason for the good fishing experienced. The Noosa River forms a formidable barrier to most of the weekend fishermen, but some have overcome this difficulty by parking their old model cars on the north bank of the river. There are also several vehicular barges, but these are privately owned and not available to the general public.

For those people who are fortunate enough to own a four wheel drive vehicle, there is a rough bush track skirting the upper reaches of the Noosa River. This track can be very treacherous in wet weather as it crosses creek-beds and low lying flats. Also the last five miles of this route consists of two sandy wheel tracks and a steep descent onto the beach which the four wheel drive vehicles have difficulty negotiating when returning in dry weather.

If you own a four wheel drive or can obtain the use of a barge, this area will be rewarding from a fishing point of view as well as being of a scenic interest. A trip along this beach would constitute, in my estimation, one of the most picturesque drives in the world.