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Brock Iseppi and his dad show off a nice barra

## Youth Is The ANSA

Sustainable fishing - tag and release workshop at 12 Mile Creek.

On Saturday, May 30, 2009 a group of 45 keen young anglers converged on 12 Mile Creek at Marmor (south of Rockhampton), for a 'hands on' barramundi fishing experience. The day was organized by members of the Bundaberg, Gladstone, Keppel Bay, and Captag Sportfishing Clubs, to give these young anglers the chance to tag and release a barramundi, thus becoming part of the ongoing fish tagging and monitoring program being run in Queensland by Infofish.

The youngsters arrived at 12 Mile Creek around 9 am and quickly began readying their fishing equipment for the day ahead. Once their gear was all sorted out, it was time to meet under the shady marquees which the club members had erected for the necessary safety briefing. Then Captag's Bill Sawynok treated all present to a brief but highly educational talk about the lifecycle of the barramundi and the importance rainfall and environmental conditions play in ensuring their ongoing survival and reproduction.

Next came the opportunity to practice their fish handling and tagging skills, thanks to the Gladstone Area Water Board Hatchery Staff, who brought along four juvenile barramundi to be the stars of the show. After being shown the correct way to handle fish destined for release by Gladstone Sportfishing Club's Peter Stoneley, each youngster then had the chance to pick up one of these baby barra, accurately measure it and carefully 'release' it back into the tank.

## Events

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Once the educational side of the day was out of the way, obviously the youngsters were keen to put their new found knowledge to the test and they hit the water in search of a fish. While a couple of barra were taken in the session prior to lunch, it quickly became obvious that the fishing was a little slow due to the relatively cool water temperatures. Given the time of year (late May) it was felt that the fishing would probably be better in the afternoon, once the sun had the chance to warm the water a little, so a break was called for lunch and everyone had the opportunity to grab a tasty sausage sandwich and a drink and sit down in the shade for a little while.



Bill Sawynok gives a demo on how to throw a cast net

Once lunch was eaten and everyone well rested, the kids hit the water again with renewed enthusiasm. Lures were flying in all directions and it didn't take long for a few more small barra to find themselves being grabbed by little hands and carefully measured, tagged and released. Again, the number of fish was probably down on what was hoped for, but while not everyone managed to catch a fish themselves, most got the opportunity to experience a barra hit their lure or at least see a fish get landed by someone fishing close by.

12 Mile creek is regarded as one of the prime barramundi nursery areas in Central Queensland and not surprisingly, most of the fish it holds tend to be well below the legal size limit of 58cm. Indeed, the majority of barra landed by the youngsters on the day varied between 20 and 35cm. Understandably, when one of the senior anglers took a break from their supervisory duties and managed to subdue a solid little barra of 56.5 cm, it quickly drew a crowd of young admirers.

This fish generated even more excitement when keen young eyes pointed out that it was already wearing a tag from a previous encounter. The all important tag number was quickly recorded the fish was measured again and then reverently slipped back into the creek so that it could continue to grow and hopefully be captured again some time in the future by another lucky angler.

This successful capture demonstrated to the juniors that, provided fish are handled correctly and treated with care they do cope well with being tagged. This fish had obviously survived the process and was in prime condition. Once the information from the previous tagging has been processed, invaluable information, including how much it has grown, how far it had moved and how long it had been at large will be revealed. This data will no doubt assist scientists to better manage our wild barramundi stocks and ensure that these wonderful sportsfish will continue to go on providing anglers with thrilling encounters for generations to come.

Unfortunately, by 4 pm it was time for most of the juniors to pack up as the majority had a substantial bus ride ahead of them to get home. As usual, the fish decided to come on the bite almost as soon as the rods and reels were packed away and those who were lucky enough to be able to hang around for a bit longer got to experience quite a bit of action as the afternoon wore on. Still, despite just missing out on the hottest bite of the day, most of the young anglers were more than happy with just to have been involved in the whole barra fishing experience and it was a well satisfied bus load of young anglers who headed back down the highway to home.



Some pretty happy Bundaberg kids call it a day

Obviously, these sorts of days don't come together or run as smoothly as this one did without a lot of input and assistance. A big thank you has to go to Bill Sawynok of Infofish for the hard work he continues to put into the ongoing tagging project. Also, special thanks to all the members of the various Sportfishing Clubs for giving up their spare time to come and supervise these young anglers so they could be part of such an exciting day. Finally, thanks must go to the Gladstone Area Water Board for bringing along the very much alive and kicking juvenile barramundi, and to the Department of Environment and Resource Management for providing the funding grant to make the entire day possible.

For more information on the day, and many other items of interest to local anglers, visit the new BSFC website at [www.bundysportfishing.com.au](http://www.bundysportfishing.com.au), or contact Kev Charteris on 0408 848 564

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