

Borumba TAG-A-TOGA 2023... Fishing for Knowledge



Marty Wolens from Ipswich with a perfectly tagged Borumba beauty.

53 anglers converged on Lake Borumba near Imbil Qld for the sixth annual TAG-A-TOGA event on 4-5th March for a lot of fun and to gain a better understanding of the resident Saratoga population.

Rather than a normal fishing competition, this event offers a more relaxed environment which focuses heavily on everyone enjoying themselves rather than who wins. There are a lot of great prizes given away for hidden treasures and lucky door prizes with only a few reserved for those who catch fish. This helps to promote the teams sharing tactics on what is working, which results in more captures and therefore more data collected so we have a greater understanding of these important fish in Qld impoundments.

The event is limited to 20 boats plus sponsors to ensure consistent results and to prevent putting too much pressure on the Saratoga population. This year, the 20 spots were completely filled with returning 2022 entrants, showing just how popular TAGATOGA has become. Meals are provided throughout the weekend and the roast meal on Saturday night involved a fancy dress to enhance the social aspect.

This was the seventh year Kingaroy Sportfishing Club had held the event at this time of year and the third since we started to collecting more in depth information, including what lure / bait, time of capture, and what terrain each fish was caught. At event closure, this data is shared with entrants to help fine tune angler's skills to have better success chasing these mighty fish, Brendan Moore from Kingaroy Sportfishing Club advised.

Although they possess very poor eating qualities, Saratoga are renowned for their willingness to take both lures and flies and their acrobatic performances once hooked, which has made them a premier freshwater sports fish. Saratoga are prehistoric, surviving since the Eocene era which is around 50 million years ago, their upward facing eyes making them a target for surface presentations, however their hard bony mouths make hooking and landing them challenging.

"The Tag-A-Toga event is part of a long term citizen science plan with an aim of collecting data on population, growth and growth rate dynamics of Saratoga in Lake Borumba." Shaun Manthey Vice President of Kingaroy Sportfishing Club explained.

"The fishing was the most successful on record with a total of 113 Saratoga caught. All of these fish were released and tagged with QLD Sportfishers pink tags. This will allow us to learn more about these ancient looking creatures. Due to the social aspect, successful methods and secret spots are shared amongst the teams throughout the event, which results in more fish being caught and therefore more data captured. "It's great to see people unlocking the secrets in landing these great fish and this is proven with the results this year" Shaun said.

The event focuses on capture, tagging, data collection and safe handling and release of the Saratoga. Before the event a briefing is held to ensure anglers are up to date with correct handling and recording procedures. A tag is attached to the fish with a unique identifying number. If the fish is recaptured at a later date the tag

Smaller ones are just as important for our event, Mick King in a picture perfect Borumba backdrop.



can be reported online to www.ansaqld.com.au . The information will record movement and growth between captures.

Although it's an event rather than a competition, we did have some great trophies for the champion team. This year, team "Cootas" caught nearly 3.4mtrs of Saratoga per team member (total of 13 fish) which is a fantastic effort seeing as it's the first time they had fished together, which was brought about after a late withdrawal of an original team member the week before. Their name will also be placed on the Alex "Flick" Robertson memorial shield. The annual shield is named after the local Kingaroy identity who was one of the founding fathers of the Kingaroy Club and a well-known lure maker.

The longest Saratoga captured during the weekend was a magnificent 790mm model caught by Dave Mollenhaur, the captain of Team Cootas and this fish secured the win from behind. Fish of this size are very crafty and landing one of these are a testament to the anglers ability. This was also backed up with a 730mm model caught on lure by Rob McAuliffe from Lake Borumba Fish Stocking Association.

Kingaroy SFC is affiliated with Queensland Sportfishers which is made up of many like-minded clubs through Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA). Adam Royle, President of Qld Sportfishers said, "It is extremely satisfying to see member clubs run great events that incorporate both sport, social and conservation science elements into the mix".

"Kingaroy Sportfishing club is one of a number of our affiliated clubs who have developed a club specific Recreational Fishery Monitoring Plan and are now implementing fishery data collection and tagging to achieve their monitoring goals" Adam said.

"Credit goes to both Kingaroy Sportfishing Club and the anglers who fished the event for having fun and contributing to a greater understanding of a highly regarded sportfish.

A captured size range of 380mm to 790mm proved that there was a good self-sufficient breeding process under way within the area as well as the larger size range proving their living conditions were well suited to their lifestyle and general health. "If you haven't been to Borumba dam, do yourself a favour, it's a picturesque dam that's full of fish, thanks to the great work of the dedicated local stocking group" event organiser Bob Dover stated.

"Non-target species, namely Australian Bass and Golden Perch were also encountered, and data recorded before being returned to the water ready to fight another day.

Shaun Manthey thanked all participants who travelled and the staff at Borumba Deer Park for the venue and hospitality. BCF Kingaroy, Garmin Australia, Sunshine Mitre 10, Australian Freshwater Fishing Charters and Borumba Deer Park all sponsored this event and made it the success it was.

The event will continue at Borumba for one final year, by then enough information will be gathered in this impoundment. Qld Sportfisher monitoring plans are set up only to tag enough fish to gain sufficient information on the local population. The club will now turn their attention on setting a date for next year and securing the relevant permits. Bob Dover hinted, "Along with a lot of positive feedback, we also have some ideas to make the event even more successful next year".

The Kingaroy Sportfishing Club offers its members an opportunity for mateship, education and skills development in a family friendly environment. To learn more about fishing in the South Burnett or to become involved, contact them via their Facebook page.



Dean Rockemer from Maryborough with a very healthy fish.