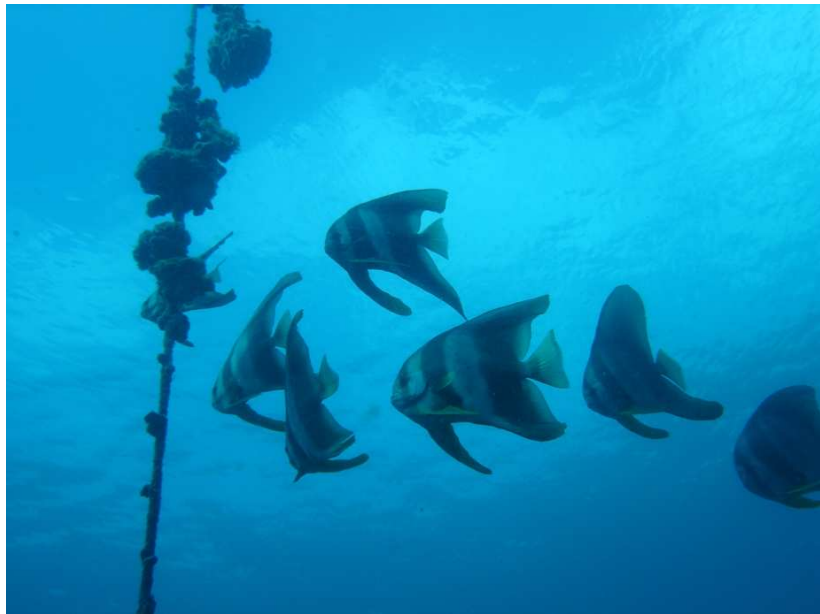


Unleashed

By Brett Craik

After an extended break from diving due to work commitments up north in the burgeoning mining industry Doug was extremely eager to unleash himself on some unsuspecting fish on arrival back in Brisbane and what better opportunity than a variable forecast, it don't get much sweeter than that. I had no choice but to tag along as well.



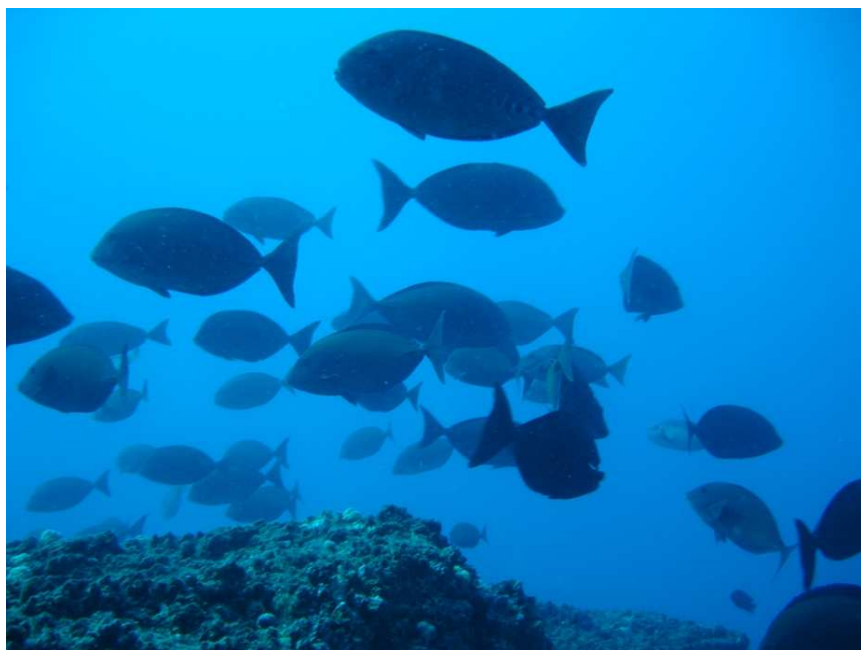
After going on a dive the previous weekend where the water was a cool 19 degrees I was please to see it had spiked back up to 21 degrees that temp while being more comfortable was more please for the fact that temperature spikes tend to result in fishy days and well with Doug chomping at the bit so to speak the early signs were for some ensuing mayhem.

Arriving at the first spot Doug and I suited up while several whales breached nearby their songs would keep us company for the rest of the day, they truly are amazing creatures I am forever wondering what they are saying. Doug hit the water first while I was still stuffing around trying to organise the camera as I was intending on filming all day. Within seconds of hitting the water Doug began yelling to me "get in here now!" I knew it would be a school of Cobia and I quickly leapt over the side of the boat swimming frantically over to where Doug was positioned. Doug was hovering in the clear water above a school of approximately 20 or so cobia,

he was holding off on approaching them to give me a chance to catch it all on film. Doug's impressive patience paid dividends as I was able to ride his shoulder on the next dive as the whole school past in front of us Doug spearing the closest fish as they all appeared to be about the same size. The fish was quickly boated, Doug was keen to try for another cobia as they were still hanging in the area I was still seeing them in the distance. Unfortunately the school must have worked out there was a threat this was evident by their behaviour becoming quite suspicious and skittish. Doug was finding it too difficult to approach them and being the opportunist he began to spear some other reefies in the area including a nice maori cod they may be plentiful up north on the reefs but its usually hard to find a legal specimen around Brisbane as most adult fish go deep around 60 to 80 metres, Doug getting this nice one from only 20 metres.



Such is our style we moved to several other spots in search of fish, many of these proving to be completely empty which is not too uncommon during the winter months however it gave me the opportunity to concentrate on taking some happy snaps of Doug with the still camera.



Just when it appeared the ocean was asleep and we were not going to find any more action I stumbled across a cobia which was also having asleep on the sand right next to a very large ray. The relationship between cobia and rays is difficult to define and it may never be fully understood; however for our purposes all we need to know is that where rays are to be found it is always worth taking another closer look in the adjacent area, you just never know particularly at this time of year. Doug was able to descend slowly on the fish getting closer and closer before it must have sensed him as it

picked itself off the sand and began to tail away, unfortunately for the cobia the range of the 1.5 metre gun far outstripped the distance between the two and an incoming shot was imminent. I was able to both film and take still pictures of the act capturing the fish getting speared and death rolling into the sand at 20 metres, not great for the shaft but worth is as cobia number two hit the deck of the boat.

With all said and done in that area we moved to another shallow ledge where there appeared to be more of the smaller life around. Burley was our main hope of attracting something larger to the area, so we commenced running a trail of fish scraps as the current pushed us along the ledge. Only 10 minutes after



starting the burley in came racing an aggressive kingfish, the aggressive fish was quickly pacified by a crippling shot from Doug, he was really starting to find his old form today.

With the burley exhausted and chance of seeing something else half descent diminishing we decided to make a run to the south to see if we could locate some crayfish as we had not had a good feed of them for what seemed like ages.

The decision to search for crays paid dividends immediately as Doug speared four on an equal number of dives at one location, all good size too. I was able to film a couple of these until I decided to get in on the act and take a few for myself. We stumbled



across one crevasse that was open at both ends the crays being packed tightly inside, they basically had no escape I was able to observe as Doug approached from one side a couple would run out the back but then just as quickly they would run straight back in seeking the supposed safety of a dark crevasse when in reality they would have been better making a run for it in the open.

Doug and I were busy having a great time and he was busy hauling up a cray which was making a fair bit of commotion when he suddenly started screaming, I had not heard him like this before so my immediate thoughts were Tiger or Great White. I turned to face the direction he was looking when my vision was full of close to 20 wahoo in only 10 metres of water, some of them being very large and so close to us it was an astonishing sight. The problem was I didn't have a gun and Doug only had a .8 Rabitech because you just do not expect something like this to turn up in such shallow water. Doug

began yelling to the boatie for a gun with a rig which was promptly provided, Doug gearing himself up and off he went the wahoo had moved away of course by this stage but that was not going to deter him. He pushed hard after them which was equally as impressive when you consider he was in a fair amount of pain the whole time from a serious cramp he was ignoring. The wahoo had a big head start but Doug made a decision which probably proved to be crucial in the grand scheme of things, he decided to head them off in the deeper water knowing the wahoo would peel off away from the beach eventually as they are a deep water pelagic, by doing this Doug was able to put himself in a position where the wahoo made another pass in front of him. Meanwhile I had jumped in the boat and was trying to deal with the crayfish, I then heard Doug yelling at to us "need a second shot" He had a wahoo on that much I knew for sure, I was just stunned I thought there would be no way in hell he would run them down, that almost never happens.



We motored over quickly and I jumped back in with the .8 unrigged Rabitech gun which was just handy at the time, that proved to be a big mistake because within moments the entire school of returned to see what was happening to their mate. I descended amongst the school seeing one fish at about 30 kilos but I was only going to take a shot if I could get in range of the head that was not likely with only a .8 gun, I did definitely get in range of a mid body shot but I am sure it would not have penetrated fully and if it did I would have either lost my gun or washed up somewhere near Sydney the following week. By having to let the school pass me by I was then able to focus on punching a second shot into the exhausted wahoo on Doug's spear, the second shot was a killer entering through the gill region and sending blood billowing out creating a thick mist around the fish as it was pulled towards Doug's eager grip.

After a few pics taken with the impressive fish and a full esky by 12 o'clock all thanks to Doug unleashing his pent up aggression we were quite happy to head off home for an early one and get ready for a superb feast of crayfish to be enjoyed by an ever expanding mob I now refer to as the 'fish groupies' its like a drug to them. Such is the beauty of spearfishing it is the only extreme adventure sport that can bring people together like that as we gathered around that evening to relive the action all captured on film and found on the website at www.bluevisions.net, check it out.