

Watch a fish – catch a fish



By Phil Jackson — Fly, Tye and Tackle

Autumn is a beautiful time of the year in the New England high country. Clear blue skies and the soft dappled light of the open shade were a wedding photographer's dream.

The property had been in Jane's family since the beginning of time and boasted a healthy population of wombats, rabbits, foxes, dingoes and the remnants of a cattle herd that was about as feral as the rest of the introduced species. The substantial barn, the only remaining structure, is a cavernous structure of split timber walls and a shingle roof.

The blacksmiths hearth was planked over and covered with an embroidered cloth to make a perfect altar – after the formalities it was converted to a blistering pit of coals under a slowly rotating spit roast. One of last year's Hereford progeny.

Tim was a lanky Territorian, a man of few words and even fewer graces who climbed out of the saddle and straight into uniform. A good friend and role model, a born leader of men with a ready smile and no time for fools – Tim could do the difficult while you waited and the impossible by appointment.

Jane was as short as Tim was tall and slightly on the cuddly side. Her bright bubbly personality made her the perfect hostess in her well-to-do Sydney family social circle and a double degree with honours proved she had ability as well.

They walked out of the barn and into the afternoon sunlight under our arch of crossed sabres and I remember thinking to myself 'opposites really do attract'.

Twenty years later I'm in a mustering camp nor west of Longreach sitting on the Landcruiser tyre we'd just repaired. The fire had reduced to camp oven ashes and one of the Mailman brothers was doing the honours with the damper. The moon

hadn't yet risen and the stars were so close I could have reached up and taken their pure clean light in my hands.

I was mesmerised as the moon rose and we ate in silence until Jimmy said "peoples heart always bringum back to their land, their place, the heart knows where you belong" – and I felt right at home.

Regrettably it was also true for Tim and

...32▷

fly fish new zealand with PHIL JACKSON

Make your next holiday a fly fishing adventure in the most beautiful country on earth. Catering for the experienced fly fisherman and novice alike, my New Zealand fly fishing holidays will give you a life time of memories.

If you'd like to mix in a little golf and sight seeing, I can do that too. Come with me for the eight days of relaxation you've promised yourself all year.

For more information just give me a call on 0411 576 793 or drop me a line at flytye@smartchat.net.au



A nice queenie.





Apex predator.



A nice barra after modifying my techniques as the season changes.

<31...FISHING THE FORM GUIDE

Jane. After almost 30 years and four children together they decided to return to the where they felt they belonged – Jane to the social life of Sydney and Tim to the up-front and raw life in the Territory.

Every cloud should have a silver lining and in this case it was the architecturally designed saltwater pool Tim had built for Jane’s aqua aerobics. He converted it to a huge aquarium with a representation by every sports fish in the Top End. At one end a below ground room has windows for an observatory. This doubled as a wine cellar when Tim was living by himself but it was converted to an office after he went to get “something to drink with dinner” and didn’t come back for three days.

There are a number of underwater cameras that burn to CD’s and relay live images to the wide screen monitors in the lounge. Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, every tail flap and fin twitch of every creature in the pool is recorded. If you ever wanted to study a species this was the way to do it, which is exactly why it’s here because Tim’s youngest daughter Anna is doing her Masters in marine stud-

ies and her university co-ordinator Ilka, who is also Tim’s new partner can have the ultimate research lab.

Naturally Tim, who is probably the best fisherman I know, feels obligated to contribute to the program by introducing new species onto the scene. The lack of an apex predator saw him get official approval to introduce a freshwater croc – but keeping the critter in the pool is still a work in progress.

I’m not saying you should convert your saltwater pool to an aquarium just so you can study the fish you like to catch but at least consider a fish tank. Not only is watching fish the ultimate stress relief, you won’t believe how much you’ll learn. The only requirement is that it must be exposed to ambient temperature and barometric pressure so you can’t keep it inside. Tim has a resident school of prawns, which we supplement with the cast net, but you could feed your fish with thawed bait from the freezer.

Watching the way barra go into hunting mode as the barometric pressure changes and the way prey species react as been a real eye opener and I’ve certainly learnt to modified my techniques as the season changes. With a tank it is even easier, you

can simply manipulate thermostat and water flow and watch the reaction to the changes with water temperature and oxygen levels.

The bigger the tank and the more species, the more you’ll learn. Not enough room? Just put it where the TV used to stand. What about the TV? Who cares, fish are far more fun than all the G-8s, G-12s or G-wizzes or whatever.

But seriously, getting to know the species you fish for is paramount to success. From my experience I can tell you don’t get juveniles. Fish are a lot smarter than the average fisho gives them credit. Young fish will soon associate you with food and react when you approach the tank to feed them. Pretty soon they will become proactive instead of reactive and they will train you to feed them every time you pass the tank. This kind of defeats the purpose – but it does make you feel appreciated.

You may also have to check with your local representative of the fish keeping and licensing bureaucracy just to make sure your not infringing any international bill of piscatorial rights and it’s really poor form to eat them when they become plate size.

“Give a man a fish and feed him for a meal, teach him to fish and he’ll be late for every meal.” ■



Location, location, location...

ADVERTISERS’ INDEX

ACFA	IBC
Aon	29
Advanced Nutritnts	19
Barcoo.	13
Bayer Cropscience	OBC
Case IH.	3
Cropcare	7
Charlton Tackle	6
Dupont	16-17
Fly Fish NZ	31
Incitec Pivot	IFC
2nd Kingsman Conference	9
Syngenta.	5