

MARINE SCENE

Pays to take the rough with the smooth

RADICAL FISHING

with Steve Radich

THE DOWNSIDE of any fishing column is that by the time it goes to press, the news may be out of date.

By the time the reader takes to the water, in all likelihood, the feeding cycle may have completed a 360-degree shift. In other words, when reports suggest the fishing has been good, the future is likely to see the fishing change for the worse.

On the other hand, if the fishing has been reported as poor, then that's the time to get out on the water, because the fish should be back biting by the next weekend.

One of the great pleasures of being involved in the natural world is the fact that nothing stays the same for long. I get worried after a series of successful fishing trips because experience has taught me that it can't stay good forever.

By my last count, over the long haul, my fishing trips tend balance out at around a third of good to very good, 30 per cent sort of okay and the last third close to useless. So a bunch of real good trips in a row and I know I'm headed for a fall. By the same token, the more bad trips under your belt, the sooner you'll strike gold.

The topic of what drives the feeding cycle of fish is frequently canvassed. And this scribe is one of the many who has, from time to time, turned his mind and pen to the matter. Which brings me to another of the great pleasures of this hobby: that one never stops learning.

A recent cycle of fishing trips that were by and large successful, had one feature in common. In addition to the ground targeted, the tide was out-going.

Accepting the reputed fact that tarakihi feed best in still water, this scribe with family and friends had made a real effort to be on site well before dead water high.

But the early mornings were all a waste of time for the fish didn't really get hungry until the tide had well and truly turned. So there you go. Still water isn't all it's made out to be.

We could all have slept in.

Then we had another experience which, while not new, was refreshing in the clarity with which the lesson was demonstrated.

We'd been fishing with only modest success for a couple of hours.

A couple of moves to try to more effectively target the fish that were clearly on the bottom had been attempted to no avail.

A keen crew had only managed to bag half a dozen tarakihi, along with a couple of pigfish and leather-jackets in this time.

The approach of a snotty looking squall from the southwest had the canopy up and cockpit sides closed down by the time it hit.

But during the half-hour lashing that ensued, we landed well over 15 nice fat tarakihi.

The tarakihi were in a suicidal mood. As the squall abated so too did the fishing. So we went home early.

WHALE OF A TAIL



HUNDREDS COME TO HELP: Nobby strands at Papamoa Beach in September 2008.

PICTURES / INGRID VISSER



FAMED FIN: Ingrid has known this orca — Nobby — with a distinctive fin since he was just a few years old. The picture on the left was taken on August 6 in the Bay of Islands. The photograph at right was taken two days later in Whangarei. Ingrid says people are frequently astonished at the great distances orca travel in short time frames. Nobby was first photographed in the Bay of Islands in November 1993. He has also been seen on the West Coast, Hokianga, Kaipara Harbour and Hauraki Gulf. On September 27, 2008, Nobby stranded at Papamoa near Tauranga and Ingrid flew down on a Helinorth helicopter. More than 2000 people helped with the rescue. Nobby was resighted in November 2008 at Whitianga and a number of times since. Without people's help, Nobby would have died as a result of the stranding, Ingrid said.



INTERESTING ANGLE: From left, three young orca approach the boat, watched by Esther Malcolm and Ingrid Visser.

PICTURE / KATE MALCOLM

Marine expert Ingrid Visser spent seven hours with nine orca as they hunted for ray in the Bay of Islands. Two days later, on Saturday, Onerahi resident Ben McFarlane spotted a pod in Whangarei Harbour at Busby point while going for a morning fish. It was the first time Mr McFarlane had seen orca in the harbour but he remembered Ingrid Visser's distinctive 0800 SEE ORCA phone number. Dr Visser said the pod in going from the Bay of Islands to Whangarei Harbour had travelled 97km in 39 hours — a straight-line distance which doesn't include going into bays to hunt.

An unlikely alliance forged to protect fish

Recreational fishers have joined forces with environmental groups in a bid to protect marine stocks and get the Government to rethink its approach to fisheries.

They are responding to the Government's strategic vision towards fisheries, outlined in the Fisheries 2030 plan.

New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council president Geoff Rowling said the plan seemed to be about deregulation and "putting money in the pockets of the commercial sector".

The group met Fisheries Minister Phil Heatley on Monday, where they proposed modifications or alternatives to the plan.

These included the restoration of fish populations to well above the current benchmark level; putting an end to destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling; and to switch to more sustainable fishing practices.

Greenpeace oceans campaigner Karli Thomas said while the organisations that make up the group did not traditionally work together, they shared these goals in common.

"We all want to see a healthy ocean and more fish in the water. That's good whether you're a greenie, a fisherman or both," she said.

The group included the New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council, Forest and Bird, the Council of Outdoor Recreation Associations of New Zealand and the Hokianga Accord.

The minister will decide next week what form the 2030 Fisheries plan will take, and whether the group's proposals are to be included in it.

"It currently does not represent any of us or deliver our vision," Forest and Bird spokeswoman Kirstie Knowles said.

— NZPA

We all want to see a healthy ocean and more fish in the water.

— Karli Thomas
Greenpeace



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