



The Pandozer

A SNIPPET

Coming from Poynter Island to Cape Palmerston

I crossed paths with a humpback whale putting on a show. From hundreds of meters away it was easily visible doing huge tail whacks and breaches. As I ambled past it contented itself with flipper flops and snorkel snortling. Always a thrill. In contrast, the previous day and a similar distance offshore, I paddled past a smallish crab floating or swimming to who knows where? Crabs do the strangest things.

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End Of The Road

Snippity snap. The water crackled with life as I eased into the cockpit. Reef sharks chased big fish around in the shallows. Big fish chased little fish, little fish harassed even smaller blob-like things. Crabs stayed out of the early morning fracas and birds watched with interest. The flood (rising) tide carried me across Shoalwater Bay at an unpredictable angle and quickly. A flying fish, maybe sensing my presence, maybe just getting exercise, went whirring past the bow like a little helicopter. Thankfully the tide lasted the journey and I landed at Stanage on high water. The campground has a pit toilet, no water and is free. As my neighbour Bev pointed out as her husband gave me a 20 liter drum to draw from, it is at the end of

100 kilometers of dirt road. Over at the shop I told the lady that she looked like my granny (Grace) and asked where she grew up. Tenterfield. No relation. The lads in the beer garden were back from fishing. I asked about the conditions across Broad Sound. That's 'green zone' (no fishing) so no one knew anything much. Big tides though. I told them you don't find many free campgrounds like that anymore. They told me the council were trying to make it a caravan park. They told me fat chance. I wished them well.

This fortnight has been a ripper. From the idyllic Pancake Creek, up past Gladstone, through Keppel Bay, into the deserted military zone, across the wilds

to Stanage and onwards towards Mackay. Life on water and beach continues to offer up delightfully insignificant moments. Like when the edges of the sand bank splashed into the creek after a night of rain. At first I thought it was fish, then I considered crocodiles, then I had to get up and check. Or when the booby hovered overhead, looking down at the orange tub in the milky green water, free of wonder. Booby's don't wonder about anything, they just fly about looking at things, the more colourful the better.

The next fortnight will include The Whitsundays, Bowen, Townsville and probably as far north as Hinchinbrook Island.

Day to Day

- 127. Seventeen Seventy to Pancake Creek, 24km
- 128. Pancake Creek to Tannum Sands, 40km
- 129. Tannum Sands to Facing Island, 17km
- 130. Facing Island to Cape Capricorn, Curtis Is., 38km
- 131. Cape Capricorn to Divided Island, 37km
- 132. Divided Island to Emu Park, 12km
- 133. Emu Park R&R
- 134. Emu Park to Byfield National Park (south), 27km
- 135. Byfield NP to Five Rocks, 24km
- 136. Five Rocks to Pearl Bay, 52km
- 137. Pearl Bay to Lingham Island, 50km
- 138. Lingham Island to Stanage, 27km
- 139. Stanage to Poynton Island, 45km
- 140. Poynton Island to Cape Palmerston, 44km

Energy, Water, Space and Food

Wise old bear. He used to roam around the house turning off lights in empty rooms. 'Wasteful', he might mutter before ambling off to his dim lair. We would laugh and call him names. Obsessive old bear, pedantic old bear. Wrong, wrong, wrong! We should have been thanking the wise old bear for his wisdom, and giving him a rub on his bearish tummy. Probably should have stopped leaving so many lights on too.

The theme of this rant is over-consumption. That's when we eat something beyond the point of being full. When we reach enough but keep shovelling it in until it spews up and out and over. Energy is a good example, we're gobbling it up at an incredible rate. I marvel at the line of coal carrying ships waiting to fill their bellies off our east coast ports. That satiating coal patiently accumulated in swampy sedimentary basins over millions of years. We are eating it up in a comparative blink of the eye. Gobble gobble. Water is another resource that we haven't come to grips with. The recent Toowoomba-Poowoomba (I laughed when I heard that) debate over using

recycled drinking water is proof of that. I mean, come on Toowoombianites, don't be so precious. Water restrictions mean people can only water their gardens with buckets in Brisbane. BUCKETS! One bucket is all you need to get by. Pouring water over exotic plant species is one of our more perplexing behaviours. Drink it, wash with it, feed vegetables with it if you must but don't tip hundreds of litres of the stuff on your lawn just so it's nice to walk on. Play in the dirt, it's fun.

Space is the third resource that needs attention. In Australia you might think that we've got oodles of it. Problem is that no-one wants to live in the oodles, we all cram into the noodles. The noodles are the headlands, riverbanks, beaches and the like. All those big new houses need lots of energy to light their meandering driveways and warm their scarcely used rooms. One of the houses on the hill I saw this afternoon could no doubt have powered an entire Adelaide suburb. Poor old Adelaide. Think small, think cosy, think communal parks.

The last resource of diminishing

returns on my rant list today is food. This is a good moment to point out that I am all in favour of consumption. Consumption keeps us alive, creative consumption keeps us energised, over-consumption makes us fat. Our bodies love fat and stack it on at every opportunity. It makes sense if you're not sure when your next gazelle will be slain, it doesn't make sense when you're sitting at McDonalds.

But wait, I hear you holler, easy for you to preach from your small blue tent, using only 4 litres a day and living off the smell of a metho soaked cooker, easy indeed. But what about when you finish paddling, when you have to live and work in the real world again, what then Mr Lightly-Bearded-Neo-Hippy-Dude? Good point, and it scares me witless that when it's all said and done I will be an over-consumer again, just like I always have been. And it's not as if I haven't known about it before. The issues aren't new. I can only say that I'll try harder, much harder.

Do you know a wise old bear?
Rub him on the belly if you do.

**“Morality, like
art, means
drawing a line
someplace.”**

**Oscar Wilde
(1854 - 1900)**

A Bad Two Weeks For Feet

They sit idly on the rudder pedals for hours on end in a warm orange haze. A slight adjustment here, a wiggle and a stretch there, not much to it. At the end of the day there's a few hours at most where they can run free. They love sand best, but don't quibble over rocks, scrub and even a bit of dirt. The last two weeks they've been getting up to mischief. There was the day they reversed onto the tent peg and sustained a jagged rip up the heel. That hurt. Then there was the day they just had to investigate behind the beach. The long grass looked soft enough but really it was hiding goats head burrs. No matter how they lie there is always a woody spike pointing skyward waiting for a passing foot to hitch a ride with. Like walk-

ing over a floor covered in tacks. More pain was to come when they booted a lump of granitic bedrock chasing a photo on the beach. Skin was lost, blood was shed. Enough is enough, after more than one hundred days with barely an incident this was proving to be a bad fortnight indeed. After rips, holes and chunks there was only one thing left undone. Navigating the cloudy shallows they never saw and barely felt the slicing. A glancing blow over the oyster covered rock left several long and open wounds. I think my feet have had a gutful. Tomorrow I will tuck them into the cockpit and prop them up on their dual layered sponges. I will try harder to steer them in the right direction. I may even put sandals on them.

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“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)

3245 Km

Nomads

“...and then the croc jumped up and dragged her back in a third time. She thought she was dead, in fact she acted dead and that’s why the croc swam away. The bank was slippery mud but somehow, even with half her thigh missing, tendons hanging out everywhere, must have been horrific, she climbed up it...”

“Are you sure I need to hear to this Graeme? I mean, if it’s got a bad ending I just don’t want to know about it. Does it have a bad ending?”

“Who knows what happens to the human body in these situations, but she crawled, dragged herself away from the bank. The ranger found her after dark when she was nearly back to the campsite. I met her bushwalking on the Bogong high plains, we’re still friends. Amazing woman.”

Graeme had been rousing himself off the picnic table in the Tannum Sands Botanic Gardens when I wandered up to get water. A shaggy white dog, malamute perhaps, gentle brute certainly, named Jennifer raised her head. The sort of head you want to grab by the cheeks and swivel around like a bowling ball. I didn’t. We chatted while I filled a bottle and Graeme rolled up his sheepskins. “I’m a nomad,” he explained, “we just did an action at the Orica factory. Sixty were supposed to show but I was happy with the fourteen that did. Cyanide criminals. We told ‘em too.”

Orica operate a huge chemical plant over the river from where we stood, cyanide was apparently in their cookbook. The conversation wandered far into Graeme’s past, Nimbin before it was *Nimbin*, four children, three mothers, and more recently, life on the road, following the cyanide trail, letting people know...

And me? I’m a nomad of sorts too, going north while you go south. Home? I suppose I do have a home. Not with an address as such. Not somewhere that you send a card to or call in for a cup of tea. The kayak’s home for now but my real home is further south. I couldn’t put my finger on it but it’s further south than here.

Jennifer wandered away to sniff a little terrier’s derriere. The scooter-driving owner of the terrier let out the throttle and buzzed away. Jennifer swayed back and lay down as Graeme picked handfuls of hair from her mane. “Cyanide criminals, I asked the manager, right to his face, I asked him how he was going to explain it to his kids one day. It’s an outrage and people don’t even know.”

He had a point, cyanide isn’t really a dinner table topic, maybe it should be?

“...and let me tell you about a friend of mine, she was attacked by a croc...”

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