

# Fishing

YOUR VOICE IN THE TERRITORY



with Alex Julius  
fishing@ntnews.com.au

# The Territory, where fishing is headline news

HOW many times have you heard someone say "only in the Territory"?

That certainly happened on Tuesday night.

I mean, which capital city other than Darwin would lead its evening national news bulletin with a story about how this great wet season and predicted bumper run-off should result in a fishing-led tourism boon for the Northern Territory?

Channel Nine News and everyone's favourite news reader, Jonathon Uptin, reckoned the story was headline news and, in my opinion, they were definitely right.

It's really so ironic that, while the rest of the Australian angling community is constantly battling ill-informed, fanging greenies and rabid, one-eyed animal liberationists, here in the Top End the promise of a great recreational barra fishing season is celebrated as headline news.

There's no doubt that the next few weeks in particular will yield some amazing barra-fishing sessions for a multitude of anglers across the Top End's big rivers.

It's a simple fact that, when you have a wet season that starts as early as this one has (the first week of December) and then continues right through into March, with one monsoon after another dumping across the big-river flood-

plains, the inland aquatic food chain goes bananas.

From the smallest microscopic organisms to the largest predators, right now the Top End's brimming floodplains are a smorgasbord of unprecedented magnitude.

Everything will be eating and growing and getting eaten.

Once the floodwaters start to recede in earnest, and the true run-off begins, all that delicious barra tucker will be pouring through flowing feeder creeks into the main river channels.

Barra will be lined up, ready to pounce, wherever they need to be: at the creek mouths with their contrasting colour changes; in the quiet back eddies next to fast-flowing water; behind submerged rocks as swirling waters tumble above; nosed up against thick underwater timber, snapping up tasty morsels as they wash by; and eyes up a centimetre from the surface underneath small, cascading waterfalls, gobbling up disoriented rainbow fish and the like as they rain down on the river.

Hundreds of thousands of anglers around the country know this. More than three decades of constant national print and electronic media coverage have made certain of that.

That's why there definitely



Josh Lee with his 105cm barra from Chambers Bay

will be a barra-fishing-led boon to Top End tourism this year because so many interstate anglers will grab the opportunity to head up here and hopefully sample the great fishing that will be on offer.

An army of barra-fever anglers will be doing it alone — towing or carrying boats behind late-model four-wheel-drives.

Along the way and when they get here, they'll be spend-

ing on food, accommodation, fuel, beverages, maintenance, repairs and much more.

Then there'll be the fly-in quick trippers who will keep our many professional barra guides and fishing tour operators busy.

Make no mistake about it — word interstate of a wet season like this one will be worth tens of millions of dollars to the NT economy.

And it won't be just for the run-off. Fishing for the whole year will be better because of it.

On that very subject of fishing tourists, I was talking with Ronald Voukolos from Fishing and Outdoor World the other day, and he offered the opinion that too many anglers up here don't appreciate how important it

is to develop our recreational fishing industry.

"The reason we have such great barra fishing up here is because of all the good work that was done by AFANT and others, together with governments which listened and were prepared to manage the fish stocks by buying back commercial licences and closing rivers to netting," Ronald said.

"This worked out well for the commercial barra fishermen who decided to stay in the industry and provide needed fish for the non-angling community. But people must understand that the quality of fishing we have available is because recreational fishing for barramundi — and both the money and votes it brings in — were given preference over commercial harvesting.

"It's all well and good to have a river to yourself, but what's the point if there's nothing in it."

If you'd like to view Tuesday night's barra story on Channel Nine, it has been put on Youtube at link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztWwVIQMdAY>

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Following on from last week's report of amazing metre-plus barra fishing in Chambers Bay, Shane Compain, pictured above left, caught a magnificent 105cm barra from the hot session and, left, Stephen Bennett also got into the metre-barramundi action with this 102cm fish

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