

Tas, Aust and World Record?

As a 39 year old mum of four my experience of fishing had been sitting on the side of a river or a jetty with my family with a cheap little spin reel hoping for the a big fish to bite. That changed when I began dating Jason McGiveron just under 3 years ago whom had been into game fishing all his life.

My very first game fishing experience was Mako Shark fishing on John McGiveron's boat "Backlash". Not knowing what to expect when a Mako took the bait I was soon harnessed up and told to take the 24kg rod from its holder. I then spent over an hour fighting a shark that was to be my first ever Mako and to my surprise a Tasmanian record for a lady on 24kg line. My muscles were sore for a couple of days after that fishing experience, but I couldn't wait to get out there and do it all again.

I have learnt a lot along the way about the game fishing rules and regulations, about trolling and about where the best place to position the lure behind the boat. I love shopping for new lures, although I pick them as I like the colours more than whether they may catch a fish.

For the first two year I was a member of the St Helens Game Fishing Club but am now secretary which has been an eye opening experience and at times very stressful, especially being a big part of running the 2013 Club Marine St Helens Game Fishing Classic.

I had no idea how big the game fishing in Tasmania was, and I have met some fantastic people along the way. I also had it in my head that it was mainly a mans sport and when attending some of the competitions in some way it still is.

Maybe other woman have that same image in their head. My children all game fish now, my two girls Zara (10) and Jessica (15) have both got national and Tasmanian records for bluefin and albacore and my son Damien (14) won the state junior GFAA tag and release award last year.

It's not an easy sport and at times it is very frustrating, but when that one fish takes your lure and turns out to be "The BIG One" it makes it all worth the time you spend on the water. That happened to me on the 24 May when Jason and myself decided to take a weekend trip to Eagle Hawk Neck, we left Scamander at around 8am and headed for Fortescue camping ground where we planned to stay the two nights.

Reaching our destination we decided to head out for a couple of hours fishing before bothering to set up camp and got onto the water at about 1pm in Jason's 15ft open tiller steer tinny "Reely Nauti".

I love fishing down here as the coastline is so spectacular and I love watching the seals playing in and around the rocks. There were a few other boats out fishing, the birds were diving at the bait balls and we were just hoping for something to grab a lure.

After a couple of hours of fishing in Munroes Bay, we decided to start heading into camp to warm up and set up camp. Jason casually said to me "wouldn't it be pain now if the rod went off we would be here til dark" and no sooner had he spoken those words the outrigger cracked and the line started screaming.

Jason quickly started bringing in the spread and yelled to me to get on the rod. Grabbing the rod and quickly getting it into my harness I pushed the lever from around 10 kilo of drag up to strike of around 13 kilo drag. We quickly realized this was not a schoolie fish as it just kept going.

The next 20 minutes I was loosing line before I was able to start getting some of it back, after 40 minutes of fighting we could see the double approaching the tip of the rod and deep down see for the first time what I was fighting, it was about then the fish decided to wake up and do another run back to the bottom.

My body was screaming in protest at this point, I had never fished 37 kilo stand up before and was hurting. The only way I could raise the fish was to lock into low gear and push the lever right over to 20+ kilo of drag. After another 30 minutes the fish



was back in sight and Jason was standing ready with the gaff. We still don't know how we managed to pull the fish into the boat once he had gaffed it. Jason told me to just drop his beloved Tiagra and give him a hand.

With the gunnel at water level we managed to slide the fish in with about 500 litres of water, I am so glad the boat has 3 bilge pumps. We sat staring at the fish for about 10 minutes in total shock at the size we had just boated and after Jason doing his happy dance on the boat we had run out of daylight and headed for shore in the dark. We had one stop on the way back once we could find phone reception to tell family members of our excitement. Luckily Paul Hicks the president of the northern gamefish club was camped near us and had a set of club scales with him.

With the help of all the guys camping the weekend we managed to hang up my bluefin. Watching the scales go past the 100 kg mark and landing on 108.5 kg actually brought tears to my eyes.

In the whole time of game fishing I never expected to actually land a barrel bluefin tuna.

That night we knew I had broken the Tasmanian Record, a record that has stood for 50 years, the Saturday we were told it would break the Australian Record and a few people had hinted it may be a World record. On Sunday Jason got the phone call that it had eclipsed the world record by nearly 30 kg.

There are still papers to be signed and line to be tested for the breaking strain but I have my fingers crossed that everything goes through smoothly and that I may be the very proud owner of a Game Fishing world record.

Melissa Nelson

Melissa Nelson with her potential record catch. There is still some paperwork to finish, but it looks good. Regardless of any records it is an awesome southern bluefin tuna.



Tuna, southern bluefin (*Thunnus maccoyii*)

LINE CLASS	WEIGHT	PLACE	DATE	ANGLER
M-01 kg (2 lb)	8 kg (17 lb 10 oz)	Port Lincoln, S.A., Australia	24-Jun-92	George Flourentzou
M-02 kg (4 lb)	12.88 kg (28 lb 6 oz)	Liguanea Island, Australia	12-May-07	Gary A. Carter
M-03 kg (6 lb)	20.5 kg (45 lb 3 oz)	Ward Island, Australia	19-Feb-97	George Flourentzou
M-04 kg (8 lb)	24.1 kg (53 lb 2 oz)	Cannon Reef, Streaky Bay, Australia	21-Feb-96	George Flourentzou
M-06 kg (12 lb)	36.5 kg (80 lb 7 oz)	Cannon Reef, Streaky Bay, Australia	05-Feb-97	David Young
M-08 kg (16 lb)	34 kg (74 lb 15 oz)	Port MacDonnell, South Australia	01-Apr-07	Dane Newman
M-10 kg (20 lb)	58.96 kg (130 lb 0 oz)	Hippolytes, Tasmania, Australia	02-Mar-76	Anthony Little
M-15 kg (30 lb)	106.5 kg (234 lb 12 oz)	Tasman Island, Tasmania, Australia	11-May-80	Jim Allen
M-24 kg (50 lb)	158 kg (348 lb 5 oz)	Whakatane, New Zealand	16-Jan-81	Rex Wood
M-37 kg (80 lb)	138 kg (304 lb 3 oz)	White Island, New Zealand	18-Feb-84	Brian Guy
M-60 kg (130 lb)	148.5 kg (327 lb 6 oz)	Westport, New Zealand	07-Aug-81	Des Benson
W-01 kg (2 lb)	4.2 kg (9 lb 4 oz)	Rottneest Island, Australia	04-Jul-10	Sangeeta Menon
W-02 kg (4 lb)	3.81 kg (8 lb 6 oz)	Rottneest Island, Australia	07-Feb-09	Sangeeta Menon
W-03 kg (6 lb)	14.3 kg (31 lb 8 oz)	Liguanea Island, Australia	12-May-07	Sherrell Carter
W-04 kg (8 lb)	16.2 kg (35 lb 11 oz)	Port MacDonnel, Australia	06-May-09	Kerry L. Heinicke
W-06 kg (12 lb)	21.7 kg (47 lb 13 oz)	St. Helens Island, Tasmania, Australia	19-Apr-81	Ms. Anne Shaw
W-08 kg (16 lb)	28.08 kg (61 lb 14 oz)	Port MacDonnel, Australia	07-Mar-09	Kerry L. Heinicke
W-10 kg (20 lb)	37 kg (81 lb 9 oz)	Tasman Island, Tasmania, Australia	07-Mar-81	Ms. Nanette Lyall
W-15 kg (30 lb)	45.25 kg (99 lb 12 oz)	Eaglehawk Neck, Tasmania, Australia	03-May-81	Ms. Elizabeth Bracey
W-24 kg (50 lb)	29.2 kg (64 lb 5 oz)	Port MacDonnel, Australia	07-Feb-10	Kerry L. Heinicke
W-37 kg (80 lb)	78.5 kg (173 lb 0 oz)	White Island, New Zealand	12-Feb-81	Ms. Carolyn Thies
W-60 kg (130 lb)	0 kg (0 lb 0 oz)	Vacant		Vacant

Although these records are from 2011, not much has changed. There are still plenty of opportunities.