

LAKE BARAMBAH & LAKE BOONDOOMA CAMP REPORT

September 4th – 10th 2011.

As a departure from the normal paddling venues, a decision was made to do a five day camp visiting two large inland waterways in the South Burnett region, Lake Barambah (Bjelke-Peterson Dam) and Lake Boondooma. As it turned out the decision was a good one, with both dams near full capacity.

Special thanks must go to Jim for organising and leading the paddles over the five days. This entailed an initial drive through the district weeks earlier to check out accommodation options and interesting areas to paddle.

A drive of some 145kms. from the Sunshine Coast brought us to Lake Barambah, located just south of Murgon. The Yallakool Caravan Park was our home for the next couple of days. The group stayed in a mixture of cabins, camping trailers and caravans. Although the dam is well stocked with fish and the surrounding countryside is dotted with several wineries, the dam's appeal to us lay in the paddling options. Arriving on the Sunday we had high expectations for the Monday paddle. Eleven paddlers formed the group, Jim, Don, Jan, Ron, Brian, George, Terry, Carmel, Lorna, Richard and Graham.

Light rain was still falling when we launched from the caravan park boat ramp. We headed off into the light rain and fog for a 17.7 klm trip. Following the shore line past the saddle dam wall we continued exploring the far side of the lake. The bird life was a surprise with flocks of black swans, pelicans, ducks and the odd sea eagle. The recent increase in water levels had flooded many of the small trees and made for an interesting paddle, as we terrorized the wildlife at every turn. After morning tea in one of the many sheltered bays and the sun now shining, we headed back across the lake to the camp sight.

The next day we all agreed it was one of the best both with the weather and the scenery. Jim and Richard went for a drive the previous afternoon looking for access to the southern section of the lake. They found a friendly property owner who kindly let the group launch from his lakeside home. This paddle of 17.6 klm comprising the same eleven paddlers headed off into the flooded Barkers Creek area, across the partly submerged barbwire fences into the tall standing timbers. Once again the bird life was in abundance. The return trip on the opposite bank brought us back to the property where we had a welcoming committee of the farmer's cows who had come down to see what all the fuss was about.



On the Wednesday we left BP dam and headed to Lake Boondooma some seventy klm north west of Murgon. Lake Boondooma was formed in 1983 with the damming of the Boyne and Stuart Rivers. We stayed in a caravan and camping park, right on the lakeside which made for easy launching. Our group has now changed somewhat with Carmel, Lorna and Ron heading home but welcomed the arrival of Margaret, Bruce, Mike and Dawn. After setting up camp, a group of us decided to an easy short paddle. With the weather now perfect, no wind and still water we headed up the lake to a rocky outcrop known as the Balancing Rock. From a distance and the right water height this large boulder appears to float on the water.



On the Thursday with the thick fog rolling in across the lake we had a reprieve from the intended early start.

Gradually the fog lifted and we could see each other and the vague outline of the fishing boats. Jim took us past the saddle dam and spillway and into the backwaters of the northern shore. Once again plenty of bird life and even a Koala having a nap in a large tree overhanging the water.

On Friday we headed upstream from the dam wall into the flooded Stuart River section of the lake. The destination was part of the river containing numerous dead trees, some three hours paddle from our camp. The weather looked threatening from the start with a possible storm forecast for late afternoon. We had a choppy run into the wind up the lake and into the Stuart River. The wind eased slightly but a light rain began to fall. As we paddled amongst this standing dead timber, an eerie quietness came to an abrupt end when we heard the roar coming through the trees. The squall took us by surprise, not the least Richard who was enjoying a leisurely ride under sail a hundred meters or so ahead, until he capsized.

Looking back as we headed for the shelter of the trees on the lee shore we could see an upturned kayak but no sign of Richard. It was panic stations for a moment with five rescuers going to his aid. Regrouping and Richard now in dry clothes we headed back through the wind and rain to camp. Once back on the more exposed lake, we had the full force of the gale and following sea resulting in some exciting rides on the cresting waves. By now we were all cold and wet with a common goal of getting off the water as soon as possible, having a hot shower and dry clothes.

One member unfortunately had to wait a little longer for that hot shower after he was accidentally locked out of his cabin. That was the funniest part of the day, Bruce.

- A special thank you again to Jim for coordinating the camp.
- To Brian for the great photos.
- Thanks also to Jan and Don for organising the camp dinner and Don for volunteering to be tail-end Charlie on all the paddles.

Graham Garrett