



Sengo: Thomas Island

## This year's final circuit of the Whitsunday's

### And the southerly migration begins

The weather was finally good enough, and we were finally in the right spots, to do a few snorkeling excursions this month, and I am pleased to say the fish list is growing. I can now at least recognize types of fish as I swim along. The first northerly of the season came in late October and, after a final broad circuit of Hook and Whitsunday Island, we picked up and started the migration south. It is also pleasing to note there was only one (albeit major) disaster this month.

## Hunkering down in Double Bay

1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Double Bay (East) is a bay on the mainland a little north of Airlie Beach. Whilst we were probably going to be all right in Happy Bay, Long Island (rated for 25 knots) we decided we'd go and have a look at somewhere new. Initially we were heading to Woodwark Bay (on the mainland south of Double Bay and north of Airlie Beach) where we would have been protected from the predicted 25 plus knot winds, but not the predicted north-east swell. We chose Double Bay (taking the East section – there is a West section as well) and hunkered down for a week.

During this time it was domestics as usual – a bit of cleaning, writing etc. We had persistent swallows visit us again and after contemplating their options from the tinnie strops, decided they would try building a nest on our back 'cover'. So waking up in the morning we had the muddy foundation of a nest near the top starboard corner of the black mesh. This we got to with a wet sponge and satisfactory cleared it off. The next morning we woke to a similar construction base on the port side top corner of the black mesh, and we repeated the clean up. After having those two options foiled this pair also discovered the divot where the davit winch line comes out (see

earlier Aboard Sengo) and we again had to revert to placing a sponge in the gap so the birds couldn't get in. In the end we reverted to a small water pistol to discourage these little passerines!

## Airlie Beach

6<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015

As per regular, the pantry runs itself down and we eventually need to get back to town to get supplies. The southerly hadn't quite dissipated and it was a spirited sail (wind reaching over 20 knots apparent) into Airlie where we anchored for the first time around the Cannonvale side of the marina : fellow Yachties have been telling us for some time

this side is more protected.

Having decided that this anchorage is indeed much calmer than our previous anchoring spot in Airlie we decided to stick around for a few days. This gave us a chance to get off the boat where a bit of exercise was welcome too. A walk to the café at Shingly Beach, and the next day, a walk back to introduce Andrew to the Cannonvale Gardens had us stretching our legs nicely after a week of stagnation. We also took a walk the other way, discovered the beach on the eastern side of the sailing club, had a quick gander at the other marina to see if we would potentially fit if we didn't book into Abell Point Marina, and had a very unimpressive lunch at the Indian in the food court.



Tiger's  
missing  
his  
greens!

Whilst we were in Airlie we also introduced ourselves to Yaraandoo II – a boat I've been stalking since we sheltered from a blow in the same bay in Eden in late March/early April.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October I couldn't have moved Andrew if I tried, as the Bathurst car race was on. Surprisingly we can get 22 free to air television channels in Airlie Beach – in Pittwater just north of Sydney we could only get one – and that was the community channel. Subsequently I used the time to type out more old poetry, stories and old course notes.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> we went shopping in Cannonvale. We tried to get to main Cannonvale beach but breaking waves would have been a problem so we retreated all the way back to the public boat ramp at Abell Point Marina and walked the three kilometers (return) to the supermarket from there. Subsequently we discovered (walked past) a few little beaches on the way to Cannonvale that would have been ok to leave the tinnie (and therefore we would have had a shorter walk). We will use them next time. At Cannonvale we had a quick chat to fellow Yachties, had lunch, did a shop for a dinner date that got cancelled later – and found an embroiderer for our boat shirts.

## Langford Island

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015 we headed out again, aiming to end up at Blue Pearl Bay, Hayman Island. Unfortunately there were no available moorings so we turned slightly south and arrived at Langford Island just as Merritt (a big tourist boat) was leaving from a large rated mooring. So at 3.15pm we picked up the mooring and went snorkeling off Langford Island again. The winds were predicted to be reasonably light so we stayed on the mooring overnight. All was very peaceful until a red tourist catamaran turned up blasting music (sound travels very easily over water). Fortunately he was not on the mooring next to us so we were able to block out most of the noise by closing the boat up when we went to sleep. Because of how the mooring buoys sit with their attachment lines to the sea floor, we had to jury rig a sling for the buoy so it wouldn't bang against our hull. At 3am in the morning I woke to a thud, thud, thud, and had to get up to re-sling the buoy. That tourist boat had stopped its music – but was running its generator instead!

Langford Island fish list:

Half and half puller  
Blue green puller  
Reefcrest parrotfish?  
Bluelined rabbitfish  
Bengal Seargent  
Yellow puller  
Violet demoiselle



View at low tide from Langford Island across to Bird Island



Gulnare Inlet...3.37pm



Gulnare Inlet...3.45pm

## Beach 25

14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> October

A lovely morning sail down to Cid Island for lunch and then around to Beach 25 (bottom of Whitsunday Island) for an overnight stop. The morning's sail took us around 2 hours. The afternoon sail took us 2.5 hours despite the shorter journey, with quite a few tacks and some frustrating moments avoiding reefs (and one shoal marker). After dinner we lay on the tramp admiring stars as our bow was facing north. In the south were the bright lights of the resort lining Catseye Bay, Hamilton Island.

We spent quite a few days at Beach 25, initially avoiding an expected southerly, and spent the time doing the obligatory domestics. I also managed to cut Andrew's hair, which was overdue but because I use sharp scissors we need a relatively stable situation so I don't slip and cut skin (his or mine).

After a couple of days we decided to take a tinnie ride and explore the area. So after lunch, when the sun was up and hot, we loaded ourselves and some fishing gear and

headed off around the shore. After skirting the shoreline of Beach 25 we headed up Gulnare Inlet. We had just finished rigging two fishing lines up to troll when we saw the rain further up the inlet. And we watched it get closer. And closer. And by the time the first, cold, drops had hit us we had made the decision to head home. Unfortunately we couldn't really rush home as there is reef at the start of the inlet and with the wind blowing the cold wet hair across my face I struggled to see the darker patches of water that we needed to avoid. We got back just before it bucketed down. But only for around 20 minutes. And then the sun came out again. By that time however we didn't have the enthusiasm to get back out. We have learnt though – if you have access to the internet, perhaps checking the rain radar on [bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au) before you head out is a good idea.

Beach 25 is surprisingly protected. On the map it looks like a large exposed roadstead on the southern end of Whitsunday Island but the presence of Hamilton Island to its south means the winds from that direction are dampened.



## Airlie Beach

19<sup>th</sup> October

We were originally going to sail across to Airlie on the 20<sup>th</sup> October to re victual but a morning sail would have meant a wind against tide situation and a very uncomfortable ride, so we spent the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> October travelling across to Airlie instead. Of course we managed to time it so we left just as the thunderstorm came through. Winds were high – for a moment – but then we struggled. Where was this predicted 15 – 20 knot wind? (although apparently wind speed was recorded at 40 knots at Hamilton Island just as we left)? The wind struggled to get to 7 knots most of the way (which meant Sengo struggled to travel anything over 4.5 knots) and the wind just started to pick up as we arrived at Airlie Beach.

The decision to come across today was fortuitous. *Enya*, a beautiful 65 foot steel sloop is a boat we've been following since Pancake Creek in July. We've had two very short conversations with her owners and we finally spent some time with

them this evening. (we were expecting not to see them until next season as they had been going to leave Airlie to head north this day and decided not to because of the weather).

## Stonehaven

20<sup>th</sup> October

A grocery shop, a gas refill and then a sail across to Stonehaven Anchorage, Hook Island. We were initially going to head to Cid Harbour but a text conversation with *Matilda* (already at Stonehaven) suggested the winds were quite strong from the South-East and turning into Cid might be a challenge. The winds weren't too bad and we averaged over 8 knots across before anchoring at the northern end of Stonehaven Anchorage.

The morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> October was spent catching up with *Matilda* as they were starting their southern journey with the afternoon tide and we don't know when we will see them again. Initially we thought of picking up the anchor and moving south down to Cid Harbour but decided to delay this action until the next day and go snorkeling at Stonehaven Anchorage instead. Having had lunch first allowed the tide to come in a bit more and we were able to take the tinnie to the beach and snorkel from there.

Words of wisdom – when one remembers to take the camera, one should have remembered to charge the batteries first. I got five photos taken before the battery went dead. Fish list for Stonehaven Anchorage is as follows:

White barred goby  
Gold speckled shrimp goby  
Birdwire rock cod  
Black damselfish (juvenile)  
Blue fusiliers  
Goldlined sweetlips  
Beaked coralfish  
Muller's coralfish  
Seargent sp – Banded seargent, Scissortail seargent  
and a Black fish with white banded base tail and yellow fins

## Water, snorkeling, bleeding cuts and a shark....

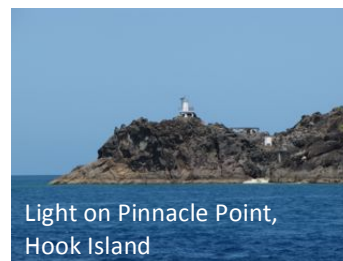
22<sup>nd</sup> October

We had originally thought that we would spend the coming weekend at the Rodeo at Cannonvale but with expected northerlies, Pioneer Bay is not a place we'd want to leave our boat on anchor for any extended period of time (in a northerly), so decided that we would spend the weekend snorkeling around the islands instead. (we later discovered we were a week out and the rodeo was the next weekend.) Low tide was around midday and from Stonehaven Anchorage the best time to sail south would be after this so this left us the morning to do something else. Instead of just sitting around, or, heaven forbid, cleaning, we decided we would motor around the top corner of Hook Island to one of the snorkeling bays there. We ended up on a mooring at Luncheon Bay and spent a pleasant hour amongst the fishes – my fingers were well and truly pruned by the time we got back. The coral was a mixture of old, dying, broken and new. The fish life was abundant and we saw quite a

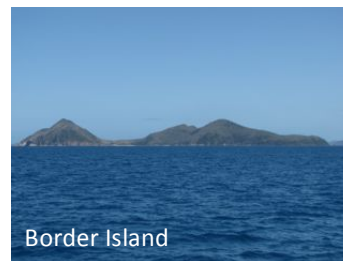
few new species. I managed to remember my camera (charged) and went through its battery life by the time I got back to the boat. We had a break in the middle of our snorkel at the bigger beach at Luncheon Bay. I had successfully taken my flippers off without hiccup – on broken old coral – and was walking toward the dry sand when my foot slid on the rock I stepped on and down I went. A pinprick on the right thumb hurt but wasn't too worrying until a few seconds later when I noticed it profusely bleeding (what felt like a pin prick was actually at two cm long cut). (I did make sure the bleeding had stopped before I went back into the water).

After a quick lunch we headed south via the eastern side of Hook Island (motoring along the top of Hook because of the lack of wind and the wind angle). Adjacent Manta Ray Bay we saw our first shark – swimming off shore and probably around 5 feet long – hard to tell when the fish are under the water. He circled a bit and then headed west. Tourist companies feed the fish at Manta Ray Bay to attract greater numbers so I guess he was waiting until everybody left and he'd go in for a smorgasbord.

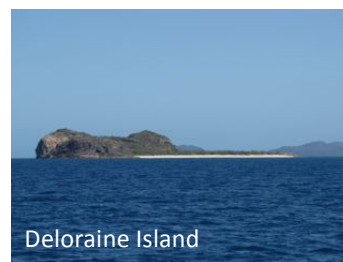
Eventually we turned the engines off to coast at a poorly 4.5 knots (and occasionally less). By the time we got parallel with Whitsunday Island (we had gone around the east side of Border Island and Deloraine Island) we were doing around 6 knots and by the time we got around the bottom of Lupton Island we were doing a very nice 7 knots – but this was where we were anchoring for the night so the sail had to come to an abrupt end. We anchored in 9 meters of water, avoiding the coral closer in.



Light on Pinnacle Point,  
Hook Island



Border Island



Deloraine Island

## White Bay, Lupton Island

23<sup>rd</sup> October

We waited for low tide to come and go – in fact we waited until two hours after low tide - so we could get our tinnie to shore –and attempted to go snorkeling. The reef around the beach on Lupton Island is flat for quite a way so to get to anything other than sporadic dull green between dying and eaten coral, the occasional clam, the very occasional fish – but lots of long black sea cucumbers - meant we had quite a distance to travel in our gear. Andrew walked. I snorkeled. Unfortunately it was after 3pm when left the boat and by the time I snorkeled out toward the edge of the coral it was getting past 4. We were going to lose light. Unfortunately, here, apart from the beach there is no where to land the dingy –and we weren't close enough to the reef to swim off the back of Sengo. Six snorkelers spent a good 1.5 hours adjacent us next to the cliffs but they had an 'inflatable' they could get back into. Our tinnie is too tippy. Hopefully some inflatable sides that 'Santa' is going to bring us will fix this issue.



White Bay, Lupton Island



Sea cucumbers, white Bay



Chance Bay



Chance Bay



Chance Bay



Chance Bay



Chance Bay

## Chance Bay

24<sup>th</sup> October

As we were clearly not going to get any decent snorkeling in in White Bay – due mainly to the current time of the low tide, we headed around to Chance Bay. And anchored with 20 other boats! Last time we'd been at Chance Bay we'd walked across from Whitehaven Beach (September 7<sup>th</sup> – see Aboard Sengo-September 2015) and there had been nobody anchored here – but then there wasn't a northerly blowing at the time and Chance is on the south side of Whitsunday Island. This time we did anchor close enough to the reef to snorkel off the back of Sengo and at around low tide we spent a lovely 40 minutes investigating the western side of the eastern arm of the bay.

## Final Victual in Airlie Beach

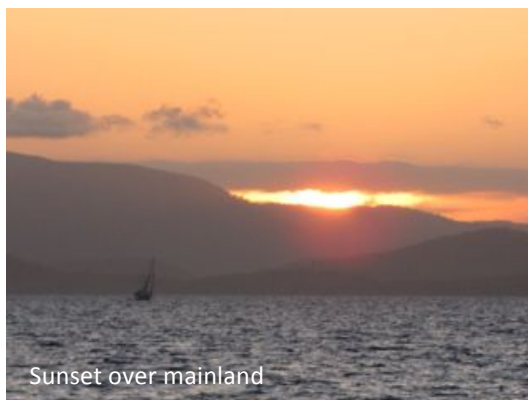
After overnighting at Chance Bay we headed back to Airlie. We'd organised some goods and we said we would pick them up on Monday. We also wanted to check if our mail had come into the Cannonvale Post Office. The wind wasn't completely our friend and was reasonably light, and in the wrong direction for a direct sail. So a zig-zagging we went – down toward Lindeman, then back toward Whitsunday, then across into Catseye Bay, Hamilton Island, then through the channel toward South Molle, then back toward Whitsunday Island, then through Unsafe Passage toward the mainland. It was about this time that the wind died completely. What should have been a 3.5 to 4 hour sail took us over 5 hours. We were hungry, having expected to have lunch in Airlie and not arriving until 3pm, but an early dinner at Barcelonas at the Abell Point Marina made up for it.

## A long day

26<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Today was the longest sail I've ever had to Cid Harbour from Airlie Beach. Technically it is only 14 nm. It should have taken us only a couple of hours, weather pending but....

We started the day by borrowing 'Shaggette' (a courtesy car for SICYC members) for the morning and drove into Cannonvale to pick up our goods (embroidered t-shirts), pick up our mail and do a final shop before we started to head south. Our departure from Airlie was a little later than desired. You have to book a spot on the fuel dock at the marina and whilst the north arm was free, with the wind coming from the north we wanted to use the south arm. No problem, we would have to wait half an hour. This was not an issue as we took the time to make Sengo ship-shape (put anything away that might fall over whilst sailing – or more likely whilst we got hit with some big power boat's wake) and lifted the anchor. We motored into the marina a couple of minutes early. 'Oh, I'm sorry but the previous booking has been delayed and is still filling up'. Over half an hour later we finally got on the dock....after motoring around in a holding pattern inside the marina walls. Pity I can't charge the slow pokes taking up our slot for our used fuel! So, by the time we finally got out of Airlie and put the sails up it was 4.30pm. A good, direct sail over to Cid is usually a couple of hours. Of course, the wind wasn't from a direction we could sail directly, wasn't of a strength we could claim as good and the sun set at around 6pm. At 7.45 we finally anchored in Cid Harbour, Whitsunday Island, having motored the last nautical mile as the wind had died completely. We were exhausted and went to bed early.



Sunset over mainland



## Thomas Island

27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015

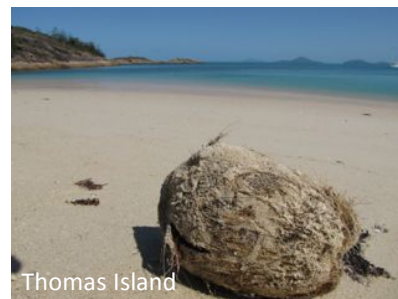
'A quiet, still morning at Cid Harbour – and light bird calls from the Sawmill Beach area below Whitsunday Peak. The sun is just starting to shine through the clouds on a southern peak. A turtle circles. It is 6.45am. Does he know we are starting our journey today – is he giving us a farewell? We will be back next year.'

The sail started slowly – very slowly – and the almost non-existent wind was not in the right direction for a short sail – so much so that the biggest push south was from the current. However just as we got to the south end of Dent Island the wind picked up – unfortunately whilst I was in the middle of a tack where I hadn't yet adjusted the mainsail and whilst I was still adjusting the genoa to get it around. The apparent wind speed went from 2 knots to 13 knots within a second and the mainsail just kept us turning. A few yells at Andrew to help me (he was off shift so relaxing downstairs) managed to get us back on track. From that point the run to Thomas Island was at a much more respectable 6-7 knots.

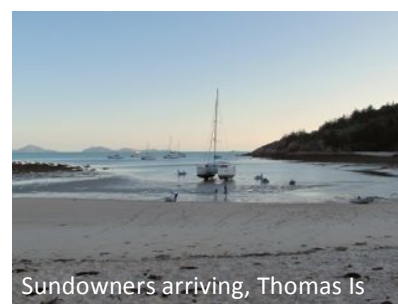
The small bay on the south-east corner of Thomas Island has a high proportion of reef and subsequently you have to be reasonably careful where you anchor. There was already a boat in the spot close to the beach when we arrived (a charter boat) so we took a safe option a bit further out. We had to be careful of the depth as it was a full moon and a spring tide (tide rises and falls of over 3 meters) and we managed to get a lovely spot where we could swim from the back of the boat to the reef for a snorkel. Four other boats arrived after we did, and the three that stayed all anchored on the outside of us.

Andrew saw more exciting things on this snorkel than me despite the fact I was usually only a few meters behind him. His tally of three turtles, two rays and one giant Maori wrasse outdoes my solitary shark. All are on video so we have a record of them.

The next morning brought a few introductions from two adjacent boats, and after the afternoon swim and exploration, we met those from three more boats at sundowners on the beach.



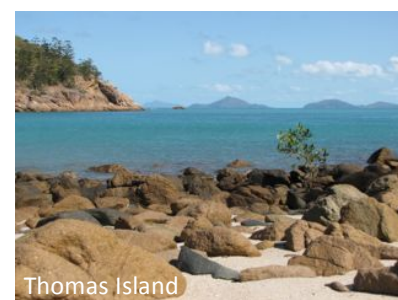
Thomas Island



Sundowners arriving, Thomas Is



Thomas Island



Thomas Island



Sunrise Thomas Island

Thursday was a lazy morning – a bit of a baking fest – I tried soda bread as well as the usual muffins – despite the fact the sea state was a little rolly.

In the afternoon we went trolling - where I hooked on three things – the first, my finger; the second, my shirt; and the third, a reef bommie: which proved a little bit of a hassle to dislodge from as we discovered we have no longer got reverse on the tinnie. Fortunately after a couple of goes, and gentle yanks in a couple of directions, the lure let go.

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## Goldsmith Island

A leisurely start at 10am saw us motor across the disturbed water south of Thomas Island before setting the sails to the next major lump of land to the south, Goldsmith Island. We had 'suffered' an unexpected southerly swell for the past few nights so we anchored in Roylen Bay, on the top north west corner of Goldsmith – protected from the easterly winds and there was no chance of southerly swell getting to us. Ironically, once settled, a northerly swell came it. Fortunately it settled down sometime later. After lunch we went for a walk along the adjacent beach, venturing further inland where a dry, mangrove lined, inlet met the shore. When we emerged back onto the beach we were met by an interesting yachty who had anchored around the corner in the next bay; emigrating to Australia in the fifties and launching his hand built boat in the eighties, he had some great stories to tell, and we spent some time sitting in the shade at the makeshift table adjacent the National Park campground talking to this interesting individual. One thing he said that struck me as sad was he'd noticed a distinct lack of birds in recent years. Whilst everybody has noticed the reduced fish numbers and we can speculate why, reduced bird numbers is a mystery – are there somehow increased numbers of feral predators on these national park islands? The monitors have gone from Sawmill Beach, Whitsunday Island, as well. Even we noticed that (you used to have to almost step over them to get to the picnic tables – and then you'd have to defend your lunch).



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## Goldsmith Island to Brampton Island

31<sup>st</sup> October 2015

A drizzly morning. We waited until the rain stopped until we headed south to Brampton Island. The wind was of variable speed, but mostly reasonable, but the wind angle completely uncooperative. A two-hour sail took five, with some very ugly angles. Western Bay was our first choice but the swell was a little too uncomfortable so we headed toward the small bay with the public jetty, joining five smaller monohulls for the evening. There was no sunset; the sun having been swallowed up inside a curtain of grey around 5pm.

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And the major disaster?.....the coffee grinder broke!