

Aboard Sengo

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June 2017

Berkeley River

Sandstone gorges and
isolation

9



Twin Falls: King George River

King George River

Sharing it with the rest
of the 'tourists'

14

Rocks, Crocs & Waterfalls!

Six weeks later than expected, (and ten weeks later than hoped) we departed Darwin for The Kimberley and after the first week was spent just getting there, we finally slowed down for some exploring...

Glycosmis Bay

Artwork, Sandstone
formations and an
unexpected encounter
with an Adventurer!

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Twin Falls: King George River



For various reasons we didn't leave Darwin by the end of May and the first week of June was spent tidying up loose ends, finalising provisioning and making sure we had what we thought was needed for potentially three months away from civilisation. We did the Mindil Markets again and watched the sunset at Cullen Bay. Andrew had been threatening to put a hole in Sengo's hull to put a second depth transducer in. I was relieved this didn't eventuate (mainly due to our timing getting back to Darwin and being unable to get into the electrician's diary) but we can use the new fishfinder for this by tying the tinny up to the starboard hull. When we finally left, in company with *Blessing*, we spent a week (due mainly to weather) getting to the 'edge of The Kimberley' before really slowing down to enjoy it. Some of the 'exploring' was a challenge and there was a fair bit of rock hopping and scrabbling. Because we were so much later than we originally hoped for we missed some big waterfalls and I would love to come back to the Kimberley earlier in the season next time.

Please note that a lot of the photos in this newsletter have been taken from a moving boat



and will not be in perfect focus. I did actually pull out a tripod this month to try and improve my land based photos but didn't discover it was broken until I went to use it on the escarpment at Casurina Creek. I still give myself ten points for trying.

Final Days in Darwin

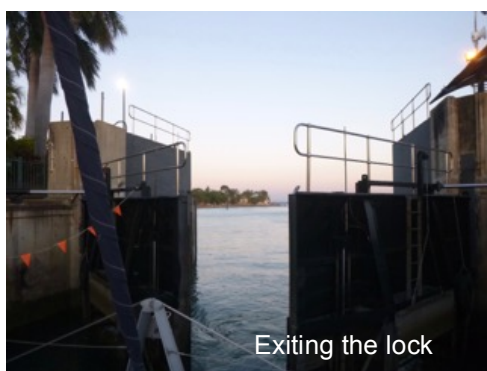
1st June 2017. We didn't expect to still be in Darwin on the 1st June. Originally, we were hoping to get away early April, but longer than expected stays in Melbourne and Biggenden meant we weren't back in Darwin until late April. Further delays in May also saw us miss opportunities to travel with other boats.

I can only blame stress contributing to a couple of monumental disasters in May (my mistakes) which delayed us further but this did mean that we were in town for Andrew's Birthday and we could go out to dinner. We were delighted that *Sea Lynx* joined us at Cullen Seafood for the occasion (last year we were celebrating with *Kereru* in Airlie Beach)

2nd – 6th June 2017. Cleaning and provisioning continued. We eventually gave up the car (goodbye Kinkaid) and got ourselves set up to go. We picked up a sunshade for the starboard side of the helm station (thanks to *Scott at Seafleet*) so we can now not get burned when the sun is on that side when we are sailing. The opportunity arose to get some extra practice going through the lock, and we provided an extra set of hands for *Sea Lynx* returning into the marina. This gave us a bit more confidence in the process but we still gratefully accepted help on the way out. But as much as we enjoyed our time in Darwin, by the 7th June we were itching to escape!



Exiting Cullen Bay



Exiting the lock

7th June 2017. Darwin to Blaze Point. We had finally left Darwin! It was an early start and I was hoping it was going to be 'calm' so I would be less anxious going through the lock. We had chosen the 0700 lock opening for two reasons; one, the possible calmness of the wind, and two, an early start gave us potentially more time to get to an anchorage further down the coast.

We had not taken Sengo through a lock before Darwin and I was in a state on the way in. Fortunately we had help on the way out. In fact we were turning people away for offers of help to get back through the lock. We decided we would let *Sea Lynx*

Heading for the Kimberley. The journey begins

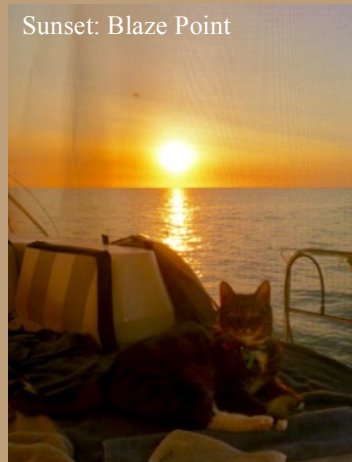
sleep in (a relatively local boat whose owners would have had to get up really early to help us) and instead commandeered the assistance of willing volunteers from the marina arm opposite us. *Ophelia* and *Sunny Days* came to our rescue in a pretty non-eventful exercise. Dropping them off on the fuel dock was our last activity in Darwin; it was then just a matter of checking where *Blessing* was (like us, for various reasons, they had been delayed in Darwin) before setting off in tandem for Fog Bay, a third of the way down the east coast of the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf. We both made really good time on the first leg of the trip, averaging 8 knots, so a running decision was made to continue on to Anson Bay. The wind however started to drop out so Plan C was to anchor between the mainland and Peron Islands. In the end, with the wind dropping right out we didn't make it to the Perons and it was Plan D, anchoring just off Blaze Point (with a fire appropriately going in the vicinity) before the sun set.

There were a few sea birds flying low above the water around us today but identification was ignored as I was busy cleaning up the results of unsettled stomachs inside, as whilst I was surprised I didn't get sea sick, Cilla and Tiger were definitely feeling the effects of being back on the ocean. Of course when we stopped all seemed good, Cilla even taking a walk around the decks, something she hasn't done for quite some time. We did get to identify one bird; and whilst

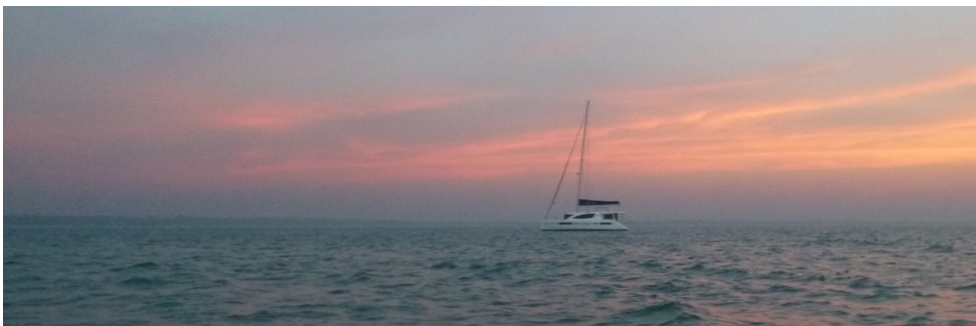
not the smallest bird we've had on the boat (that goes to the crimson finches that graced us with their presence at Cullen Bay) a brown honeyeater is probably the smallest hitchhiker: the little avian balancing on the genoa sheet for around half an hour before it flew off again. Clearly this bush bird had been blown off course but if it had stayed half an hour longer it would have had less of a distance to travel back to land. I hope it made it.



Sunset: Blaze Point



8th June 2017. Blaze Point to Anson Bay. At 0830 it wasn't an early start par se, but perhaps I should have stopped giving the cats their breakfast earlier. I don't think Cilla threw up, at least I didn't find anything, but Tiger emptied the contents of his stomach quite early in the sail. The winds were brisk, and although I didn't read any greater than 21 knots apparent, our travelling companions, **Blessing**, were reading around 26 knots on their guages, and apart from the necessary motor through the channel between the Peron Islands and the mainland (we were heading directly into the wind) both boats travelled the day on the genoa only. The chop did cause both vessels to raise a hull occasionally and the wind was strong enough to send an empty bucket across the front deck before I got some water in it in preparation for the catch from the game rod that was trolling out the back. Unfortunately no catch eventuated and the bucket was emptied again after we had anchored, in much calmer waters near Pelican Rock, having rocked ourselves across the wide expanse of Anson Bay. Having not socialised due to the rocking waves the night before we did invite ourselves aboard **Blessing** for a drink as the sun went down, before returning to Sengo just before it got dark...

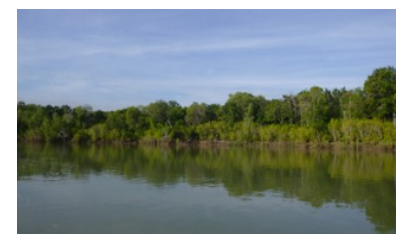


9th June 2017. Anson Bay. Before we had left Darwin weather predictions had indicated fairly rough (wind warning) weather for Thursday and Friday across the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf. As we were hugging the eastern side of this gulf we thought it prudent, having survived Thursday relatively intact, to maybe wait for the wind to drop off a bit before continuing. Of course, out here, dropping off a bit usually only equates to around 5 knots, the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf nicknamed by yachties as the 'Blown Apart Gulf', but sometimes that small amount makes just the difference. We had woken up to a flattish sea and the noisy wind logging to 16 knots. As the day progressed the wind picked up, the waves produced whitecaps between the shore and us, and it got a little rocky; Andrew's attempt at working on the transducer for the tinnie aborted as standing on an unstable platform was deemed a little risky. A late afternoon excursion had us heading part way up the creek at the bottom end of Anson Bay. We were just popping in for a look, but more importantly, acting as back-up to **Blessing** who decided they wanted to put some crab pots out. **Blessing's** tender's engine

had played up the day before and the last thing they wanted to do was find themselves alone up a crocodile infested creek; as ascertained by the sentry at the entry to the creek (see photo) and another similar reptile, just up river; **Blessing** did point it out but we missed it. As it happened their engine still had problems so they pulled the crab pots back and we headed back to **Blessing** for sundowners.

Birds seen; egret, crow, darter, pelican, terns, jabiru

Up the creek...





Planning the next step

10th June 2017. Anson Bay to Port Keats. The clouds and smoke had receded to cover about half the sky this morning and eventually the sun popped out from behind the grey.



Yesterday's burning had been extensive, the fire first reaching the point but then flames were seen further south along the beach and when the sun went down, a further three distinctive fire plumes were seen from behind the dunes. The fire had left its mark on the yachts, Sengo covered not only in the smoky grime of fallout but the distinctive shards of solid black ash swirled in group eddies with the wind along the deck. The sail from Anson Bay to Port Keats was efficient, the apparent wind at one stage hitting the low twenties, and this prompted us to reef the main sail in and put the genoa out. This was a little hairy as turning into the wind with a lumpy sea to adjust the sails isn't the smoothest activity one could take but the result worked well, even though there was sporadic bouts of loss of wind, and we eventually pulled the reef back out again. Because we headed deep into Port Keats, and our first attempt at anchoring failed, it took us until around 1700 until we finally settled down for a rest. No cat chuck today

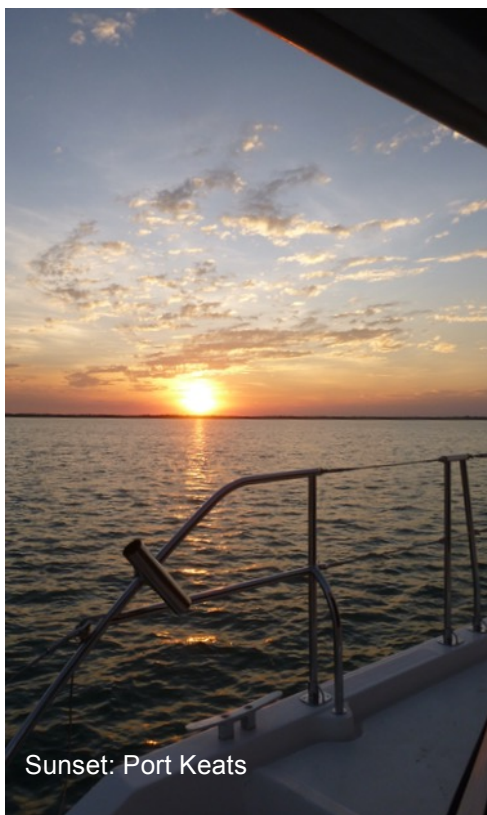
11th June 2017. Port Keats. Today was always going to be a rest day, initially for the simple reason the wind didn't look good. Whilst some would argue the strength was normal for this area, 15 to 20 knots increasing to 20 to 25 knots, it was not something I would willingly

go out in. There was another reason for hanging around as well. The boat we were sailing with had engine issues and depending on the diagnosis, there was a possibility of having to get something ordered in to Wadeye, the aboriginal settlement up river a bit. That in itself, had it been necessary, may have been a challenge because we had spoken to a couple in Darwin (land/vehicle based) who had just been refused permission to this area. As it was the decision was not to use Wadeye to source material and the boat eventually continued on with one motor.

12th June 2017. Port Keats. The wind strength prediction had not abated much and indeed it was quite blowy where we were until mid afternoon. We took the time to finish off a few small projects and repack some of our gear, mainly food, into more accessible areas. Sengo looked like she was covered in diamonds and I would love to say that was because she was freshly and sparkly polished. However the real reason was a bit more agricultural. Our two previous sailing days had been brisk and a bit bouncy, resulting in the odd wave crashing over the deck, and the wind had picked up and deposited any mist. In short, Sengo was covered in salt! So much so that the last couple of day's deposits had started going all rust red on the stanchions. I did a quick wash down of the stanchions and was able to thankfully wipe most of these little patches off with water and a cloth. Port Keats was the last known area that we had been told we could get internet and we were grateful for this as I had just remembered our boat insurance was due in July! Fortunately it was sorted via email before we left.

Swimming with the Sharks...and crocodiles... and irikanji... and...

13th June 2017. Port Keats to Yelche Beach. Today's trip wasn't all that far compared with our earlier sails, only 27 nm, and it shouldn't have taken us that long. The surprise of the morning was however there was very little wind and it was coming from behind us. Whilst our companion boat motored up to the entrance of Port Keats we took the opportunity to put the spinnaker up for the first time since we had left Darwin and we took a slow but determined trip out. The wind angle changed a little and our challenge was to do a full 180 degree turn without



Sunset: Port Keats

losing power. Slowly and determinedly we managed coming around Kinmore Point and Cape Hay below the reefs and were happily moving along at around 5 knots (we had started the day at 2 knots but we had only 2 knots apparent wind at the time). Whilst the wind had thankfully turned enough to get us around the corner we soon realised we weren't going to get it around enough to get us to the shore and our destination, so the decision was made to drop the spinnaker and put the main up. The wind was a little stronger than it had been but that wasn't an issue and she came down with no issues. Andrew's idea had been to put the main up and then put the spinnaker back up but that was not to be. The seas were surprisingly flat so we gathered the spinnaker on the tramp, turned the engines on and started hoisting the main. This was a lesson in *ship shape*. We hadn't tied the spinnaker lines off, they were on the deck and

all looked well. Seas can seem surprisingly flat when they are behind you but when you turn into them it is another matter. Because we were using the engines to bring the boat around to raise the main, the sea was no longer flat, side on waves rocked the deck, the spinnaker lines went over without us knowing it, and before we knew it one was wrapped around the starboard prop. Terrific. We have a sheet stuck under the boat around the prop, we can't use the engine (thankfully we have two) and we are in croc country! I called up **Blessing** who headed back to us for support, giving up their lovely 7-plus knot run, and Andrew at first snorkeled then scuba-ed underneath and cut the line. This was a bit harrowing – for me and for him. Fortunately we were a little way off shore and here his issues would have been more sharks than crocodiles (I don't know what the state of irikanji is here (he did wear his stinger suit)). Rope cut from around the prop we continued on (apparently there is some still left on the shaft) and of course the wind had died. Both boats limped into Yelche Beach, two bays north of Pearce Point for an eight-hour rest. The next run was going to be a midnight start.

14th June 2017. Yelche Beach to Reveley Island. Reveley Island is 100 nautical miles from Yelche beach and at a speed of 5 knots (what I plan my worst case scenario on) would take us around 20 hours. Good wind was predicted however and I knew we would make better time. To assume a speed of around 6 knots in order to anchor in the light this meant a starting time 0000. Both boats were on their way at midnight and we put our main up with a reef in it and a full genoa. There was however very little wind, and propulsion to begin with was essentially due to our engines. Around an hour later I was able to turn the engines off, although I was really only getting 5 knots. Occasionally it would go down to 4.5 knots but I knew the wind was going to pick up and the average speed get better. It is a long time since we have done an overnigher – the last occasion was the 0300 start from Cape Don in order to get into Darwin via the tides, and the midnight to 0300 stint took it out of me. Andrew generously gave me an extra half hour and I got up at 6.30 but struggled though to 1100 when I could hand the boat back. I had gone to bed with a respectable 6-plus knots traveling speed and smooth seas. I had woken up with lumpy seas and the trip wasn't much faster. The fetch was greater though and it is amazing what wind and water can do together. We do have to be thankful; we could have had a much rougher ride. We anchored behind Reveley Island (near the entrance to the Berkeley River) mid afternoon. Of course then we discovered we had gained 1.5 hours (by crossing the WA border) and used the extra time to sleep. As our companion boat was leaving us the next morning there was a final sundowners on **Blessing** before returning to an early bed.

Reveling at Reveley Island

15th - 16th June 2017. The anchorage at Reveley is only mentioned in the Western Australian Cruising guide as a stop point while waiting for the right tide to enter the Berkeley River. We had noticed when we arrived that the beach had a number of shorebirds on it and we thought we might wait here and explore a day or two before heading up the river. The sail from Port Keats over the two days with strange hours, as well as the adrenalin shot with the spinnaker incident had left me quite exhausted and I spent most of the 15th sleeping. We made one aborted attempt to land at Reveley, arriving a couple of hours before low tide but unfortunately well below the sand line and my feet sank down into smooth squelchy mud. The fact it was hard to maneuver – and would have been harder getting back out, and that the anchor shackle had seized during its summer holiday and we couldn't attach the anchor rope, meant that we aborted the exercise and headed back to Sengo for a strong cuppa.

16th June 2017. Choosing a time before high tide this morning we landed the tinnie on sand, and the familiar practice of putting the anchor out (which we hadn't done for six months) went without a hitch. A planned walk along the beach was changed to an attempt to attain the ridgeline but once we scrambled up the rocks we found that the flat areas across dead looking groundcover had odd spikey grass that brushed painfully against our legs. We had read that spats or long trousers were recommended in the Kimberley – we just hadn't come prepared. Back below the escarpment a sojourn up the creek bed was similarly abandoned when we came across debris that looked too dangerous to traverse so we ended up back with Plan A: a walk along the beach. Traversing the salt pans to the base of the escarpment where we heard birds didn't bear much fruit (we didn't see any) before back-tracking to the dingy. A bit more of a walk to round the point may have been nice but **Blessing** had reported a croc on the beach there yesterday so we prudently headed home instead.

The afternoon trip was an exercise in discovery. Andrew's new depth sounder on the tinnie was tested on two fronts. We took an hour and followed the waypoints given in the Kimberley Coast Cruising Yacht Club notes for the entry into the Berkeley River. The depth sounder worked and so did the



Reveley Island

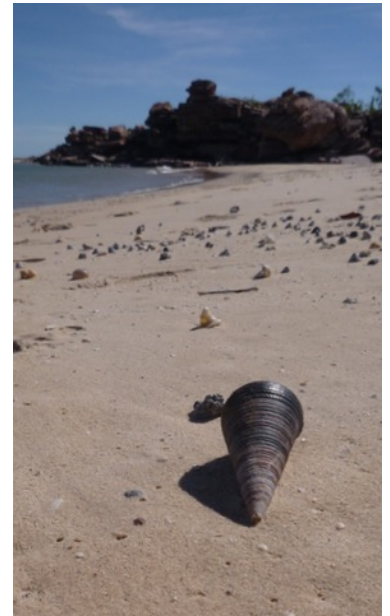
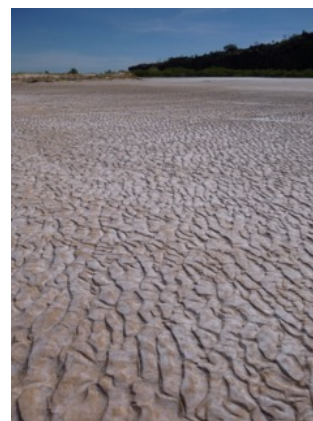
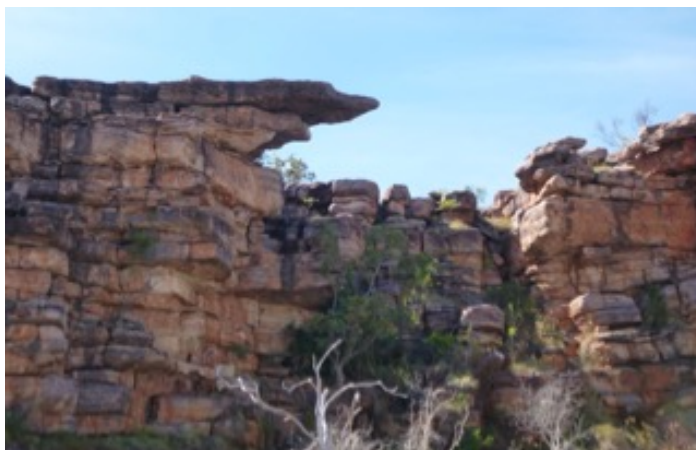
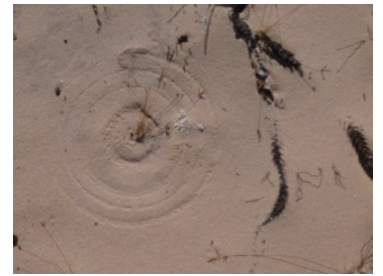


Testing the depth sounder

waypoints, with a little bit of a detour closer to land near the point giving slightly deeper readings (Thanks **Sea Lynx** for the tip). We took a quick look around the corner on the way back to Sengo to check out if yesterday's reported croc was still on station but he was, at that point, nowhere to be seen. As we got back on board however he was spotted –laying on the mud on the outside of the mangroves at the beach adjacent Sengo (where we'd been walking earlier!)

Not a great bird list: red capped dotterels, beach curlew, gull-billed tern, sooty oyster catchers, pied oystercatchers, intermediate egret and the sound of a lot of small birds that just weren't seen.

Tracks and Debris at Reveley



Berkeley River



Our upper Berkeley anchorage – near 'Amphitheatre Falls'

17th June 2017. For a very brief moment, well, two very brief moments, we were actually sailing up the Berkeley River; the first bend that had us angling into the wind meant we temporarily furled the genoa and put the engines on, and the second bend that had us angling into the wind meant we put the genoa away for good. The river was getting narrower anyway and the wind wasn't reaching the water. We had our anchor up at 0900 and had a pretty smooth motor over the sandbars into the river mouth. Surprisingly we saw another yacht leave the river, but it was someway ahead of us and had no AIS (Automatic Identification System) so we have no idea who it was. We have heard other yachties say they have spent time in the Kimberley's and seen no-one so the sighting was good, although a social opportunity missed. We are also six or so weeks later than we wished to be so the other boats we know taking this route are already way ahead of us.

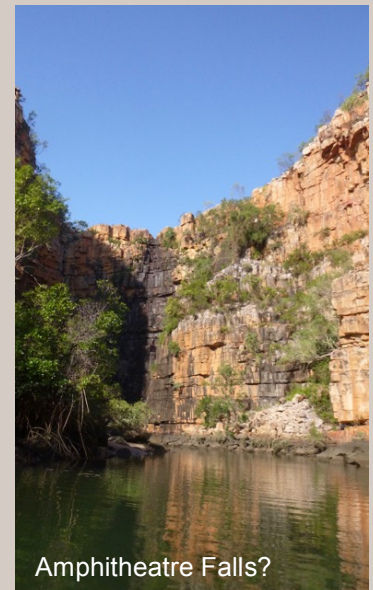


One of the consequences of being late, even after a big wet season, is missing the waterfalls; the black stains down the gorge sides obvious. Our little sojourn into an unnamed creek with Amphitheatre Falls at its end presented us with a black dead end. There was water running here, but only dribbles at the base of the rocks on the southern side and the loud gurgling of a deeper water flow behind the rock façade on the north side; and noting the faults and cracks this liquid would be following, we wondered how long it would be before these slivered blocks would fall into the water below.

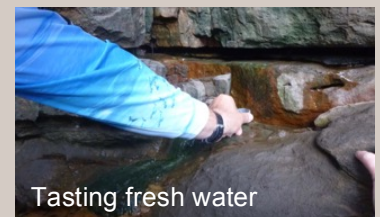
Trolling for fish (where we had one bite but it let go) we followed the river upstream a bit. The gorge sides have weathered blocks, cracked and faulted and water, wind and vegetation have combined to ensure some pieces from the walls fall, whilst some remain behind for now. Andrew's comment of Nature's 'Kaplunk' is not far from the truth and impossible looking gravity is holding some of the sandstone up. Some gorge faces are weathered more than others and the impressions in the resultant rock faces look like a cross between Easter Island statues and Mount Rushmore. Croc Count: 2

Amphitheatre Falls (?)

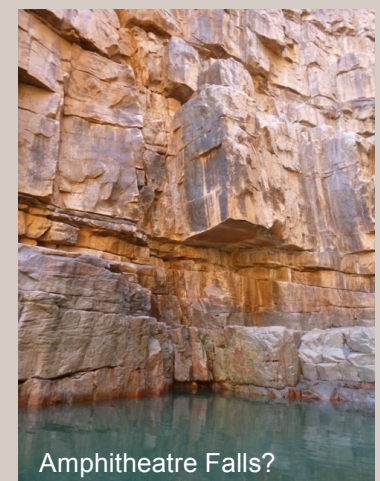
Mud maps that have Amphitheatre Falls, Amphitheatre Creek and the Amphitheatre, all listed in different locations makes one wonder just where we were.



Amphitheatre Falls?



Tasting fresh water



Amphitheatre Falls?

Up the top of the River...



Our first real Kimberley Waterfall!

Well, not quite! 18th June 2016. A leisurely morning start had us heading up to where the salt water meets the fresh, stopping off out our 'first fullish Kimberley waterfall' (as small as it was) for a pleasant walk up the creek, before heading to the extent of where you can take your tender and exploring (a bit) upstream. One guide book says you can probably swim up here: if you are far enough up, have checked for crocs (possibly only the freshwater variety here although some salties have been known to be swept upstream in flood) and can clearly see the bottom. We left the tinnie on what we thought was a rising tide (!) and discovered our timing was a bit out on the way back. One crocodile was seen basking on a rock on our trip up but he had gone by the time we returned. As we were leaving a



Up the creek



Up the creek



Up the river



Up the river



Up the river

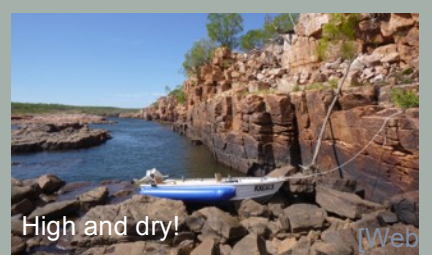


helicopter landed near the rock wall and within the time it took us to explore a very short creek offshoot and return to the main river, a tourist barge had also arrived (the occupants of which were taking photos of Sengo as they passed on their way back downstream). Croc count: 1



After a walk up the creek.

From relaxing at rock pools to a lesson in timing – the top of a rising tide is not the same up river as it is at the river mouth. Fortunately we were not too high and dry – and fortunately we got off when we did – five minutes later a tourist helicopter arrived!



High and dry!

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Our upper Berkeley anchorage – Amphitheatre Falls

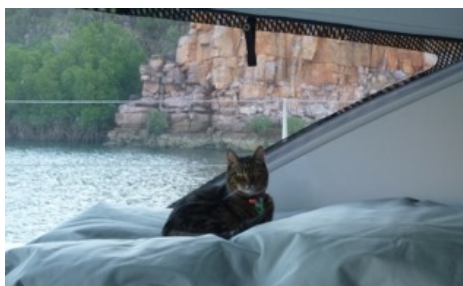


rising tide – we were definitely on a dropping one. I guess they had a schedule – hearing the radio chatter, Met Eye's predictions were mentioned and the cook was warned he had about 20 minutes to rescue the food on, and in, the oven before they hit the 'rough stuff'. We spent the evening on the tramp, bird watching, and noted a sole dolphin swim past. In fading light I also washed the outside of the clears with fresh water – they were still covered in salt from our trip to Reveley. Croc count: 1. Dolphin Count: 1

Heading downstream

19th June 2017. Bourke Street! Well no, not really but we didn't expect to see another boat! We were having a lazy morning (to the extent we were actually doing some boat maintenance rather than an off-boat activity) in preparation for an afternoon motor back down the Berkeley River to Casuarina Creek. Around 1100 we heard motors and turned around to see the *Ocean Dream* motor past us, a very nice looking boutique ship. She looked great with a backdrop of sheer cliffs but I wasn't quick enough in getting a photo. A friendly wave was exchanged before they chugged out of view. After an early lunch we raised the anchor and headed slowly back down the river. We had just got the entrance of Casuarina Creek and were about

to get into position to anchor in the middle of the river when we see *Ocean Dream* coming toward us. Pulling aside to let her pass, she ended up anchoring at the creek confluence and we ended up further upstream. She didn't stay long. Her two tenders ripped across to the other side of the river to what we discover later was probably to check out a large croc (which we dubbed 'Brutus'). I suspect that he is almost on the tourist run as they knew exactly where to go. They then headed up the creek with passengers on board. They were back fairly quickly though, so I suspect they didn't get out to explore. The guides say the best time to go for the walk to the artwork at the end of Casuarina Creek is on a



Fumbling around: Casurina Creek



Ready to head back: the creek heads across the falls; the escarpment in the background was where we saw the paintings



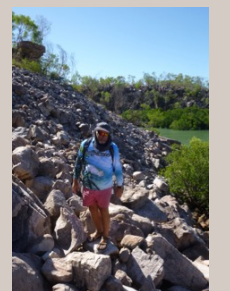
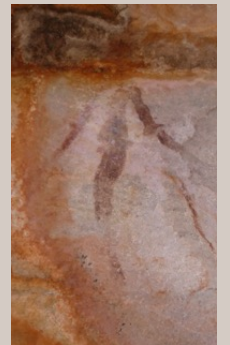
From the top: looking east.

20th June 2017. Rock Scrambling and artwork. Casurina Creek lies a few nautical miles inland from the entrance of Berkeley River and is a well photographed location. The falls at the end were down to a trickle but at least there was water coming over them, and the pools in the creek on the escarpment above were relatively full and clear. There is room to anchor a yacht up the creek below the falls (if you put out a stern anchor) but we didn't want the hassle and stayed outside in the Berkeley River. After a few early morning chores (including a bit of polishing) we headed off to go exploring. Prior to getting to the falls at the western navigable end, there is a very prominent rock scree on a point and it is from the top of this that a walk to aboriginal

Bradshaw artwork exists. Because of the oysters at the base of this scree, guides suggest you wait for a rising tide – so you don't cut your dinghy – and we spent quite some time trying to remember an anchoring technique we had first used at the Flinders Island Group in November so we could shuffle our dinghy away from the affected area. Finally set up we set about climbing the rock scree, which I would say was almost more of a challenge than getting up Mount Walsh (See Aboard Sengo March 2017) – that at least had a designated direction. There are cairns to follow once you reach the top that lead you across to the top of the falls area and then supposedly on to the rock art. We lost the cairns, found some foot prints, and lost those, and generally found ourselves hot and frustrated (and hungry as we hadn't expected to take so long). We had made our way up a couple of layers of rock levels but I actually think we were on the wrong side of the creek. Hot and tired we made our way back to the top of the falls, (which included a couple of aborted attempts to reach creek level) before deciding on a quick exploration of the other side. We still saw no cairns but did find one site with decomposed art. Satisfied at that – we weren't walking all the way back up the creek -we headed back, tentatively scrabbling back down the scree and back to Sengo for a very late lunch.



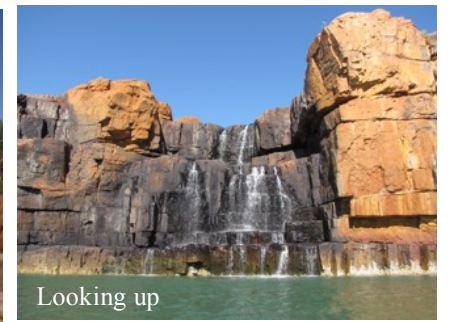
Morning



Looking west



Looking east



Looking up

Berkeley River to King George River



21st June 2017. Berkeley River to Seaplane Bay. This morning we had a neighbor - a rather dark and relatively large neighbor-sunning himself on the adjacent bank. It wasn't the croc we'd named 'Brutus' but it was pretty big none-the-less. We spent the first half of the morning foofing around and tidying up. As low tide was at 0900 there was no point leaving before 1000 - we needed some water to get back over the bar. As we left the river entrance into deeper water it got awfully bouncy and I did wonder what the poor cats were thinking. I was surprised that Andrew didn't suggest the spinnaker for our run from the Berkeley River mouth to Seaplane Bay but I later find out he didn't mention it because he thought I was a bit gun shy after the last time we had it up. As a result, for a while, we had the standard set-up of main sail and genoa but because of the wind angle we were heading out to sea. The wind wasn't particularly strong and we were sailing at around 5 knots, (and occasionally a little less). Eventually we did put up the spinnaker (after searching through the rope locker for a suitable replacement starboard spinnaker sheet) and we aimed the boat straight at our waypoint. Unfortunately it was about this

time that the wind really dropped off. We persisted for a while before realising if we didn't drop the spinnaker and put the engines on we were not going to get into the anchorage by dark. - it was the shortest day of the year after all! (Atlantis Bay had also been recommended as an anchorage but by the time we had to make the decision we were already several nautical miles past it). Anchor was down in uncharted Seaplane Bay at 1630. The sunset at 1709. Croc count: 1 (Seaplane Bay was named after two Germans crash landed their seaplane here in 1932. When we were at Port Keats I read how an adventurer (Michael Atkinson) had just left Wyndham to retrace their journey from the crash site along the coast and then across many kilometers of land to help at Pago Mission (abandoned in 1937) and Kalumbaru.

22nd June 2017. Seaplane Bay to Koolama Bay. Koolama Bay (named after a ship that originally founded here (bombed by the Japanese) but is now lying sunk in the Ord River near Wyndham) was always going to be our overnight



anchorage, it's just that we didn't expect to arrive five hours early! There had been no question about putting up the spinnaker when we left Seaplane Bay for the short hop to Gallery Bay. Gallery Bay had been specifically recommended to us as a 'must see' because of its aboriginal artwork but it was emphasised 'only in calm weather'. The weather was good - less than 15 knots, the wind was from the right direction and we scooted along - travelling, at one stage, at 9.5 knots. We were there in no time. However, as we approached, we realised that the smoke we had seen the night before, and with relief noted it was to the west of Seaplane Bay was actually in the vicinity of Gallery Bay, and once we dropped the spinnaker and motored back into the bay (which was extremely lumpy and I hope the cats forgive me) we discovered the smoke was very close to the inlet and walking area for the aboriginal and Bradshaw art. If there is one thing you learn living in Victoria it is not go bushwalking with a bushfire near. Fires behave differently up here but the smoke is just as toxic. Making the decision to put it on our 'must see' list for next time we continued into Koolama Bay and anchored, in smoke, outside the river. We had watched **Reef Prince**, a small cruise ship, enter the bay before us but they went though the entrance and anchored up the river. By 2000 two other ships had anchored in the Bay: **Eco Abrohlos** and **Ocean Dream**. We will enter early tomorrow morning on the high tide. Croc count: 0: Dolphin count: 1

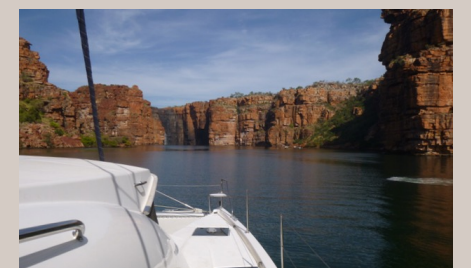
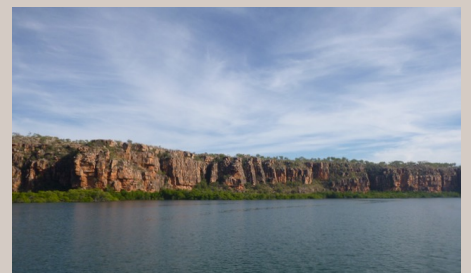
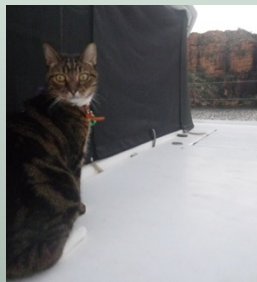
King George River

23rd June 2017. Sometime during the early morning I awoke to discover that there were three (not two) small cruise ships in the Bay with us (*Eco Abrolhos* had moved down adjacent *Ocean Dream*) and a light out my window seemed to indicate the top of a mast light of a yacht as well. By the time I got up, just on first light, the yacht (if there had been one) had moved on and one of the cruise ships was entering the river. This ship turned out to be *True North* who it seemed did a run of the river and then headed out again, to be base for the helicopter flights that persisted into the early afternoon. We saw one yacht leave the

river just before we entered and the only other sailing vessel was a small monohul anchored near 'Bar BQ Beach.' By the time we got to Twin Falls there were four tenders at the start of the walking track to the top and who knows how many people up on the escarpment. It seems the tourist boats have some sort of arrangement – we heard them calling each other, and *True North* seems to be the only one with a helicopter. I am guessing that the majority of the people went back to the ship via 'copter' and left the climb down the rock face for the more agile. *Ocean Dream* eventually came up, anchored under the falls (we had anchored further back into the anchorage) and eventually left around 1430pm (ish)). I waved as usual but got three toots in response (we had exchanged waves in the Berkeley — it was quite cute). Andrew tried to return the toots but we discovered the horn needs attending to (I was outside polishing). A pleasant afternoon was quiet and tourist free. Dolphin count: 1 Turtle count 1 Croc count: 0



Walkies – whilst I generally keep Tiger and Cilla in the cockpit in crocodile waters they both managed to get a run around of the decks this evening (chaperoned). We haven't seen a croc in this river yet.



When we arrived at Twin Falls Andrew wanted to nose Sengo up and get her nose wet – so to speak – apparently it is the thing to do. I got a bit paranoid about this and we stopped about twenty feet away. It would have been different if there was more water – we would have got wet further out but we have been caught before with unexpected weather, high freeboard and hard surfaces.

The decision to wait a day before heading up the river (rather than follow *Reef Prince* in) was justified and worth it. The smoke had gone and the sky was a beautiful blue – cirrus and high-level clouds graced the view. Visually the King George River is more 'majestic' than the Berkeley – you enter the gorged area much sooner than you do on the Berkeley, but it is shorter and not so intimate; the Berkeley Gorges are narrower and almost feel they encompass you.



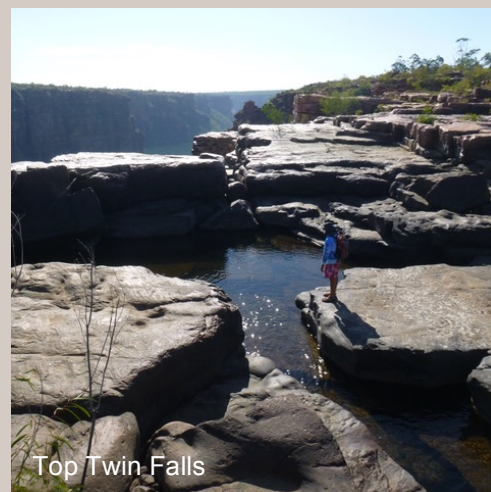
Top Twin Falls

Twin Falls: Take Two

24th June. 2017. At least this time we didn't need an aeroplane to see them! (see Aboard Sengo April 2017). We tackled the walk to the top today up another rock scree (although this has a path well travelled and the way is a lot easier, and despite its steepness, a lot safer than the one at Casurina Creek). The cairns at the top were again hard to follow (after a while), and we did lose them again, coming across them unexpectedly on the way back. Some water is still flowing over Twin Falls, which means the rock pools are nice and full and would have been a great place for a swim if we hadn't been distracted.



Top of the eastern fall



Top Twin Falls



Top Twin Falls



Top Twin Falls



Top Twin Falls

Birds:

Green/striped herons
Wedge-tailed eagles
Whistling kite
Brown Falcon
Red headed honeyeater



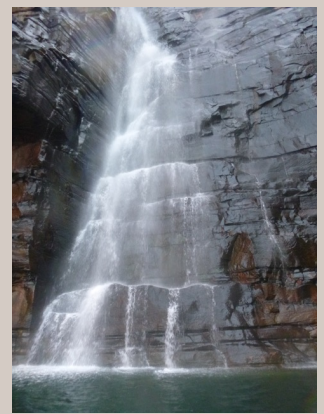
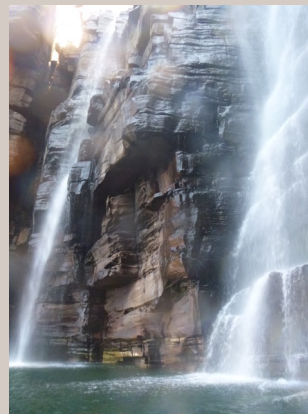
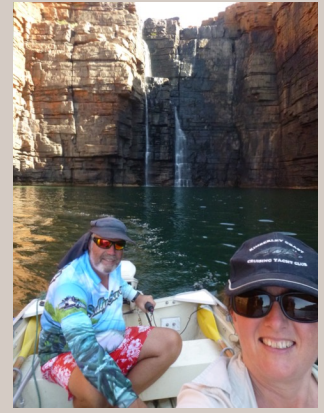
As we didn't get to frolic in the rock pools above the falls, we did so instead below them – taking the tinne for a refreshing shower. The sun was heading west and the falls were in shade (now I know why all the tour boats only visit in the morning) but getting wet and cool was great. Croc count:0



Insects: Yes they are here and we have several times been sent inside because of sandflies (our mesh is basically mozzie proof but not sandfly proof) and/or other little annoying winged creatures. There are a couple of slightly larger gaps where other more determined bugs get in and a couple of crickets have been the victims of both Cilla and Tiger's playtime (and an extra

snack). This little fellow was too cute to let him become a torture victim. A lovely green, he let me use him as a model before flying off. (I wont say to safety, as he has probably become a bird's breakfast by now).

Getting wet

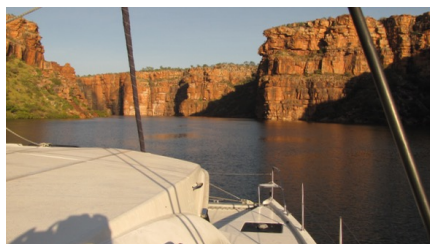


Back on board Sengo we were relaxing after an early lunch when we noticed two large, full(ish), tenders heading our way. It turned out to be Border Force (we had wondered when they would catch up with us and whilst we had heard them calling others from the plane a few days prior we were yet to be hailed). A quick chat before the 'patrolers' went off and frolicked (I imagine – just around the corner from me) under the coolness of the falls. It was probably officially their lunchtime. Twenty or so minutes later they emerged and headed back down the river. Apparently their next port of call was Darwin. (I didn't ask for their call sign!)



25th June 2017. I was barely awake at 0650 when I heard the helicopter's rotors overhead. 'Here we go again', I thought. But it is only ten minutes to seven! I looked up and noted it looked like the helicopter from **True North** and then I looked out the back. There was **True North**, large and looming coming up behind us, and I was less than presentable – in no state to wave hello. Pity – it would have been a good photo. The ship did what a the other ships seem to do, disappear around the corner into the falls area – they may be nosing up to the waterfall - and emerged around an hour later, the loud service announcer saying 'hope you enjoyed the King George River and now its time for the helicopter briefing.' This time I was in the cockpit and waved. I am not sure if it was the same officer as two days ago (someone had come out of the bridge to take photos of us as we were coming up river) but I got a very jubilant "Good Morning," hailed at me. Which of course I heartily returned.

The plan was to have a lazy day and move down river a bit in preparation for moving down to



outside East Arm on Monday. We ended up moving down river a bit more than we expected as two goes at anchoring near Bar BQ Beach didn't work. It was no great loss, there was no one to share a Bar BQ with anyway (the small yacht anchored there a few days earlier had gone) and we ended up around a nautical mile south of where we were heading to the next day anyway. Whilst there was plenty of bird song, this was a quieter spot than our previous few nights as when dusk arrived there was no sound of waterfalls. With around an hour of daylight left we got in the tinne and did a bit of drift fishing. There were all sorts of



occasional potential splashes just beyond the mangroves. Not having any success on the western side we tried across river where one individual (at least) was doing acrobatics at regular intervals. Unfortunately, and this always seems to happen to me, I ended up with a tangled mess on my line and was going to be out of the action. I was in the middle of trying to sort this out however, when Andrew hooked the jumper. There was only a few moments of 'panic' however as the cheeky fish, in the process of his pulling and acrobatics (he was around a foot out of the water) bit off the line, disappearing momentarily and taking the lure Andrew had just

put on with him. It was too dark for Andrew to tie another lure on to the line and we headed back, with the 'bloody cheeky' fish jumping in the same spot behind us as we left.

Croc Count: 0



26th June 2017. At the eminently more respectable hour of 0740 we were passed this morning by the **Great Escape**. As small ships go this was a lovey looking boat – and it has its own helicopter! I think they were lucky, we were the only two boats in the river today.



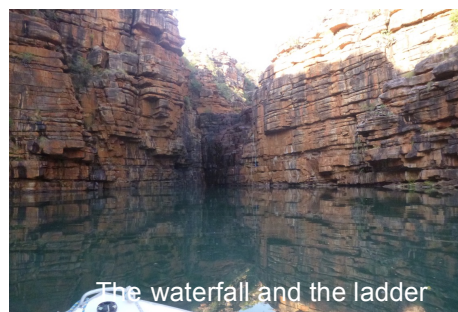
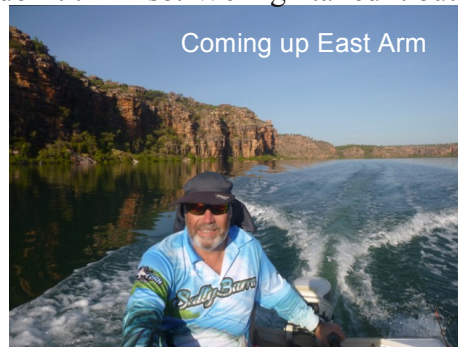
We only moved a few nautical miles today to put us outside the East Arm of the King George River. The aim was to wait until a couple of hours before high tide on the morrow morning and go and explore the Arm. In the mean time we spent a couple of hours before dusk fishing. We didn't have a lot of success for a while before we turned the motors of the tinnie off and drifted around the



corner of a large sand bar. And then it was on! There were fish jumping everywhere. Andrew hooked up something that gave him a bit of a fight and reeled it in. To his disappointment he had caught a barracuda - a feisty but bony fish (not worth keeping) - and the first thing we had to do was extricate it from the hook. Because of its pointy face its snout was through the net, and the net was also wrapped around its lovely sharp teeth! Andrew was a bit annoyed - Fish were jumping around us and we were wasting time dealing with this....Daintily maneuvering my fingers so as not to get bitten I managed to get the net out of his mouth, from around his nose and eventually the hook of the lure away from him. Putting him back in the water I was a bit worried we'd had him out too long; for a very long four or so seconds he didn't move - and then he was off like a rocket. There was to be no more fishing however - it was just at that point that we got swamped with sandflies. We headed back to Sengo. The fishing would have to wait. Croc count: 2

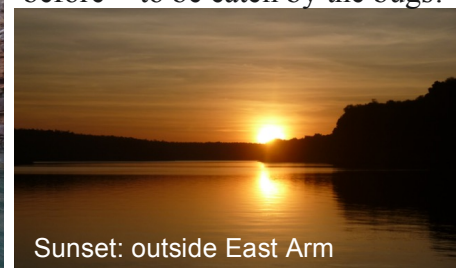
27th June 2017. Plan A: the motor up the East Arm to the waterfall and a potential climb to the top of the escarpment just didn't happen. We waited for the tide to rise and headed off Sengo around 0720. The trip up the arm was pleasant and the rock reflecting in the water colourful. As we were heading toward the falls however, I spied

something in the water. There is rumoured to be a 4 meter croc up this section of the river but that wasn't it. This one was smaller. Less than a minute later however Andrew had seen the bigger one as he slipped off his sunbaking rock fifty or so meters further on. Big Croc. Little Croc. Let me see. Do I really want to struggle up a rope (because that's all you get) to get to the top of a (barely running) waterfall to potentially get a view back down to 'said' crocs again. I don't think so. We high tailed it out

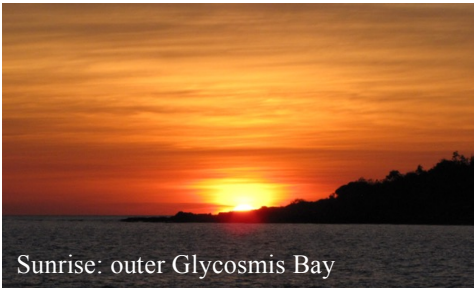


of that section of the arm and turned into the other short extension of the arm. Here we were fascinated by what we thought might have been some sharks coming in to round up fish. We went for a closer look, distracting the fish from their quarry and discovered they were probably slightly smaller but large pelagic species rounding up breakfast. 'Pity we hadn't known, we would have just thrown the rods out. On the other hand, we didn't want to snare shark. This spot turned out to be quite active, with lots of leaping and splashing from the fish, although we specifically didn't wish to catch the baby reef shark that I saw or any of the large school of white lipped mullet. (There is rumoured to be barra in this section of the arm) After throwing away a squidgie (it and the leader came off and I was disgusted to see a fish splash just where my lure had) we set up the rod I was using with a small blue and pink lure. Something dutifully made contact but unfortunately a pause in the reeling in (my fault) of the fish gave it enough time to dislodge itself. Out of luck we headed back to Sengo for morning tea.

The afternoon excursion was as pectoratorially devoid as the morning, although I hooked the boat and Andrew hooked a mangrove. The tide was dropping and we came in early not waiting around for a repeat of the day before - to be eaten by the bugs!



Glycosmis Bay



29th June 2017 Glycosmis Bay. It took us over two hours to move and anchor Sengo in the pointy bit of Glycosmis Bay. We had arrived in the outer bay mid afternoon yesterday having lifted the anchor in King George River around 0930 in no wind. Making our way over the bar of the river there was still no wind and still none greeted us when we got to the middle of Koolama Bay. Our choices were to keep motoring, or anchor or drift to await the expected breeze. The official reading was 0.00 True. We stopped the engines and drifted and enjoyed the attention of a pod of seven dolphins whilst we were waiting.

Murphy's law prevails that just as our tea was brewed, the wind picked up and whilst we had set up for the expected spinnaker run we discovered the wind was blowing from the north! (well, north of east anyway). Running close to the wind we put up the main and genoa and were traveling at a respectable 6 knots for half the journey (admittedly three knots of that was tide). The *Coral Explorer* was anchored in Koolama Bay (its barge had rocked us awake at around 0700) and just as we left Koolama Bay another big sailing cat entered it from the east.

We eventually anchored in Glycosmis Bay just off the beach with the walk up to the Lost City. (We will ignore the fishing line that we forgot to remove before putting

the engines on, getting some of it wrapped around the port prop – at least we now have a matching pair). It was getting close to low tide so entering the inner bay over and around three prominent sand bars wasn't an option. The wind died down to practically nothing, although it was still northerly and we expected it to turn around to the south overnight.

Which it didn't! When we awoke we were still facing out to sea with a lee shore. We noticed another cat emerge from the inner anchorage on the rising tide and they looked like they were heading back east. The wind was reasonably light and we headed off to explore the Lost City.

The Lost City is an area of weathered sandstone outcrops and columns that are dotted with aboriginal paintings dating across many ages. Because the place is remote but known amongst its visitors, there are vague tracks, and the occasional cairn, to direct you around some of the site. We didn't explore all this area but found quite a few rock overhangs with artwork on them. It is fascinating to know that these figures have lasted thousands of years in this climate and the most destructive thing to them is the weathering of the rock or being covered up by newer, different style artwork.

When we emerged back on the beach we discovered the wind had picked up. And so had the swell. And the wind was still from the north! We downloaded some new weather files but the predictions still suggested we should have light variable winds (which usually means around 5 knots or less).

It was swelly, it was rocky, it was really untenable and the tide was dropping. We estimated that we

were about the same time after, as the previous cat had been before, the high tide mark and taken slowly we should be able to get into the inner bay (making the assumption his draft was similar to ours). Glycosmis Bay, like several bays in the area, is un-surveyed so our only guides were mud maps and approximate marks given by previous travellers. We missed the first sandbank to start with and ended up with reading of 0.00 (but no bump). Turning around we saw where our mistake was and eased our way into the inner bay. There was a shared sigh of relief – until we started anchoring – we just couldn't get a hold...two hours later... (we suspect the drop of the slope had something to do with the difficulty in anchoring).



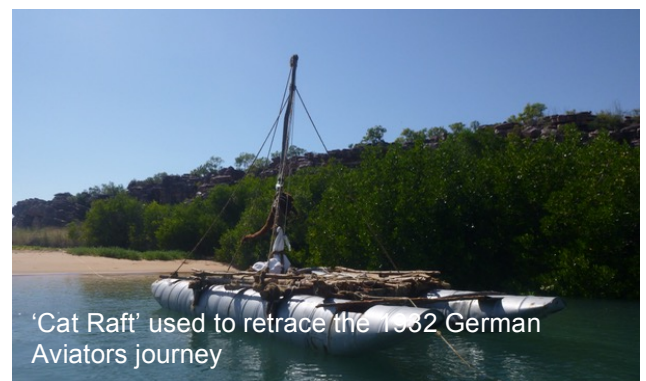


Sengo from partway up escarpment, Glycosims Bay

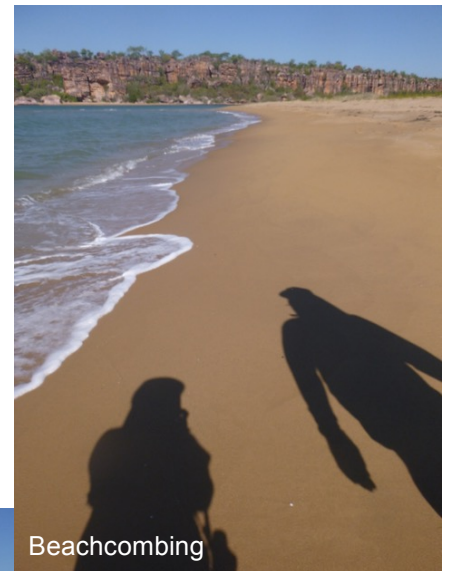
30th June 2017. There is a 'path' to the top of the escarpment in the smaller (inner bay) section of Glycosims Bay but we couldn't find it. It doesn't help that the two photos in the guide notes we have contradict each other and are in two different locations (unless of course there are two ways up). We did find one way, of sorts, and it involved some pretty hairy climbing. Hairy enough that on the last section I refused to climb (Andrew was struggling to find handholds around him to haul himself up and if he's having trouble then I am going to really be pushing – and besides if I did get up – how was I to get down?) According to the notes we have the walk is rated a 5 to 7 out of 10. The route we took was definitely closer to a '9' so I guess there is another way. Maybe we will search for it tomorrow.

After lunch (or in our case two lots of chocolate muffins and cream) and after the fascinating display of a peregrine falcon making contact with a pacific black duck (the duck made it to water and survived) we dropped off a welcome note to the little cat at the beginning of the bay (we had seen it anchored here yesterday as we entered the bay and quite rightly assumed it was the vessel being used by Michael Atkinson in his 'retracing' of the German aviators journey in 1932 from Seaplane Bay), and headed across to the opposite beach for a 'beachcomb'; or as much as you can halfway down the tide. There was nothing of particular note to see; a few washed up shells and coral, a pair of pied oystercatchers and a pair of red-capped dotterels. One wedge-tailed eagle soared high, whilst a one Brahminy kite entertained us by catching a fish in the water in front of us. Andrew thought he saw a small crocodile in the soak behind the dunes (not confirmed) and we started to head back.

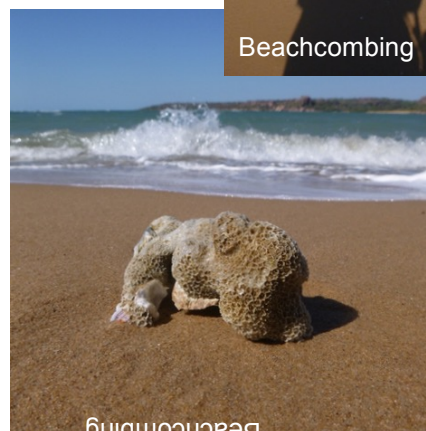
Suddenly, a helicopter appeared, waved, circled and landed on the beach near the little cat. Michael Atkinson was being dropped off after his long walk to Pago Mission. We waited for the chopper to go, introduced ourselves and invited him over for dinner –considering he's been eating bush tucker for most of the past few days we probably overfed him. He was kind enough to bring his drone over and we now have some awesome footage of Sengo from above. A small croc was seen dropping Michael back to his 'cat' around 1900. Croc count 1. You can find Michael at <http://www.outbackmike.com.au>



'Cat Raft' used to retrace the 1932 German Aviators journey



Beachcombing



Beachcombing