

Aboard Sengo



Magnificent Sunsets

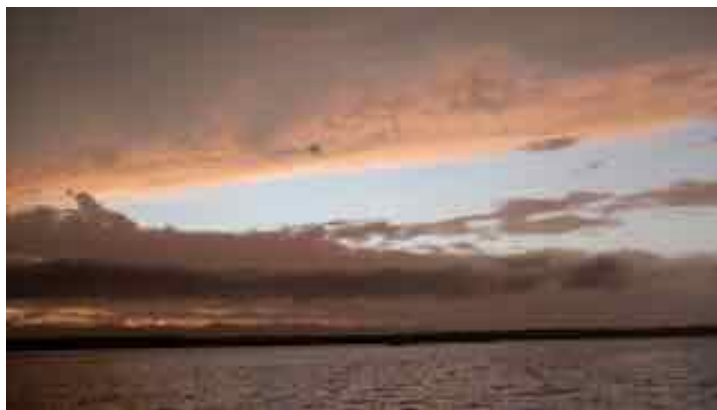
With a lot of rain!



March 2022 was a wet month! 'A very wet month. 'A month where we got a veritable deluge from the sky! And we didn't get the worst of it - there were locations, both to the north and south of us, that were 'inundated' with more rain than we suffered. And whilst I feel sad for those who got flooded out of their homes, and happy for those in drought that have finally got a reprieve, I was definitely not happy about the amount of rain that fell down upon us. Our leaky hatch drama extended this month, and every time rain threatened we grabbed the buckets and towels; it was a battle trying to keep Sengo dry inside with all the tiny leaks in both the disintegrating or non integral seals, or the gaps in temporary plastic sheeting.



For two thirds of the month we were trying to keep dry. There was no planning to go further afield than the Gold Coast; not whilst I had a weekly medical appointment. So the weekly routine involved hiring a car, the daily routine standard cleaning and boat jobs, and the hourly routine, so it seemed, watching the www.bom.gov.au rain radar! On board Sengo for March 2022 was essentially a month of cloud and precipitation watching.



The one reprieve in all this was a walking holiday; a long-planned-for walking holiday — although that didn't turn out quite as expected. We had been intending to go to Lord Howe Island, around 400 nautical miles off the NSW coast (give or take, depending on where you start from). We ended up in Western Australia instead. The photos for that little dalliance are in a complimentary document on the Plodding Along page at www.purringalong.com.au. This document is full of cloud and weather photos.



THE GUTTER

1st March 2022. There were clouds along the eastern horizon when I got up at 0600. The sun was poking its way through them. Most of the rest of the sky was a clear light blue.



The rain radar had a small smattering of light rain along the East Coast Current out to sea. There was a 20 per cent chance for rain in the forecast at Seaway for today, with a chance of a thunderstorm in the hinterland.

The idea had been to go to shore and do a big weekly food shop. Yes, the winds were predicted to be gusting high teens to low 20s, but I was hoping that's what they were, just gusts, and most of the time the wind speed was supposed to be in the lower predicted numbers. However by the time we had had breakfast and Andrew finished off the shopping list, the wind was consistently in the high teens and blowing white caps from the south. Wind over tide was making the boat slightly uncomfortable and going out onto that brown rough surface was just not going to be comfortable, let alone fun. We would wait until tomorrow's predicted, much calmer, winds.

I had woken up with a slight headache which wasn't too noticeable during most of the morning, but it escalated mid afternoon. A sleep didn't help so I took some anti-inflams and after a while felt fine (sometimes there is a need for drugs).

I read a bit, fiddled with an itinerary for Canada, and continued with a newsletter. And that was about it. I didn't have the head space for Spanish which was a pity as Andrew had actually taken the initiative today.

We watched a movie in the evening and went to bed around 2200.



2nd March 2022. The waters were calm. The wind was relatively calm. Skies were mostly blue. After breakfast at 0700 we headed off in the tinnie toward Paradise Point. A sea eagle flew over us; which was lovely, the last time we headed across to Paradise Point in the tinnie, two days ago, the bird above had been a Brahminy kite.

The water was still baby cack brown although the top layers seemed to be separating near boat into cloudy puffs in the first few centimetres - with a uniform nondescript colour below.

There were 15 pelicans on the edge of the swim area at the 'Point, along with their companions of one egret and two pied cormorants. All lined up in a row: they would have made a great photo. We started walking toward Runaway Bay Centre just before 0800 and arrived around 0840. Not all the shops were open yet but we only had to visit a couple; the newsagent to put money on our Go Cards, and the supermarket and/or fruit shop for our weekly supplies. As we are a bit organised these days and can tick off a list, the shop was done with relative ease and minimal fuss. The longest wait was for the bus. We were back at boat, through a friskier wind but still only rippling waves, at around 1100.

After putting most of the shop away, and having a well-earned rest, we had chicken kebabs for lunch.

We didn't do much during the afternoon. I read a bit (finished 'Green Mountains' by Bernard O'Reilly) but wasn't really in the mood for much after that. Andrew was doing research on the computer.

According to the forecast we were expecting a little rain. We hadn't had any by the time we went to bed, but the clear skies of the morning had eventually been covered with grey. There were no stars visible tonight.



3rd March 2022. Morning. It was the thunder that woke me up proper at 0445. And it was the flash of lightening that got me out of bed.

And checking the radar at bom.gov.au there were storms

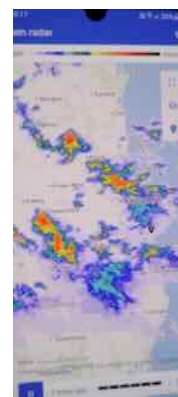
coming in from the north-west; the larger ones to the north and south were likely to miss us, but the one in the middle, still a fair way out, if it didn't dissipate, could possibly make us a bit wet.

I grabbed the towels I had been drying over the past couple of days and reinstated them near the leaky hatches - just in case.

I hadn't been fast asleep. A headache had been persisting. I hadn't taken anything for it but did so as I got up, deciding as I was going to stay up for a while anyway, then I may as well try and get rid of it. In these days of Covid there is always the niggling possibility of virus. Yes we were at the shopping centre yesterday, but we were masked up. I eventually came to the conclusion the pain emanated from a stiff neck, and I expected the drugs to kick in easily.

At 0454 bom.gov.au issued a severe thunderstorm warning. The yellow patch didn't quite reach us which was a relief. That didn't mean we wouldn't get wet though. So I sat and waited

I heard the first pitter patter of rain at 0515. At 0750 I saw the first bout of lightening; rumbles were however a fair way away. At 0810 rumbles were louder and more frequent but the difference between the lightening at that time and the associated thunder was significant. Bom.gov.au radars showed more rain, but most patches of yellow coming our way were dissipating into blues before reaching us.



Afternoon. The Seaway got 16.4mm up to 0900 this morning and then 0.4 until 1800. There were however storms in the west heading our way. Whether they dissipated like the others during the day before getting





to us was yet to be seen.

We had kept the eye appt at 1430. This wasn't despite the weather, this

was because it was too late on Tuesday to change it when I realised that Wednesday morning's weather was going to be ideal. Thursdays weather was predicted to be wet and stormy, although wind predictions were light. The doom and gloom was somewhat reflected on www.windy.com which predicted 30mm coming down in the time tranche starting at 1300. That would be the time we were going to shore and walking to the car. When I looked at windy.com again, the 1300 time tranche was predicting 45mm during that time; we know what that feels like, we got 40mm on the way across to shore last Wednesday morning. By this morning however the predictions had dropped back to 11mm. In the end we only got a few drops, most of the storms had gone over or past us, although the newly minted blue sky turned to grey with rain clouds just as we were getting off boat - and rumbles were prominent. There were still storms to our north and south but I figured they were past us to the east. The wind had picked up slightly and I felt a couple of drops of rain. I urged Andrew on, much to his annoyance and grump. Rain seemed imminent. I tried to explain, without seeming panicked, that if we were on shore we had options, but not if we were still on boat. It is ironic that the

only time we got wet today was during that tinnie ride to the Paradise Point jetty; the rain jackets having been hastily put on as we headed off. Thunder was still grumbling and to my concern a flash of lightening splayed across the sky just to our east over South Stradbroke.

An osprey greeted us at Paradise Point today. The rain had stopped. Given that the rain had stopped we walked to pick up the car - it took 40 minutes - taking our rain jackets off half way there. We managed to get a slightly cheaper vehicle and tootled off south. Having time to spare we visited Wild Earth to fill in time.

The eye appt went well but given that next week's medium term weather predictions indicated it was going to be very windy during my usual allocated time, I changed next week's appointment to Wed morning and hoped the weather would be doable before the blow. I also changed the optometrist assessment to tomorrow morning; which means there will be no early bush walk, but I suppose we can do a town walk before handing the car back.

The afternoon weather was gorgeous; blue skies again. I was willing to try a new suburban walk in vicinity of the clinic today but Andrew suggested we head back home and do the Paradise Point jaunt instead. Which we did. On the drive back the radio news service predicted doom and gloom. Checking the rain radar I only saw a relatively small patch of opal near the Scenic Rim, which wasn't posing an issue for us. So I promptly forgot about it. It was only in the final tinnie ride home that I checked the radar again after Andrew asked about when we were expecting the storms. The western section of the screen was ablaze with colour and I suddenly realised there were clouds coming in above us. Perhaps we were heading back to boat just in time. Fortunately the storm dissipated to our west and south west before getting to us and missed us to the north. And despite a very dark grey cloud blocking sundown and lots of clouds elsewhere, there were stars out when it got dark.



4th March 2022. A nondescript day. After my eye assessment in the morning we wandered around inside the Robina Town Centre shopping area. A hike outside would have probably been healthier ,and less expensive as we managed to get distracted and go clothes shopping; an activity we rarely engage in. After dropping the car off we walked back to the jetty and then headed back to boat. Lunch was a late 1400. I spent the afternoon on the January newsletter, the dishes and packing for Lord Howe. The evening was spent watching a movie.



5th March 2022. There was hardly a cloud in the sky at 0600 when we got up; it was bright and sunny.

Our excursion for the day had been firstly to Harbour Town and then to Runaway Bay Centre. Both by bus. The aim was a pair of non-hiking walking shoes for me; essentially I wanted a good pair of 'runners' in which to pound the streets. Concrete is not a good match for proper hiking shoes, the soles tend to wear out on them. It took excursions into several shops but I finally got a pair from Asics. The old model..not that the sales person told us that ...it was, just that the new model was tried on in a subsequent store and found to be almost as good and \$30 more expensive. Andrew didn't go without presents, getting himself a pair of casual shoes. At Runaway Bay he got some new board-shorts and then it was back to boat for a very late lunch. Dinner, after our sunset viewing, was only 3.5 hours later.



The late afternoon had been spent on the tramp as the sun went down. Due to the tide however we were facing in the opposite direction to the sunset and admired the russet red tops of the clouds to the east, the dugong surfacing occasionally, the whistling kite and a pigeon calling, the laughing of the kookaburras and the pipping of the whimbrels as a small flock of five flew past over the now inundated sand flats. Apart from those dulcet animal sounds it was the pounding of the surf on the eastern side of South Stradbroke Island that could be heard. We retreated in just as the last light was fading, and the kookaburras sounded a few final curtain calls to the day.

6th March 2022. I was up at 0645. The sun had beaten me. High mixed clouds hung in the sky. The forecast was for 90 per cent showers with a possible storm likely late morning.

We missed the opportunity this morning to get some exercise but we were sorting out the next weeks menu, which does take time. Breakfast was defrosted muffins but lunch and dinner were main meals so took some time, and pots, which meant the dishes load was big. I spent the rest of the morning on eye exercises, finding the wet weather hiking pants and putting February's phone photos on the newsletter.

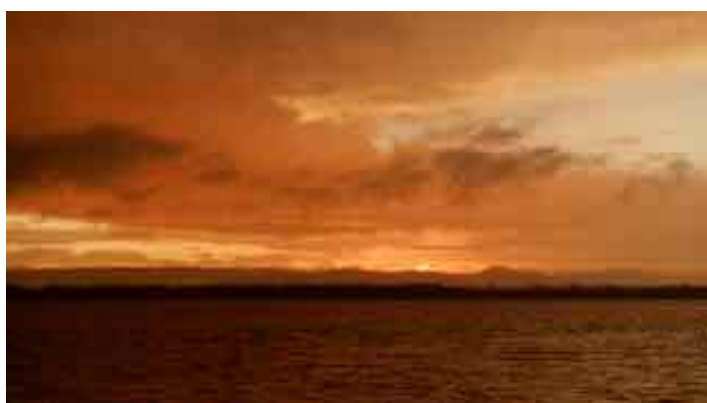
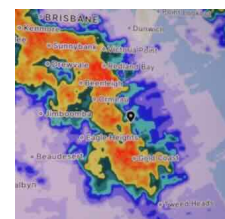
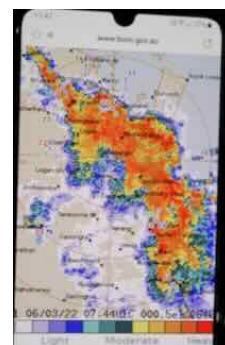
The storm didn't really come until late afternoon. The first rain and the lightening not arriving until close to 1700. We had heard the rumble of cannon fire for some time and the bom.gov.au radar had a few sets of storm activity coming our way. The first was a much smaller system than the second but thankfully passed to the south, just, and its cannon rumbling turned into fireworks. The thunderstorm warning had the label of 'very dangerous storm' (on top of severe).

Andrew started watching the storm but initially I was still in the middle of cooking a stir fry (which meant the oven could not be used as a faraday cage).

Dinner cooked we sat down to eat. Andrew faced out the starboard window; I was facing the port. Outside on both sides was the constant flashing of yellow; I wouldn't want to be an epileptic. Most of it was sheet lightening, but there was an awful lot of it. We are now the only ones at this anchorage and therefore with our mast we have the highest point. The thunder was also almost continuous, which means it was impossible to tell what thunder was associated

with what lightening. It rumbled frighteningly overhead, and I was under the impression that very little of it was close. One or two strikes gave us a bit of a fright but nothing like last November's close strike out to sea. I only saw two sky to ground strikes during the night - for which I was grateful.

I missed the sunset as such but got the afterglow, complete with mamma clouds and blue sky!



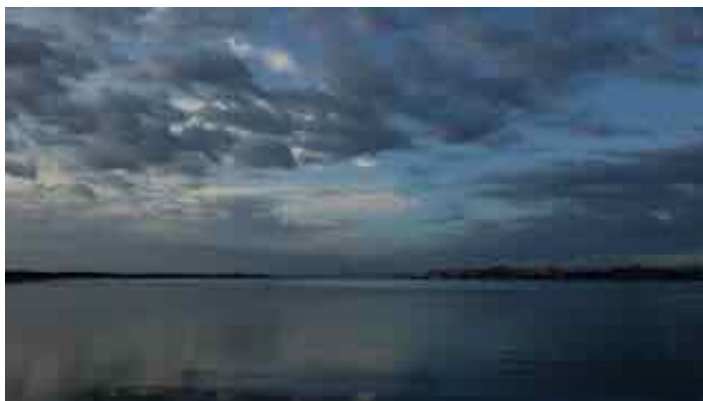
A WASHING RUN

7th March 2022. It was a blue morning. At around 0600 a bush bird cooed in the mangroves; the sound of which I should know but have forgotten.

We were walking from the Paradise Point jetty toward Runaway Bay Marina just before 0720. We were back on boat at around 1130. The washing wasn't exactly an easy run. Only two machines were available (we had three loads) and one of those didn't work...after swallowing our money, of course. The boss of the cafe however also runs the laundrette so after ordering coffees, and before they arrived, I had some on-site help. Which didn't actually help much as they couldn't get the recalcitrant machine going either - but as one of the machines in rinse mode was theirs I just waited 15 minutes and nabbed it when it had finished. Coffee came with a chocolate, which delighted me from a normal point of view, ie it wasn't a biscuit that I couldn't normally eat, but right at the moment I couldn't have the chocolate either. Maybe at the next washing run...

The afternoon was spent reading, sorting the food shopping list, watching a movie, doing the dishes, and sorting photos.

Andrew checked the rain radar before going to bed. And it looks like we will have a quiet night!



8th March 2022. It had been quiet all night. But I awoke to flashing lightening. Which got me leaping out of bed to reinstate the towels and water collecting stuff that I had put away. Checking the rain radar I saw a rather nasty system stretching out to sea. The radar seemed to suggest it just tickling us, but I didn't hear any pitter patter, and certainly didn't hear anything storm related. The background noise was the pounding surf on the outer side of South Stradbroke.

9th March 2022. Somewhere in the morning I should have been clued in that not all would go to plan.

I was up around 0300 with an urge to get the next lot of photos into overdue newsletters and went back to bed at 0430 knowing the alarm was on for 0530 because of the early start needed for my eye appt. Somehow, despite the early start and time restriction we managed a cooked breakfast before heading to shore. The motorway traffic was thick but not impossible, and as usual when I have organised a swap to an early morning appt, we were early.

But my therapist was a no show. She was unwell but because she sticks notes in the system as a reference when I change the day due to weather (and not change the official appt) it meant the reception girls didn't know what was going on, I didn't get any text prompt, didn't notice I hadn't got one and therefore there was no one waiting for me. A bit of a scramble at their end came up with an alternative practitioner, who just happens to be the therapy's guru, so I wasn't put out, although we ended up a few minutes late to return the car.

In the mean time on the way back to boat I had just hung up from a friend who had almost been hit by lightning (which would have been a disaster because their boat got hit by lightening six months ago) to read an email cancelling our

To make efficient use of time this morning we thought we would divide and conquer. Whilst Andrew trotted off to pick up the car I headed to Runaway Bay Marina to wash our rain jackets. We then made a bee line for BCF to get some gas and whilst Andrew was sorting that I was negotiating with Macpac for an extra \$10 off a pair of trousers - I seem to have completely misplaced my good walking pants. We got back to boat for lunch. It was too windy after lunch to comfortably get off boat.

upcoming holiday to Lord Howe Island. What!! This was a shock. We were essentially a week away. We were looking forward to this, indeed the past few weeks had revolved around getting things ready - just for us to be told that we couldn't come. Apparently our room had been flooded. It was unoccupiable, and there was 'no more room at the inn,' so to speak. It only affected us. We had taken a slight variation of an accommodation package to have a slightly bigger room than the standard tour. If we had taken the standard tour package we wouldn't be in this situation; but, admittedly someone else would be.

So I spent the afternoon crafting an email to other local accommodation premises asking for help. Peak season on an island paradise is almost always going to be fully booked so I wasn't expecting to be able to get accommodation at just one place. I was hoping to string a few accommodation vacancies together. Some responses were not fruitful, but polite. I had one response, the first positive one, offering three nights, but if I wanted the spot I needed to book via the website. With their refund policy for cancellation way past I could not do this immediately. The next positive response was from the most expensive place on the island, obscenely so, because the fees are 'all inclusive.' It was for three nights as well, but the dates were not consecutive with the first offer, so I was hoping for some other

positive responses to fill in the gaps. Given the range of accom options and the fact the resorts are all inclusive we decided we would ditch the walking program if we could get the 10 nights and just climb Mount Gower with a group - as it is a separate tour and was already booked. Because of daylight savings Queensland is an hour behind NSW and I knew by 1600 I was unlikely to get any more responses today so tootled off to make dinner.

There had been warnings of severe thunderstorms coming today, for a great swathe of the south east coast line. And given we had friends almost get hit by lightening this morning we knew the Sunshine Coast had got the storms early. The Gold Coast was expecting these into the afternoon and evening and indeed a mid afternoon tempest hit the area around Southport. I had been potentially looking for a change of scenery for these few days as they were expected to be windy, and had suggested we shift either north or south. On reflection Andrew reminded me that where we were has been getting less storms than Southport or Jumpinpin (influence of Mount Tamborine perhaps?) and suggested we stay where we were. It was a prudent decision. The storm that hit Southport continued for some time and I sat down on the back step to admire the lightening show in the clouds to our south, just as the last vestiges of twilight took the day's light away. It was about this time however that the expected southerly blow came in and within a few minutes we were facing almost 180 degrees in the opposite direction. We had moved to the front to admire the lightening show, it was windier than the back but the advantage of this was no mozzies. However with the direction change we were now facing more directly into the wind and as the wind came up over 20 knots it became a bit too windy to be comfortable for a serene evening sky watching. It blew mid twenties most of the evening, gusting to just shy of 30knots on a regular bases.



10th March 2022. Ok. So I thought I was getting up at 0400 to fill in yesterday's diary notes to discover after I had written the draft that it was only 0100! Yes I had gone to bed early but it had been a very disturbed sleep, I suspect the humidity didn't help, a food reaction wouldn't have helped either. I had taken yesterday's tablets late and had automatically taken a vitamin b, a tablet I was warned not to take in the evening because I was unlikely to get a good sleep (or not feel like sleeping); now I know why.

I went back to bed. At around 0400 I got up again and checked the official bom.gov.au observations Southport had gusted to 29 knots at 1930 last night but it was now relatively calm in comparison (blowing low teens). Southport also had no listed rain fall, although it must have been so close to last evening's storm, the highrises having looked enveloped in cloud from here.

This morning I was still hoping for some fill in dates to rescue our Lord Howe trip. Nothing useful came up before we decided to pull the pin and cancel Lord Howe altogether

Given the circumstances of feeling like we had been kicked off the island, I don't think Andrew was going to be in the mood to enjoy it anyway. Of course a resent email this morning when I realised there was a new email for one of the premises on the global email that had bounced back yesterday, actually bore fruit..we were offered six days in a row which meant

I could have strung 8 days out of the original ten days together and salvaged most of it, but we had already left instructions to cancel and refund everything. We will look at rebooking Lord Howe for next year.

Now all we had to do was work out what were we going to do with ourselves for our 'booked' holiday time? Going north was going to be too hot and humid, we had after all booked a walking holiday. NSW was flood and weather affected. Victoria was considered to catch up with friends, something we haven't done for many years but given most of our friends are, albeit distant now, still in Vic it would be an extremely social and busy time and I didn't really want to risk getting Covid before we went to Canada. Tasmania is a delight to us but having spent a quarter of last year there we are a bit over it, and don't want to visit for some time. SA will still be too hot. The NT even hotter. Andrew was sussing out NZ but because we have no family or residential ties to the country we can't get in until July 22nd. What about 'Cape To Cape'? I suggested.

This walk was suggested to us when we walked an 88km section of the Bibbulmen Track around 12 years ago. It was not as well known then but an accommodation provider in Prevally, which is along the Track, and whom we were visiting after finishing our Bibbulmen Track section, had suggested we would love it. We both 'Googled' to see what we could come up with.

Now that we were cancelling out of everything, flights included, we weren't technically beholden to the dates we had had booked. But changing holiday dates would require changing docking dates for Sengo, which might be problematic given it is hard enough to find marina space around here anyway. And if we took a later break it would mean less of a break before

Canada. You can do Cape to Cape on your own but that was not the point. We managed to find one guided walking tour with accommodation options (at this point we would have been happy with the glamping option but that option was full so went the 4 star option) who had a tour running over the dates of our original booking. Perfect! I sent an introductory email and then followed up with a phone call two hours later. I didn't want to get the host out of bed...with daylight saving WA is two hours behind us.

Confirming the tour had space we then had to officially book it, organise accommodation in Perth, and airfares. It is almost a five hour flight across from Brisbane to Perth. Would we survive in economy (business class was exorbitantly

11th March 2022. A day of not much and lots of distractions. The routine boat jobs are getting neglected and I really need to get to some fibreglass rust stains with a toothbrush. The sky was grey all day but there was little rainfall, only a couple of very light showers. The wind had its moments but most of the day, whilst not enticing us off boat, was reasonably calm.

I spent a lot of the day fiddling with my phone, which I fear is an addiction issue. I started reading Thomas Keneally's 'The Great Shame' and managed two short yoga sequences. Add in cooking three meals, dishes, eye exercises, a bit of packing for our upcoming break, and a bit of research and booking another guided walk that will be a challenge for us next year, that about filled in the day.

The locals are getting bolder, there were several yahoos (modern use of the term) zoom past Sengo in their tinnies at a very close proximity today - and at an illegal speed!

12th March 2022. I was hoping for a walk this morning. The early morning bom.gov.au predictions looked reasonable 10s to 15s. But Andrew wasn't up until after 0700 by which time it was blowing low 20s. By this time I had done my eye exercises, clove oiled uprights in the back cockpit, looked at logistics and started packing the day pack for WA.

The only exercise we managed today was two very short yoga sequences, Andrew shorter than mine. Apart from that I chatted to two yachties on the phone, organised a catch up with a yachtie in NZ, cooked three meals and had an afternoon snooze; for some reason I felt extremely tired. We also managed to book two flights to NZ at the end of the year to finally start TA.

Andrews achievement for the day was releasing all the zips on my old backpack. Although I had replaced it with the Osprey pack a year ago, it was still a good back pack. I wasn't going to chuck it in the bin from both a waste perspective and an environmental one. I had previously offered it to one yachtie who was happy to retain their smaller, less ergonomic one. However, I have found a new home for it, with yet another yachtie, who aims to do a lot more walking. I just had to get the zips working (it would have gone to the op shop otherwise). The win was not only one for the environment, but one for our pockets; I had forgotten there was a stash of \$45 in one of the pockets for an emergency. It will now be put in my purse for other purposes.

Today's skies started as a uniform grey, and the stratus produced two very light showers. There were however bits of blue sky in afternoon. At night the stars could be seen beyond the harmless cumulous clouds

Whistling kites are normally heard here but today it was the sea eagles calling (with their raucous duck-like calls). I went outside to admire them but found they were being chased not only by the whistling kites but by a smaller bird as well - I suspect there may have been more than one breach of territory here!

13th March 2022. The waiting around is getting frustrating. Now that we have switched our coming holiday from the east coast to the west coast I am itching to get there. Admittedly being stuck on boat is not helping because it means no training. For the past few weeks we have walked around the local area when we could (weather conducive) or at least managed 1.5 hours over two days picking up and dropping off the car. But for the past three days, and today, the forecast has not been conducive from a wind perspective, despite short bouts of reasonable winds, to consider going anywhere. So stuck on boat at the mercy of passing motor vessels at high tide we have done our best. Which is very little. Today we only got half a short yoga sequence done, the boat too wobbly for the balance poses. I generally get more done than Andrew and I am grateful for one particular back stretch I am doing every day; I think it is helping to keep me flexible because after sitting on the unergonomic seating we have, I just have to do this pose and I feel, and almost hear, my spine tickle back into alignment.

We watched a few youtube videos today on two of the three specific walking trails we are going to do over the next year and a bit, read a bit, dishes, regreased the now cleaner, old back pack with now working zips, one of the three eye exercises, and looked at how I am going to carry my camera for the upcoming walk. I also made some sand gaters. Andrew bought his for around \$5 some time ago and uses them quite often. As they are only a small bit of material, some elastic and stitching I got out the sewing box and some material I had at hand and made myself a pair today, hand stitching because pulling the sewing machine out was just going to be too much of a hassle. I am not sure whether the elastic is tight enough. I will work that out when I put them on over my boots, but the exercise filled in a few hours.

We spent a short time this evening sitting on the front deck waiting for the sun to go down. The sun was technically to the starboard side of us and a bit behind, but we were watching the gold coast change from clear



and bright to dull and grey as the small rain system moved in, the front of which was moving north just to our west over The Sovereign Islands. There were no bitey insects because the wind was too strong for them, and eventually us, as we suspected the edge of the rain would hit us soon. We were again spared however, and just like the rest of the day we had the system pass closely by without getting a drop. In fact small rain squalls had passed either side of us all day, according to the rain radar, without bothering to worry us. This anchorage spot has its issues, but it also seems to miss a lot of the rain.



14th March 2022. got Andrew out of bed earlier than he would have preferred this morning: he had had a much later night than me. The wind predictions were not brilliant for the next few days so any chance of doing our shuffle to pick up and drop off a hire car for my eye appt was going to be in the very least uncomfortable, but quite possibly dangerous. This morning has a moderately less blowy forecast (ish) and I suggested if we could get a walk in before the 1000 tranche we might miss the worst of it. By the time we had had breakfast and dropped the tinnie it was around 0800 and the wind had started to pick up. Small wavelets headed our way with distant small whitecaps. We headed to the Paradise Point jetty down between The Sovereign Islands and the mainland for a bit of protection. By the time we started walking it was 0725 and after dropping our rubbish off we followed our tried and true Paradise Point jaunt, the usual 45 minute circuit extended by a trip to the chemist (to pick up some foot first aid supplies for our upcoming trip) and a trip to the post office, where for once I was sending mail, not receiving it. Skies were blue, sun was warm, and lots of people, mainly with dogs, were out enjoying the morning: most offering a friendly unprompted greeting.

The wind had picked up a bit by the time we wanted to return and after a slightly bumpy and slightly wet tinnie ride, we were back on board Sengo at around 1000.



15th March 2022. As per yesterday morning I woke up to clouds to the east on the other side of South Stradbroke Island. There were more of them this morning and the rain radar showed patches of rain just off the coast from Ballina in NSW in the south, to The Sunshine Coast to the north of us.

The day got progressively greyer, the wind progressively stronger, and by midday we hadn't had much rain, just a smattering really, but wind speeds were gusting up to 30 knots!

At 1400 we spotted and watched a pod of dolphins head north along the disappearing sandbank to our east. Given their behaviour Andrew suspects they were fishing. He also commented that maybe after the deluge we had last week that the water is finally getting clearer. It still looks pretty brown to me. It has been dugongs that have graced our anchorage over the past few weeks, we believe a mother and calf, who always seem to be together, and a male, bigger and often on his own. As much as we are privileged to share this space with them, sometimes within a matter of meters, it is still nice to see dolphins again. It has been a long time

HEADING OFF FOR A BIT OF DIFFERENT SCENERY

16th March 2022 - 28th March 2022

We were supposed to be enjoying ourselves exploring the semi-tropical Lord Howe Island from the 18th - 28th March 2022. But the long yearned-for, and looked-forward-to holiday (albeit an active one) didn't eventuate. The resort we had booked cancelled out on us! Extremely deflated we changed plans, and headed in the opposite direction instead, crossing the country and flying to Perth. For Andrew with his long legs, it is a long, and very uncomfortable haul in an economy class seat!

We spent a week walking the Cape To Cape Track; a walk from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin. The last time we travelled along that line we were twenty nautical miles out to sea, and in the dark, as we had done the trip overnight! This time we were on ground and admiring the coastal scenery up close. We did it with an organised group - I didn't have the headspace or the time to organise it on our own. We were lucky, the weather held up for us. The writeup of this trek can be found on the Plodding Along page of www.purringalong.com.au.

28th March 2022. We were in Perth when we checked the Brisbane rain radar on our phones. We had four top hatches missing, all had temporary plastic sheet over the top of the gaps. All were leaking. The shipwright was checking, and decanting, buckets every 40 minutes. What on earth were we going to come home to?



BACK AT THE BOAT WORKS DOCK

29th March 2022. I got up, and stayed up, from around 0330. Andrew had done the overnight shift. I had been exhausted, possibly due to the airplane meal as I think it contained capsicum in the sauce (it wasn't obvious; just a feeling I had later. It didn't help my back either) that anytime I got up for a drink of water I went straight back to bed again. Apparently there were several bumps on the hull from logs passing with the strong flow of the river, but I slept through them.

By this time the rain band was to the south and south east of us and any water hitting the deck was dripping from the boat structure above. Of course any rain still caught in the gutters around our hatch-less but leaky plastic sealing was still dripping inside. Andrew had kept the buckets relatively empty but I had immediately emptied 2/3 bucket when I got up.

Now the Coomera gets a flood warning! Having escaped most flood warnings from the last major rainfall event, the Coomera has now been specifically mentioned! Just when we are up river! The general rule is not to be up a river in a flood if you can help it.

Just as Andrew went to bed I went outside to investigate the voices on the dock. The security personnel was worried about our swinging around. I hadn't noticed but I guess Andrew had been okay with it otherwise he would have got me up..he had clearly been outside, the torch was out.

I thought about making yoghurt but Andrew had mentioned both water tanks were practically reading empty so waiting until it got light and I could access shore water was probably a good idea.

At 0520 I had my head down into the bilge with a sponge. I had checked the easier access areas of the bilge at around 0500 and they seemed dry, which I thought a bit strange, particularly for the starboard side that had had the overflowing buckets in our head. It was around five min later that the starboard bilge pump went off. Whilst I didn't completely clear the bilge (from the harder to get at places) I got a good 4 litres out, taking a break to rest my ribs. It was still dark outside; Winter is coming! A few weeks ago the sun would already have been up.

Around 0530 I heard the first worker in the yard. Again at 0550. I could hear a power tool working. It was getting lighter but was not yet dawn.

I checked my face in the mirror around 0630. My black lip is returning to normal; meaning the blood stained peeling and possibly infected skin is starting to drop off. The only bit left to heal is the infected looking strip that I ripped the skin off with the napkin the other night. At least I only look like I have a slightly pussy top of my lower lip now; not that I have some horrible disease as I did a few days ago.

During the day I managed several hours sleep, finished off decanting the starboard bilge, two lots of drying towels, lunch at the cafe and sorting our menu out for the next week.

As the guy with our hatches hadn't done anything and we had leaking plastic covers we thought it prudent to pay for a few more days on dock. Who knows we might get the new ones by the end of the week! However Andrew's first call to the fabricator was one of shock. He hadn't started the measurements (even after yesterday's phone call from Perth) and he couldn't fit us in until end of next month! What!

This is the same person who suggested originally that it would only take a couple of days to produce new hatches after he had the old ones for measurements.

I was having a chat to the owner of the boat in the pen next to us. He had a similar chat to another boatie recently. We all agree. If you can't do the job...'The second best answer is: NO!'

So the contractor said he was at least going to measure the hatches so we could pick the old ones up and reinstall them. Andrew got on to another manufacturer who could do the job in two weeks - he just needed to see the hatches. Immediately after this the first fellow rang back...he could now get the job done in two weeks....if he had said that when we first called him we would have new hatches tomorrow. Sticking with the first contractor for now we hope to get our old hatches back in a couple of days. This expensive and time consuming exercise has turned into a more expensive and more time consuming exercise. And messier. With all the water that has been in the boat I now have mould growing on horizontal and vertical surfaces...and the bathroom ceiling.

I sent Andrew off food shopping whilst I did a morning run to the dryer to dry all the wet towels that had soaked up the dripping water. The floating jetty was above normal level, with the access walkway angled the wrong way. By early afternoon both the tide and flood water were dropping, and the jetty access walkway aspect was back to normal; lower than the land.

30th March 2022. A good sleep. A grey morning. There was little rain when we went to bed at around 2230 and no rain at 0600 when I woke up. However by the time the alarm had gone off at 0630 a steady stream of water was flowing into the red bucket in our head. The rain radar was frightening in the amount of rain it showed.

Andrew had a wet job to do...he had to return the car key to the office by 0730. That was the only reason we had had the alarm on...to make sure we got the car key back in time.

Apart from the now guaranteed bucket decanting, other jobs for the morning included an audit of the Mackay Marina invoices (the marina rang up a couple of months ago saying we still owed them money), and chasing some replacement rollers for a door in Tasmania when we don't have the originals (by phone).

I also gathered all the paperwork to determine the details to send my Olympus Camera off for repair. It was a frustrating job for a frustrating situation. Having emailed a repair request in, now all I have to do is get the camera there... via our beloved Australia Post!



31st March 2022. This was a day of small jobs and bits and pieces.

It was a Thursday so we picked up a car for my eye appointment. With time to spare we visited WildEarth and Andrew bought himself a new back pack (framed - about time) and we got a second waterproof pack for canoeing. Jobs for the day included a bit of clove oiling, organising repairs for a sliding door in Tassie (or trying to), chatting to our bank whose security section had rung us (I never did get to the bottom of why they rang us but suspect it has something to do with our listed address), managed a shore shower, and chatted to The Boat Works staff.

The highlight of the day was going out to dinner with two boats; one we are in semi regular contact with, the other will be leaving Australian shores, possibly for ever. Sad to see good people go back to their original lives.

In the end it was a long day. We got up at 0730. We went to bed at 0045 on 1st April 2022.