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**By Tracey Lenz**  
**594 words**

## THE LAKE AWOONGA GUARANTEE: BARRAS' APLENTY

The sight of Lates Calcarifer is one that can evoke sheer joy, while the scene of it swimming away can bring a tear to even the most consummate angler's eye. The call of the Barramundi draws many fishing enthusiasts to jump into boats and chase their elusive tail all around Australia. Some triumph over this 'Muhammad Ali' of the fish world, while many walk away minus the spoils. But there's a place where you are almost guaranteed to catch Barra, Lake Awoonga, located approximately 30 kilometres from Gladstone.

Lake Awoonga's world-class Barramundi hatchery has become very popular in recent years for those pursuing this cunning fish. The Gladstone Area Water Board with support from Central Queensland Ports Authority spends tens of thousands of dollars each year regularly stocking the lake with Barramundi, Mullet and Mangrove Jack fingerlings. In fact, since 1996 in excess of two million barramundi fingerlings have been released into Lake Awoonga and Barramundi over 15 kilos are regularly caught. Recently, lucky anglers snared two of the whopping creatures which weighed over 30 kilograms each. Fish from your own vessel; hire a tinnie from Lake Awoonga Caravan Park or a specially designed 'Barra Elite' boat from Lake Awoonga Houseboats to haul in your monstrous catch.

Other species found in the lake include varieties of Perch, Bream, Catfish, Grunter, Mullet, Eastern Rainbow Fish, Fly-Specked Hardyhead, Gudgeon, Long-Finned Eel, Longtom, Mouth Almighty, Snub-Nose Garfish, Hyrtl's Tandan, Saratoga, Sleepy Cod, and Yellowbelly. The sheer amount of fish found in Lake Awoonga inevitably guarantees a feast on your first visit. The best part is the lake is open to fishing is all year round. There is no closed season for Barramundi and many other fish at Lake Awoonga; however the best time to land a Barra is from September to April when they are on the bite. Bag and size limits for all species vary depending on the time of year.



Along with fishing, many activities can be enjoyed on or around Lake Awoonga. The calm waters of the lake are the perfect spot to swim, sail, canoe or ski. The lake is surrounded by beautiful, naturally sculpted landscapes teeming with a wondrous array of plants, animals and birds, perfect for bushwalking, photography or bird watching pursuits. Whip-tailed or Pretty-faced Wallabies can be easily found through the recreation area. You may also encounter Skinks, Frogs, Turtles, Platypus, Echidnas, Koalas and Geckos to name a few. For the bird watching enthusiast, Lake Awoonga is a paradise with approximately 25% of Australia's bird species found in the region. It is also arguably one of the most important near-coast bird refuges on the East Coast of Australia.

At the end of the day why not cook your catch on a bar-be-que available at one of the popular picnic bungalows and sit back, relax and take in the lovely landscapes and sensational scenery. Alternatively, drop into Kalinda Dining Room for a

bite to eat and a quiet beverage after a hard day's fishing or kick back on the balcony of your Lake Awoonga Houseboats hired abode and watch a magnificent sunset over the lake while pondering tomorrow's adventure. In



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the evening, retire to the comfortable confines of your houseboat. Alternatively, bunk down in a caravan or tent at the Lake Awoonga Caravan Park, conveniently located at the entrance to the lake and enjoy the spectacular views from dawn to dusk.

If the lure of the Barramundi is calling you to Lake Awoonga contact Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited on (07)4972 4000 or [www.gladstoneregion.info](http://www.gladstoneregion.info).