**From the Flybridge 22 April, 2017**

As the Coffs Coast settles into autumn, the big questions that game fishermen are asking are all about the weather and the East Australian Current - the two pieces of the game fishing puzzle that affect marlin fishing here more than anything else.

After a summer of strong winds making fishing offshore more or less impossible, the view from the beach recently has been of an uncommonly flat horizon without the usual sawtooth pattern of big swells and wind chop. Hopefully, this means an end to the constant north and south winds that have been buffeting the coast most of the year.

But this is only one element of the puzzle, the other being the East Australian Current, which has been notable for its absence most of the summer. For Finding Nemo fans, the depiction of the EAC as the transport system used by most of the migrating fish moving along the east coast of the country was remarkably accurate. When the current flows straight down the edge of the continental shelf, it brings warm tropical water from the Coral Sea southwards as far as Tasmania.

This water can be as warm as 29º Celcius, and when it’s flowing a full speed of about 8 kilometres per hour out there, it can be moving water southwards along the coast at a rate of 36 million cubic metres per second, which is about four times the volume of Sydney Harbour every minute. That sort of free ride isn’t one that migrating pelagic fish like marlin ignore, and in fact, they actually rely on the current to help them undertake their annual voyage down the east coast of Australia in search of the big schools of baitfish that can only be found in cooler waters.

This summer alone, the EAC has been diverted away from the coast at around the Queensland border and out into the Tasman Sea multiple times by the unrelenting strong winds we’ve seen here, and as a result, the migrating blue and black marlin in particular appear to have more or less given up the idea of swimming along with it past the Coffs Coast.

It’s not too late for a last gap hot marlin bite before the current slows down for the winter and the marlin go back to the tropics, but it’s probably only going to be the irrepressible optimists among us who will be heading out to the edge of the continental shelf this Saturday for one more try…

 **Rick O’Ferrall - www.FromtheFlybridge.com**