

**MILESTONES**

The first word, the first step, the first day of school are all milestones we look forward to sharing with our children as they grow older.

It only seems like yesterday that Austin, now eight-years-old, babbled "Dad! Dad!" in the back seat of the car. Now I am a little sad that my last baby, Bailey is all grown-up after achieving a big milestone.

As well as the standard ones, milestones in our house go something like this: first trip out in the boat (which has taken place at two to six months), first time camping, first time reeling in a fish, first time snorkelling, and the big one — first fish caught independently.

Fishing in 20m of water, Ashley and I were focused on catching a snapper or dhufish for dinner before taking the kids to Rottneest Island for an ice cream and a play on the beach. We have a good arrangement with them and everyone gets a fun day out.

I was being a bit selfish throwing my line in first, but then I helped the boys get their rods ready following numerous requests. Focused

on hooking a fish myself, I quickly baited the whiting rigs that were already on their short little rods, and hoped they might be able to catch the little pickers that were attacking my bait.

At 3½ years, Bailey knows how to hold his rod, open the bail and get his bait to the bottom (well, sometimes, as he is impatient), close the bail, and then generally retrieves the line in haste before a fish has time to see it.

As long as he was happy, I wasn't troubled, and once I had the other kids set up, I would help him to catch a fish while attending to my rod.

Distracted while getting Austin and Cooper organised, I heard Bailey calling for help. There he was, nearly falling overboard, struggling to hold his little rod as he excitedly told me he had a fish.

I managed to get him back on his seat and took some of the weight of the rod while he held it in one hand and wound with the other.

"It's too heavy," he said.

But he already had the fish half way to the boat, so I encouraged him to do it all by himself.

by Emma George



It was probably a five minute fight, fishing very light gear on a minnow rod, but soon we saw a flash of something long and white below the boat.

None of us thought it could be a King George whiting until it was on the surface and Ashley and I rushed to lift it in before it dropped off.

Bailey was beside himself with pride, as were mum and dad. Not normally happy to pose for a picture, He picked up his 50cm King George and held it high for the camera.

It was a beautiful moment and I was so happy we were all there to share it together, as our little boy was now a big fisherman. The only person a bit upset was Austin, as he is normally the one catching good fish. After a string of wrasse and rock cod, it was clear his little brother had outgunned him.



Catching a fish is listed in the National Trust's "50 things every child should experience before they are 11¼".

Once the fish was in the esky, Bailey began to gloat.

"I got a big fish for dinner, Aussie had to throw his back," he repeatedly told anyone that would listen.

I couldn't believe it; at 3½ he was already

starting to trash talk the rest of us who weren't having much success!

After that, he was obsessed with catching more fish and even complained when we had to leave and fulfil our promise of a playground and ice creams.

As it panned out, Bailey ended up being BOB (Best On Boat) and we went home with a lovely feed of KGs for dinner, with his 50cm whiting clearly the fish of the day. Of course he couldn't wait to get to kindy to tell his teacher and friends all about it! **F**



The first step is always an exciting moment in a child's development, but for us, Bailey's first fish caught unassisted was even better.



All grown up, Bailey catches his first fish independently and ticks off a big milestone in style with a 50cm King George whiting.

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