Trudie Trewin is the author of *Camp Croc*, the gripping new title in the Lightning Strikes series. Set in the wilds of far North Queensland, the book follows Daks and his mates on an unexpected adventure at school camp. Packed with hair-raising encounters with crocodiles, snakes — and two very nasty wildlife smugglers — *Camp Croc* is guaranteed to keep you glued to your seat!

**5 MINUTE Q & A**

My favourite colour is: **Turquoise.**

Five things I love are: A thunderstorm at the end of a hot day, the moon landing, a full moon rising over the ocean, laughing, and disaster movies.

Five things I hate are: Cold days, cold nights, broccoli, the first paragraph of all my first drafts, and real disasters.

My perfect meal would be: Freshly caught and cooked lobster, with salad and crusty bread.

I sometimes worry about: What the back of my ears look like.

If I had a time machine: I would go back to about 1990 and write the Harry Potter series before JK Rowling did!

I wish I had: A singing voice better than a strangled galah.

I wish I hadn’t: Been singing a Katy Perry song at the top of my voice, without music, when the parcel man appeared at the door last week!

My favorite movie is: Apollo 13.

I would like to meet: Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

My perfect day would be: One where my boys don’t fight, the cat doesn’t bite me, the computer understands what I’m trying to do, nobody rings up wanting me to change phone companies, and I like everything I write.

If I wasn’t a writer: I would probably have more money!
What inspired you to write *Camp Croc*?

A couple of years ago a lady went for a morning swim at one of our local beaches (in the stinger enclosure) and bumped into what she thought was a log. On closer inspection, the “log” blinked at her, and she realised she was face to face with a 3 metre crocodile! She hightailed it back to the beach at a speed Ian Thorpe would be proud of.

I read about this in the local paper, and for days I couldn’t stop wondering what it would feel like to be so close to a croc in its prime hunting environment. To find out, I figured I could either jump into the nearest croc-infested river, or write a scene about it.

It was too cold for swimming that day, so I decided the writing option was more attractive! Daks was the character that ended up bursting out of the water (minus his pants) in my scene, and I knew then that a character who had been through that ordeal deserved a whole story!

You live in Far North Queensland near where *Camp Croc* is set, and your passion for the area shines through in the novel. What is it about the place that appeals to you most?

The beauty of it. I grew up in an area that in the summer looked like an over-baked biscuit, and here everything is lush and green. Having said that, I know there are many beautiful places in Australia, so I guess the weather here has as much appeal for me as the scenery. I hate the cold (any temp under 22 degrees), so I love that I can wake up in summer and jump straight into the pool, and do the same thing late at night. And we have the best rain – not cold needle rain like down south, but big fat rain that just begs to be played in!

*Camp Croc* focuses on events at a school camp. Did you go on camps when you were at school? Were they anything like *Camp Croc*?

I went on a couple of school camps, but I can hardly remember anything about them – so they mustn’t have been at all like *Camp Croc*! Most of what I know about school camps comes from listening to my boys talk about theirs. Waaaay back when I went to school, we didn’t get to do anywhere near as much fun stuff as they do now!

What are your strongest memories of school?

I am tempted to say studying and working hard, just in case my kids read this! But in reality, it’s the friends and teachers that stand out most in my memory, and the games like hopscotch, skipping and elastics. Some events stand out in particular – like doing a somersault halfway through my 100 metre sprint on sports day (Well, I was halfway, everyone else was almost finished. I did it because I needed a better excuse to come last by such a large margin than just being really, really slow!). Being crowned Queen of the Continental in Year 9 (the Continental was the name of our annual fundraiser) complete with sceptre, cape and crown! Being told I would never get a boyfriend because I had no calf muscles (luckily leg warmers were all the rage back then, so I could hide my hideous skinny calves at social events).
A CHAT WITH
TRUDIE TREWIN

The book features many nail-biting encounters with dangerous creatures – both animal and human! What’s the most frightening encounter you’ve had?

While hiking with a friend one day, we turned a corner and found ourselves staring straight at a giant cassowary. We only knew two things about cassowaries: that their claws could rip you open with one kick of their strong legs, and if confronted by one, the general advice was to stand still, grab a stick and hold it above your head so you appear taller than them. We did that for about two seconds before deciding cassowaries weren’t that stupid then we ran for our lives!

One of the characters in Camp Croc is a teacher called Mr Longbottom. Was he based on anyone in particular? Are there any teachers from school you remember particularly well?

I had a friend in school whose last name was Longbottom, but apart from borrowing the name, he wasn’t based on any particular teacher. A couple of teachers from school stand out in my memory: my lovely grade one teacher, Miss Wilson. Some friends and I were innocently hiding behind the water tank one lunchtime and we just happened to see her kissing her fiancé. We whispered about that kiss all term! I also remember my Year 12 Biology teacher, Mr Rudy Waclawick, who didn’t deserve the treatment we gave him – but really, Daks is right, people with funny names just shouldn’t be teachers!

Do you have a particular routine you use when you write?

I wish I did! Every year I begin with a vow to structure my time more efficiently, but it goes to pot by about March! Generally, I will try to get any little jobs out of the way first thing in the morning then get writing. If I’m working on a story that is still in the concept stage, I’ll usually carry it around in my head while I do non-writing related tasks, because ideas and plot lines often sneak up and surprise me when I least expect. Once I’m at the stage of actually writing the story, I’ll usually do the first draft outside on the laptop, then do rewrites and edits inside in the office.

Daks, the main character of Camp Croc makes many humorous observations throughout the book. What would Daks say to an aspiring writer?

“Daks’s facts No. 4:
If there’s any embarrassing story in your past, you can try and tell it yourself, but your mates will always take over and make it sound even worse than it really was.”

If your mum says your story is great, ignore her and keep rewriting. Because let’s face it, we’re talking about the same woman who once looked at a piece of paper with three splodges of paint, a squiggle, and a blob on it, declared it to be a masterpiece and proudly stuck it on the fridge.”

Learn more about Camp Croc and the other Lightning Strikes books at: www.lightningstrikes.com.au