

the tight line[®]



Vol 7



Kalantis

Nthn Silver Ash

West Red Cedar

Balsa

Kauri Pine

Silver Silkwood

Lignum vitae

Kauri

Yellow Cedar

*The Tight Line Vol 7
Jigging The Tropics*

Australian Lure show

The Lighter Side

NZ Troutling



Gamphor Laurel

Hoop Pine

Silky Oak

Tas Myrtle

Cheesewood

Chinese Elm

Rosewood

Chilean Myrtle

Basswood

The Tight Line Vol 7

There's no getting around it, so I'll mention it right at the beginning.

It has been a long time since the last Tight Line mag came out... Ok, a very long time. Apologies to those who have waited and especially to the authors wondering when their articles were ever going to see the light of day.

Well, here it is! In this issue we have a review of the Australian Lure Expo at Fernvale last year, which was a fantastic event showcasing Australian lure making talent. It also ties in with the fact that this years bigger and better show is coming up soon. The show is on the 8-9th of June in Fernvale QLD. See lureshow.com.au for more information, it is sure to be a huge weekend with a mind boggling array of Australian lures on show.

One thing that has really become common again in recent years is the use of ultra light tackle. Prior to the

introduction of braid, it was common to see anglers fishing 1, 2 or 3kg line for all sorts of species. Under the influence of the ANSA sport fishing club scene, everything from stingrays to billfish were targeted on ultra light lines. Whether it was the decline in the popularity of club fishing or the arrival of braid lines with their high strength to diameter ratios, the light line scene went dormant for a while. Now things have come full circle and it is again common to see anglers fishing light braid, mono and fluorocarbon lines for all sorts of species. Angus Gorrie's article in this issue gives a great insight into methods and techniques available to the light line angler.

Craig Ashdown has spent plenty of time over the last few seasons travelling to New Zealand for the brilliant trout fishing on offer there. In this article he details his experiences with a group of mates on a trip to the North Island during cicada season.

Lastly for this issue, I have written an article about jigging the tropics for reef species as well as pelagics. For a long time, jigging in Australia revolved around fishing for southern species. More recently there has been a lot of interest in jigging the tropical reefs, and some pretty spectacular fishing

has resulted. This article gives you the lowdown on some of the species, techniques and gear for this addictive form of fishing. Next issue we plan to have some more nuts and bolts information about tackle and rigging for jigging, so keep an eye out for that and a whole lot more in the next Issue.



Tight Lines

Duncan

O'Connell

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The Australian Lure Expo 2012

Fernvale QLD

The Australian cottage lure industry has been through plenty of ups and downs over the years. With the popularity and quality of imported lures these days, it would be easy to think that there was no need for the hand made lure. In fact the opposite appears to be true. Whether it be for a specific action, colour, shape or simply as an objet d'art, the level of interest is definitely on the rise. The internet and the many niche forums around have allowed lure designers and aficionados to communicate and trade ideas and wares more easily than ever. Australian lure fanatic and owner of fishing forum Sweetwaterfishing.com.au Garry 'Fitzy' Fitzgerald, decided to bring some of these craftspeople together to showcase the amazing talent there is among Australian lure makers. The result was the Australian Lure Expo - a celebration of old and new lures and their makers which packed out the hall at Fernvale in the last weekend of July.

Kezza Lures

The following pages show just a slice of what was on offer along with a few of the stories of the lure makers. This years show promises to be bigger and better so check out lureshow.com.au for all the information!

Scott Anderson of Nutterjuck lures has a uncompromising philosophy: "Simple. Done well". His minimalist approach to lure making earned him the Lure of the Year award at the show. The striking and original designs really stood out, particularly as he works only with black and white paint. There are no fancy finishes or superfluous decoration save for a handful of 'marbled' black & white models. Scott's influences range from Japanese retro topwater bass lures to classic American saltwater plugs. His designs are versatile, suited to everything creek bass to large mulloway and kingfish.

"Lure
of the Year"

2012

AN LURE EXPO





Left: Kezza Lures
by Kerry Urlich



Tom and Natalie Barrett of Gidgee lures have been hard at work on their latest design, the Ripple Cray. Should be a great lure for digging the depths in the dams for bass and yellowbelly or slow rolling across rocks and timber in the rivers. The Brisbane based couple make some awesome timber lures and by the time you read this, they should be hard at work on a new lure for Fish Head

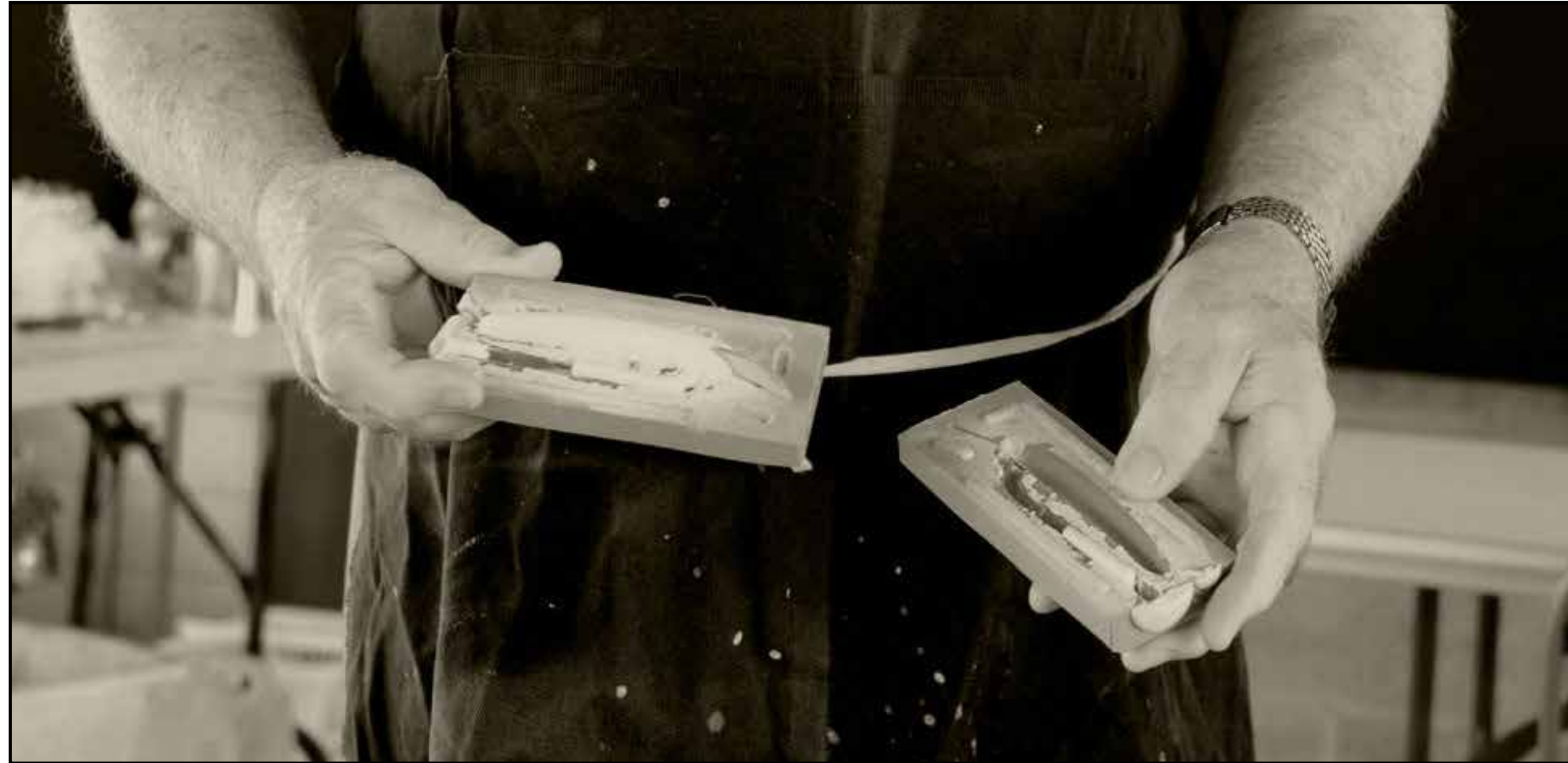
Right: a Rob Gaden anniversary box set makes a stunning addition to any lure collectors wall



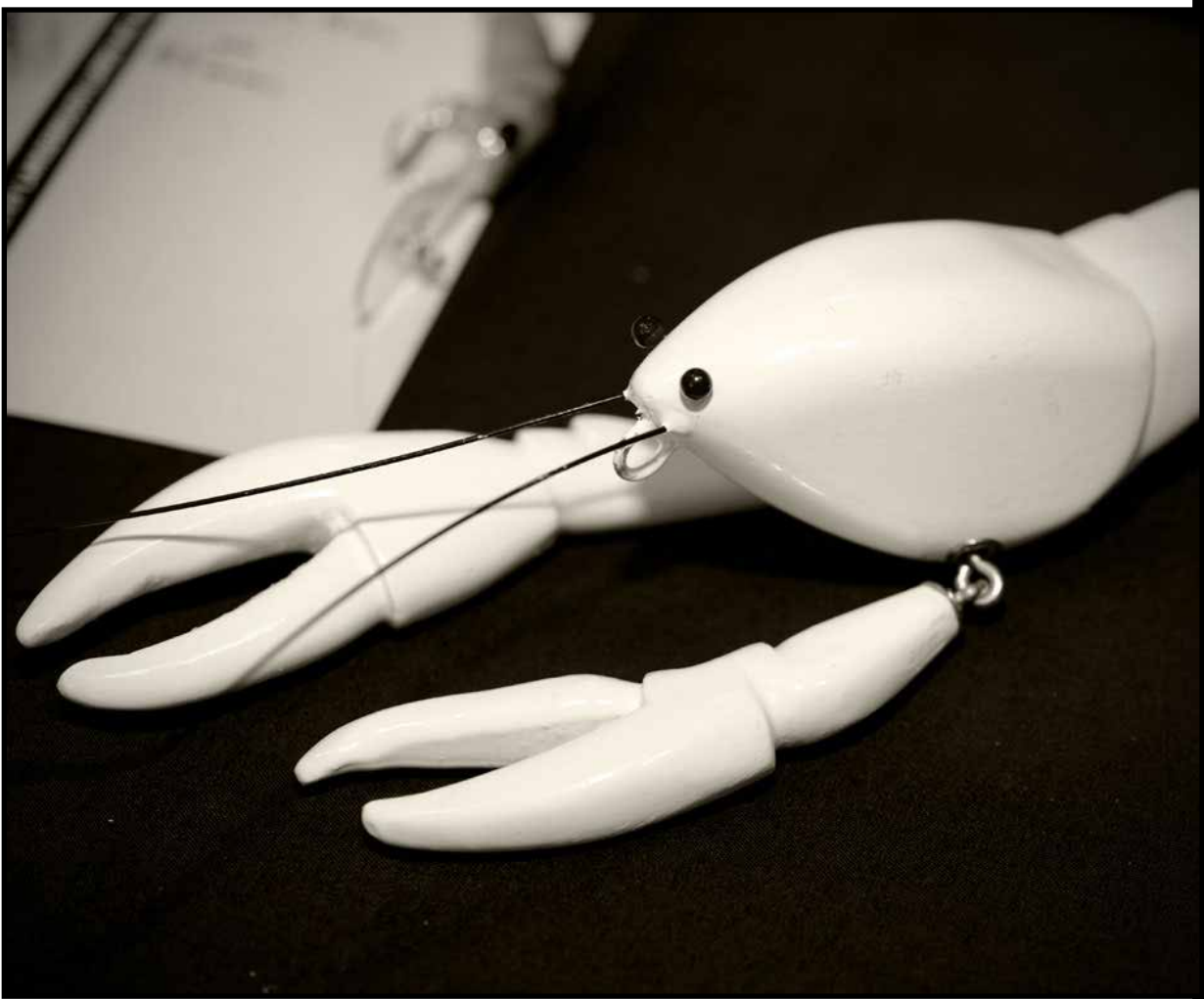
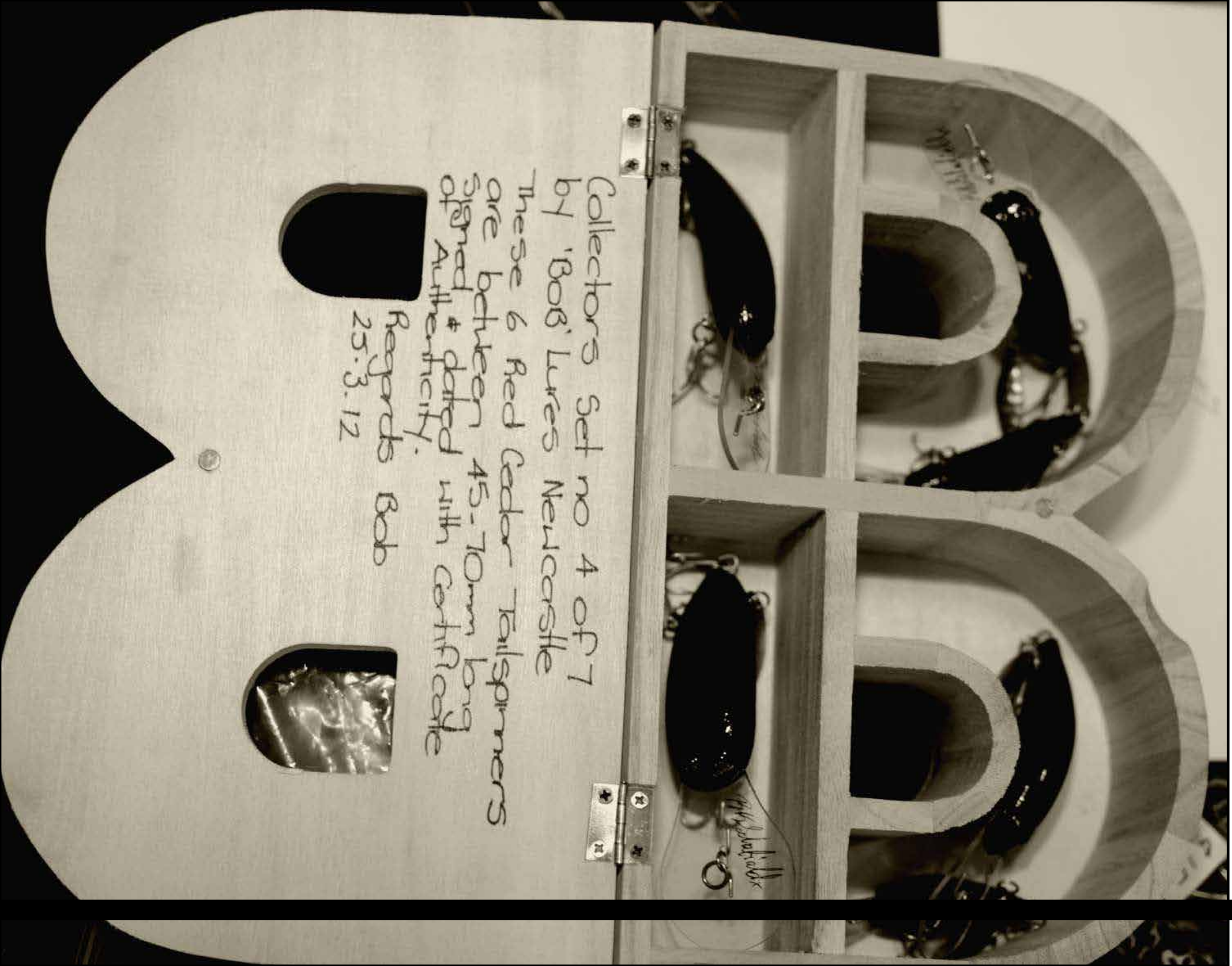


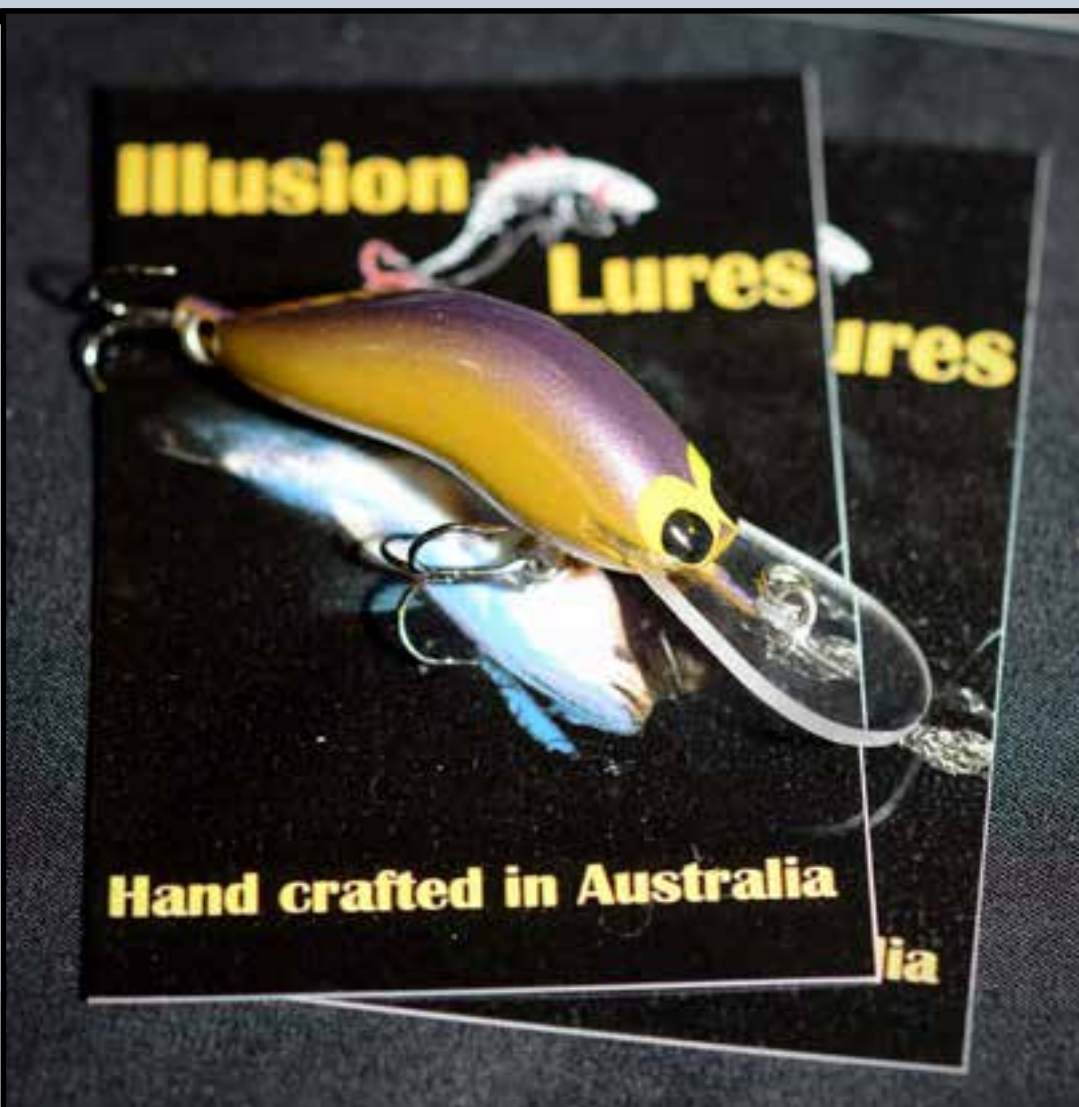
There was plenty of cool stuff on the Deep River stand





Kev Horsey demonstrating lure moulding techniques





Wal and Sam came down from their home at Georgetown in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Wal's Illusion Lures were first designed for catching Bream, Bass and Jewies on the NSW North Coast, where they had a formidable reputation. They have since adapted well to their new home, racking up many big barra, jacks and sooties. The main problem we had was finding enough of them to photograph. By the time we made it to the stand, much of the stock they brought down had already found new homes across Australia.



North QLD's Gavin Marshall makes these stunning barra lures in a huge range of colours. A born and bred North Queenslander, He's been fishing and playing around with lures for over 30 years, but it's only in the last couple of years that he has turned his hand to timber lure making. With the help of another luremaker, Keith Boys, he developed and refined his technique until ending up with the handcrafted beauties you see here.



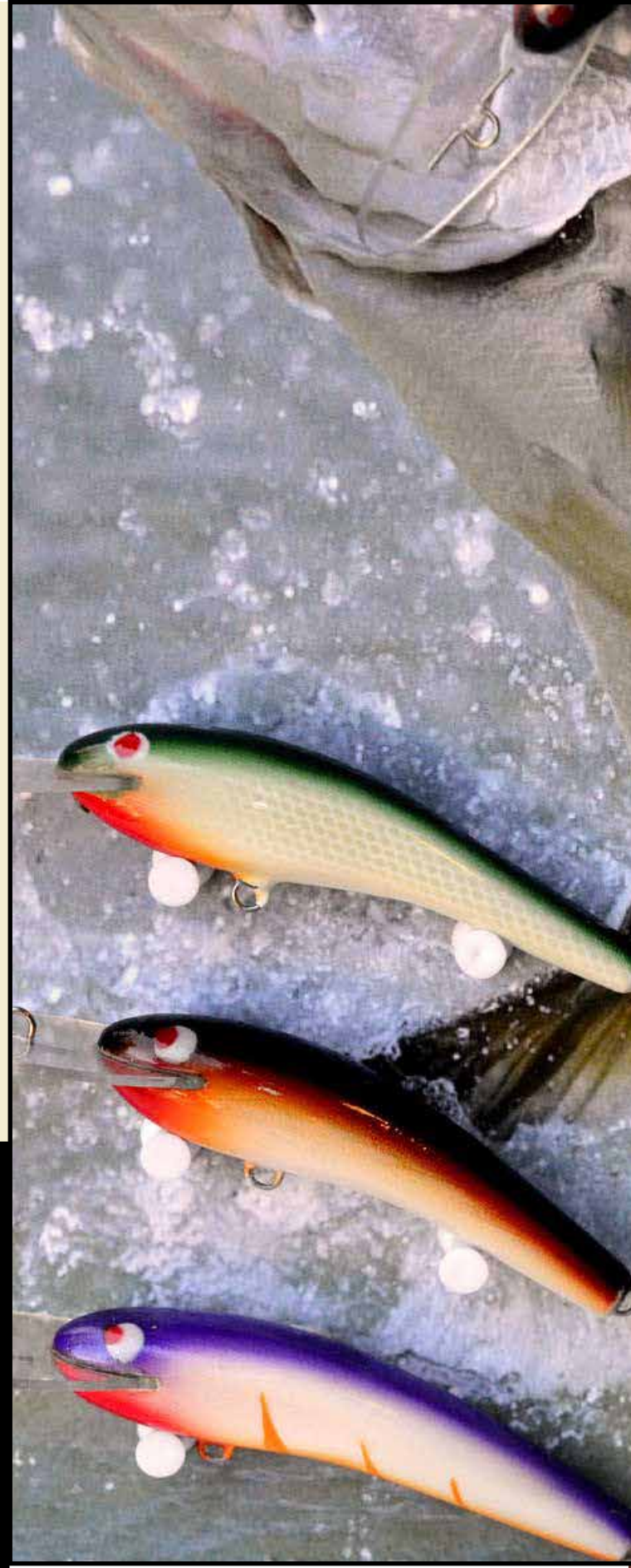


Ollie Hardt's Stingray Lures were a standout for many at the lure Expo. As well as designing a 'regular' range of lures, these stunning works of art were also on display. The menagerie included Cuttlefish, Crays, shrimps, cicadas and more.





Jono and Helen Wicks are the lure making team behind HJ lures Jono has been lure fishing the Hinchinbrook area for many years and this interest has recently developed into lure building. Helen actually does most of the work, doing most of the cutting, sanding and painting, while Jono set eyelets and bibs as well as swim testing the lures. Jono also gets to do most of the lure testing: a pretty sweet deal, we think!



Jason Nicholson didn't have an airbrush when he started making Nichos Lures, so he painstakingly painted them with a brush. Plenty of people advised him that he needed to switch to airbrushing his lures if he ever wanted to get a professional finish. Luckily for us he stuck with a brush because these are some of the coolest finishes I have seen on lures in a long time



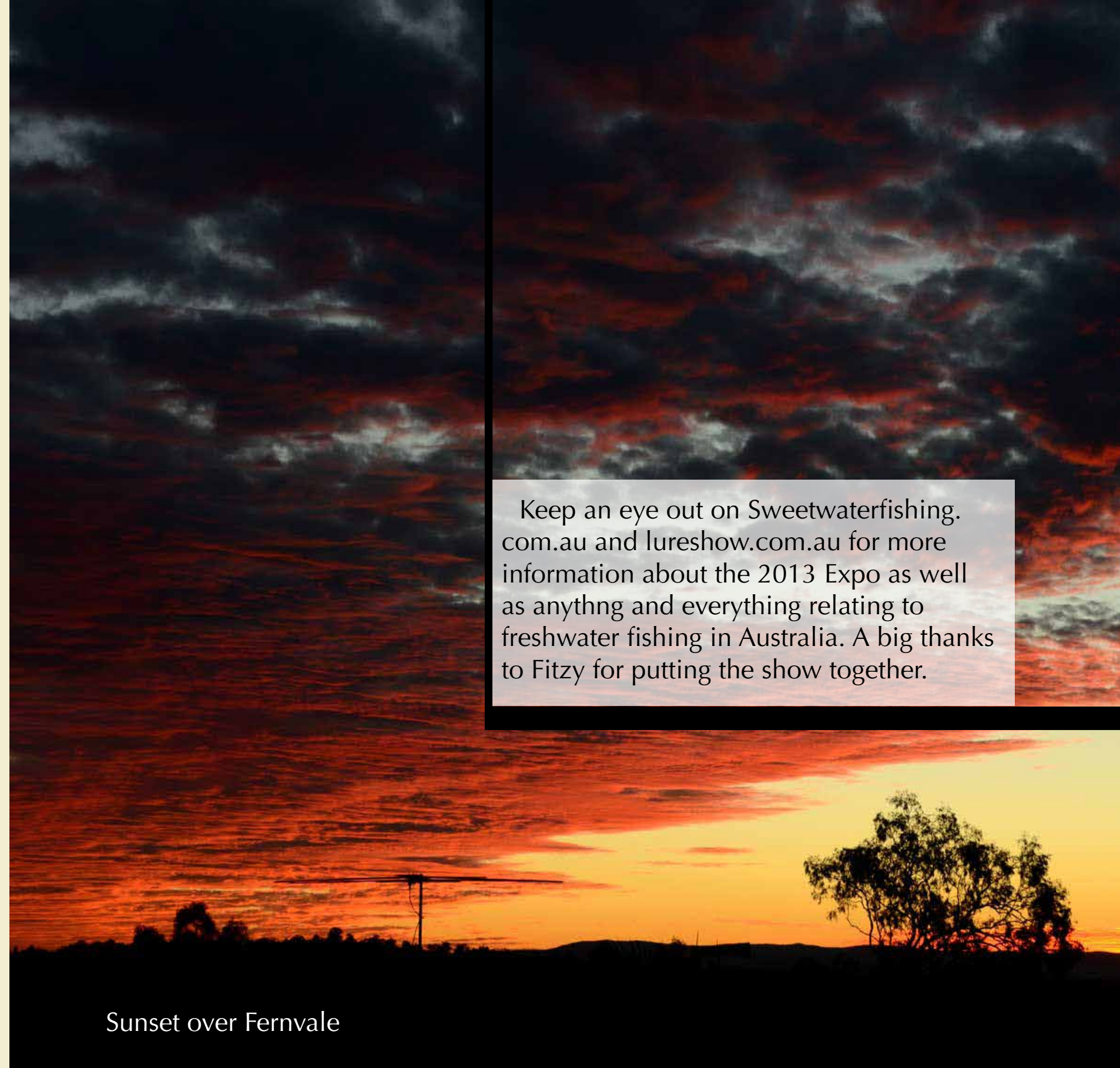


Chris Sinclair began making lures in the mid 80's after discovering the wild bass population of the Brisbane River. Although the first lures caught more catfish than bass, Chris kept at it over the years. A mate once described one of his lures as 'flamin ugly' and hence Fugley's Lures were born. The examples of Chris' work shown here are anything but ugly and have pride of place in many lure collections. The Bite series of lures depicting gory injuries were a big hit at the Lure Expo for many (myself included).





BTD Lures drew a lot of attention with these show stoppers!



Keep an eye out on Sweetwaterfishing.com.au and lureshow.com.au for more information about the 2013 Expo as well as anything and everything relating to freshwater fishing in Australia. A big thanks to Fitzy for putting the show together.

Sunset over Fernvale

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Model	Length	Line Class	Cast Weight
Lalandi	7'11"	PE 5-8	Max 170g
Topshot GT	7'11"	PE 6-10	Max 250g
Banshee H	7'0"	PE 2-4	Max 60g

Synit Deepshot Jigging Rods

Model	Length	Line Class	Jig Weight
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150	5'5"	PE 3-4	100-250g
250	5'3"	PE 3-6	180-400g
350	5'2"	PE 4-8	250-450g
450	5'2"	PE 5-10	300-550g
Seriola	5'1"	PE 6-10	180-450g

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The Lighter Side

Angus Gorrie

The Lighter Side...

The term 'finesse fishing' gets thrown around fairly liberally these days with the common theme being of course, light line. Most anglers limit their outlook of what quantifies as finesse to that typical 4lb and under spectrum... I would however argue that true finesse fishing is dictated by the respective fish being targeted, as opposed to gear being used. For example, 20lb braid, while not typically considered finesse, would be, if the target species were 20kg+ GT's! It is with this view of finesse fishing that the general points and principles of this article will be construed.

Finesse fishing has seen somewhat of a golden age in recent years with more and more anglers being concerned not so much with a full bucket, but with the thrill of the chase. The tournament bream scene has certainly spurred on this revolution with a requirement to fish specific, often heavily fished locations for spooky and cunning fish. But outside of a competition scenario, why would an

angler intentionally put themselves into a situation where they are potentially under gunned? Finesse fishing adds both a competitive edge and utter exhilaration to the fishing experience that, like any extreme sport, can only be understood by active participation. These two fundamentals (competitive edge and exhilaration) form the logic that dictates the pedagogy and application for this form of fishing.



That Competitive Edge

Finesse fishing really comes into its own in locations that experience higher pressure from anglers. Heavier leaders restrict smaller profile lures from moving in the way the designers intended. Fish that inhabit highly fished areas may not

be cluey enough to pick a lure as a lure, but they are certainly more cautious. Tiny discrepancies in movement caused both by leader cutting through the water and a slightly encumbered lure can be enough to make a fish reconsider and chase something seemingly more 'natural'. Light leaders in contrary, allow for total freedom of movement as well as lower visibility. By



no means are these two factors always required, but you will be a happier angler when you are the only one on the water employing a finesse approach on the day when they are needed!

It is important to break the mindset that these tactics are reserved for small fish species (bream etc) only. Long Tail Tuna for example are renowned for their habit of ignoring heavier rigs in favour of more delicately presented offerings. In short, finesse angling gives an angler the ability to present a desirable lure when larger ones are not working. Many SE QLD Long Tails that enter Moreton Bay feed on bait fish known as 'eyes'. These baitfish tend to be around the 2-3cm size range. Frustratingly for some anglers, when they are set on feeding on eyes, they tend to ignore almost any large plastics or slugs thrown their way. To imitate one of these eyes, anglers often successfully employ either 2 inch plastics or small (14 gram) metal slugs. To successfully deploy these lighter options the heavier rods and line classes

need to be retired for a more finesse option.

The ability to better 'match the hatch' using finesse gear has extensive applications that are often not utilised. On a recent Darwin trip we found ourselves doing it tough on Barra and needed a change of tactics. "Jelly Prawns" are a common food source for many predatory fish right around Australia and on this particular day, they were flicking all around us. Now anyone who has fished The Territory will appreciate the fact that 'small' lures up there tend to be 80-100mm and this approach was just not working. Luckily we had brought our 2-4g rods and 1000 size reels. Gear like this is rarely applied in the various mangrove estuaries surrounding Darwin. However, it proved our saving grace with numerous Barra falling victim to 40mm lures, flicked right into the shallows. This tactic and ultimate success was only made possible by using the finesse approach.



Exhilaration and the Challenge

Aside from obvious advantages in hooking fish to begin with, the other notable reason for the ultra-light finesse approach is exhilaration and the challenge. This is strictly not an applicable reason for those anglers who get disgruntled at occasionally losing a fish, but for those out there that love a doubled over rod and a screaming drag...

This is the motivation for you!

For a growing number of anglers, fishing has become more about challenge and pushing the boundaries. This attitude can be summed up as something like...

“Sure, you ‘can’ target bream successfully on 8lb line with a limited chance of getting snapped off... but I wonder if I can do it with 2lb?” This desire to test the boundaries is an exceptional way to get more out of your fishing experience. Not only do you

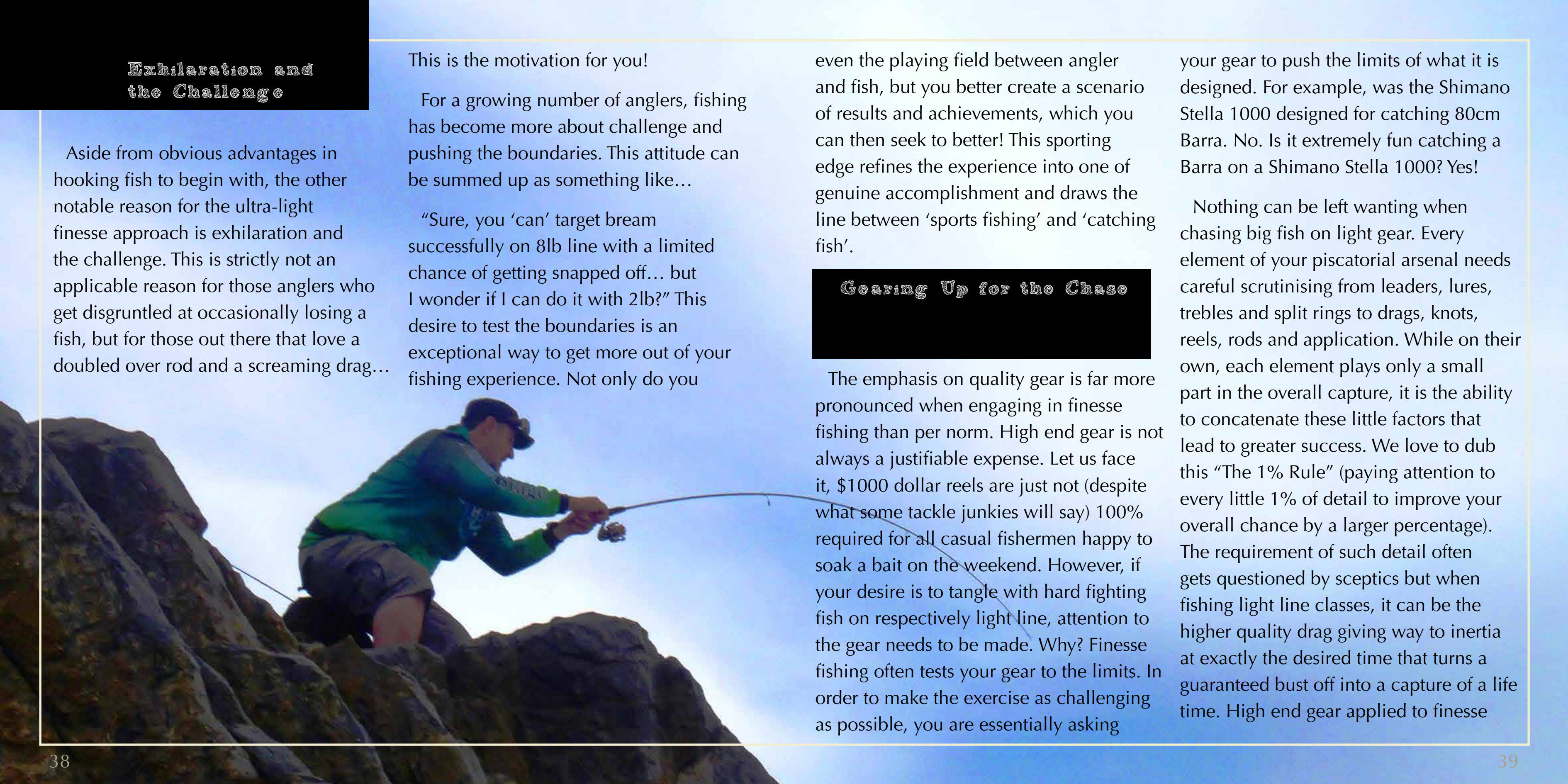
even the playing field between angler and fish, but you better create a scenario of results and achievements, which you can then seek to better! This sporting edge refines the experience into one of genuine accomplishment and draws the line between ‘sports fishing’ and ‘catching fish’.

Gearing Up for the Chase

The emphasis on quality gear is far more pronounced when engaging in finesse fishing than per norm. High end gear is not always a justifiable expense. Let us face it, \$1000 dollar reels are just not (despite what some tackle junkies will say) 100% required for all casual fishermen happy to soak a bait on the weekend. However, if your desire is to tangle with hard fighting fish on respectively light line, attention to the gear needs to be made. Why? Finesse fishing often tests your gear to the limits. In order to make the exercise as challenging as possible, you are essentially asking

your gear to push the limits of what it is designed. For example, was the Shimano Stella 1000 designed for catching 80cm Barra. No. Is it extremely fun catching a Barra on a Shimano Stella 1000? Yes!

Nothing can be left wanting when chasing big fish on light gear. Every element of your piscatorial arsenal needs careful scrutinising from leaders, lures, trebles and split rings to drags, knots, reels, rods and application. While on their own, each element plays only a small part in the overall capture, it is the ability to concatenate these little factors that lead to greater success. We love to dub this “The 1% Rule” (paying attention to every little 1% of detail to improve your overall chance by a larger percentage). The requirement of such detail often gets questioned by sceptics but when fishing light line classes, it can be the higher quality drag giving way to inertia at exactly the desired time that turns a guaranteed bust off into a capture of a life time. High end gear applied to finesse





fishing eventually pays for itself anyway. The simple fact is, quality gear can put up with more, for longer. If you are intending to push your gear to its absolute limits, by splashing out early on, you will certainly save yourself multiple replacements and upgrades and possibly save yourself the heart ache of a few lost fish!

Finesse Tactics and Techniques

Finesse fishing is not all about the gear, but also opens up a range of tactics and strategies not always available with heavier gear. These tactics can be pivotal when chasing cautious fish, or just simply to get a lure into the strike zone. Skip casting for example is made infinitely easier with ultra-light gear, especially as the ideal lures to skip cast are extremely light weight plastics. Skip casting is the process of skimming a lightly weighted plastic, across the surface with the goal of hitting right up against the rim of a pontoon or wall. From the fish's perspective, the plastic then appears

to have fallen off said structure, and being lightly weighted then wafts through the water column like a crustacean or mollusc that has become detached from its purchase. This very occurrence is a mouth-watering opportunity for most canal bream and this tactic often pays dividends! This process is far less efficient with heavier more cumbersome gear which causes many plastics to splash in the water or not find their mark making the whole effort redundant in its clumsiness. Tactics wise, accuracy is king. Finesse gear dramatically improves your accuracy.

Toothy critters are also a consideration when using ultra-light gear. A lot of anglers dismiss outright, the notion of targeting certain species such as tailor on light line due to their ability and quite frankly, the likelihood of the bite off. The easiest solution in these situations is to use what is known as a tippet. A tippet is essentially a smaller length of heavier leader added to last 5cm or so and connecting to your jig head or lure. A well placed and tied tippet will neither add much visually to





your rig, nor reduce the overall exhilaration of the fight which will still be primarily conducted on the merit of the main line. The creation of this heavier buffer will however dramatically reduce the chance of bite off. Using light lines also tends to prolong the fight time for any capture. Thus another benefit of a tippet is in its ability to suffer through more abrasion from the fish's mouth brought about by this longer fight.

Overall, there are copious reasons why one would choose a finesse option to enhance their fishing experience. These not only include the thrill of the chase but also the increased opportunity to hook fish. With the afore mentioned tactics employed, not only will you have the chance to snare that fish of a lifetime but also be given an adrenaline rush to rival the greatest of extreme sports.



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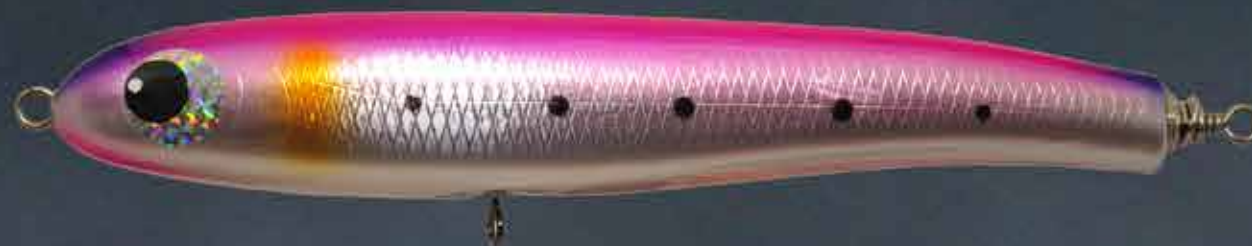
BABY PAT 200-65

200MM 65 GRAMS FLOATING



FAT PAT (UW) 220-160

220MM 160 GRAMS SINKING



FAT PAT 240-110

240MM 110 GRAMS FLOATING



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Promises Promises

By Craig Ashdown





The cast was delicate and the drift looked to be perfect.

The dry fly settled on the water about two rod lengths in front of the fish.

I was mighty pleased with myself as two big rainbows sat in the current, unknowing of the fly drifting towards them.

I settled in expectation – a self-satisfied feeling that was quickly broken.

“Nah brew, ya’ gotta drop it on its hid,” the guide said, clearly agitated at what I thought was a great presentation.

You have to love New Zealand. A country where the English language is butchered and the distinctive accent makes us Aussies sound positively posh.

Of course, you should always listen

to your guide. The drift was perfect and despite a very positive look, there was no take.

Instead, as instructed, I lifted the fly and dropped it about a metre in front of its “hid”. The big dry fly landed with a splat and the smaller 6-pound fish was shouldered out of the way, as a good 8-pounder surged up and gobbled the fly.

Welcome to cicada season – New Zealand style!

It had taken us a few days to get used to how to fish cicadas. Our trout experience had been developed on the spooky fish of the Eastern New England tablelands in New South Wales and you certainly didn’t splat flies down there. You fish Humpies, Royal Wullfs and Elk Hair Caddis. You throw them up in to the riffles and let feisty rainbows chase them down. Or you use long, fine leaders and delicate presentations to browns sitting at the back of pools.

We had started this week-long trip to the North Island throwing size 10 Humpies around. At the time they looked huge. We only put on the (to us) enormous cicada imitations when we saw fish rising.

It wasn’t until I fished that iconic big





water; the Tongariro River, that slapping cicadas became a technique. Even then it took a couple of hours to get in to the groove. After a few hours of heavy nymphing I changed tactics and began wading the heavy Tongariro water to get in casting range of the riffles. There the water rose up in shock-waves, almost turning over into white caps.

It was down the edges of these that I started to find fish. Fish that triggered to the sound of a cicada slapping down on the water. Sometimes the fly would barely have time to land before a silver submarine would slam up under it. Sometimes the fly would be flung across the water, other times it would be gulped down and the fight began.

They weren't huge fish, but three and four-pounders in water like the Tongariro certainly put on a fight. Each is a strongly etched memory in my mind. It was certainly unexpected that a river I generally associated with bombing and glo-bugs, would serve up such an experience as those fish provided in their eagerness to nail a cicada.

The water we were now fishing was so different to the Tongariro. Not loud and

forceful, but overgrown and slightly tannin stained - more of a flow than a rush of water.

Think Eastern New England and you have the size of stream; just up the size and population of fish. And the further upstream we moved, the bigger the fish got.

The pool we were currently fishing was viewed from above. There were six of us, including the guide – and we looked down from a three metre cutting on to these beautiful big rainbows. Cruising around like great big silver footballs.

With the bigger fish now hooked, the hushed reverence of the pre-take crowd had turned to loud laughter and jeers. From the atmosphere of a pulpit to the rowdiness of The Hill at the Sydney Cricket Ground in the time it takes for a trout to eat a cicada imitation slapped on its head.

The fish was strong and fit and soon had me buried under a fallen tree, from which the leader did not survive.



As the line pulled free there was silence.

We stood around looking at each other in open-mouthed, wide-eyed amazement, and then it was laughs and back slapping all around.

And so began one of those fishing sessions that sits in your mind and feeds your soul. We spotted, stalked and cast cicadas to a multitude of fish for the rest of the afternoon. Large dries would slap on the water, and as long as they were in the field of vision of the trout, it would rise unhesitatingly to gobble the fly. Sometimes they were landed, sometimes they were not. Sometimes they would be in open pools, other times they were hard up under overhangs.

For two of the anglers, it was the first time they had seen fish take a dry, let alone their first time catching fish on the dry. For the





rest of us, it was a cross over between the aggressiveness of Australian bass, with the beauty and accessibility of a small trout stream.

It was an unexpected boon at the end of a trip. The week had not been easy, and the expected highlight had turned out to be a lot less. We had arranged to raft down the Mohaka River, in to the steep gorge and canyon for which there is no other access.

We boarded the rafts with expectations high and wearing wetsuits and helmets – not your usual fishing attire. Pretty soon the helmets proved their worth – with one of the party getting lazy on the back-cast and slamming a set of bombing nymphs in to the back of his helmeted head. There was much laughter all round as he turned to see what the noise was.

But early in the drift we came around a bend to be greeted with the sight of a giant slip - probably 400m wide and 30m deep. The whole steep hillside on the outside of the bend had washed in to the river only a month or so before, damming the river for a day, before it all gave way in a mighty wash. It was pretty clear after the slip that it had sand-blasted the river clean. Next to no algae or weeds grew in the river, and

sand filled all the quiet spots. We fished some beautiful water on the way down, for not a sign of a fish. Our expectations of backcountry rafting bliss had been dashed by the savage nature of New Zealand weather. It is not called “the land of the long, white cloud” for nothing.

And so instead, the guide took us to this new stream, a favourite of his not fished this season. A small stream that looks terrible from the road so most people simply ignore it.

Of such string of events are memories made – and so are promises. Promises to return to New Zealand in summer with more cicada flies. And a promise to listen to the guide.



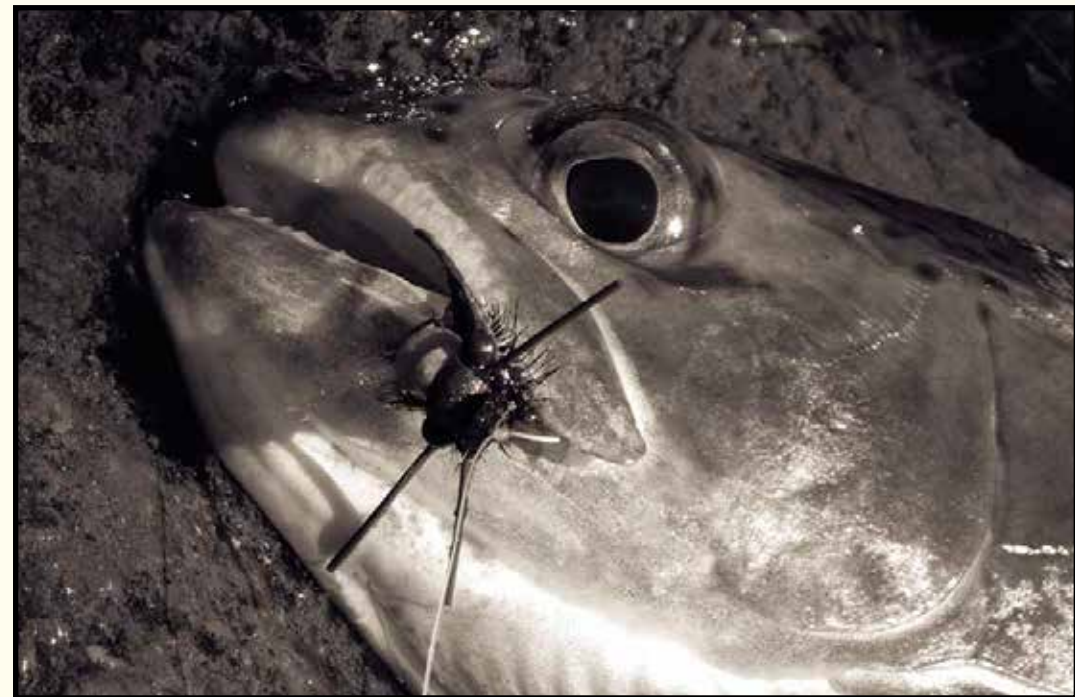
NZ Cicada Fishing

Cicadas hatch regularly in New Zealand throughout summer, depending on the weather. The summer of 2011-12 was wet and mild, but still managed a struggling cicada season.

This style of fishing calls for gentlemen's hours. It takes the sun getting up, warming and drying for a few hours, before the cicadas start taking to wing and the fish switch to them. For us, it wasn't until later in the afternoon that the fish really started looking up and responding to the splat.

We fished rods ranging from five-weights up to eight-weights. It all depended on how far you wanted to cast. A 6-weight is a good all-rounder. Standard nine-foot tapered leaders are fine. We fished six-pound leader most of the time, and probably could have gone up to eight-pound easily enough.

As well as casting to sighted fish, a good number of fish were caught blind fishing likely areas. Some of the fish came from surprisingly deep down to slurp a cicada off the top.



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“Can you catch fish on jigs up North?”

Is a question that I have been asked reasonably often over the last few years. While the answer may seem obvious when you think about it, it is not quite so obvious as that other question that still pops up from time to time: “Do those plastic baits actually work?”

Not so much is spoken in Australia about metal jigs in the tropics. Volumes have been written about kingfish and samsons, the mainstay of the southern jig fishery. A fair bit has been added in recent seasons on southern demersal species like snapper, pearl perch and dhufish too. Tropical reefs on the other hand are generally the domain of bait and (more recently) plastics fishers, however, jigging is an extremely effective technique.

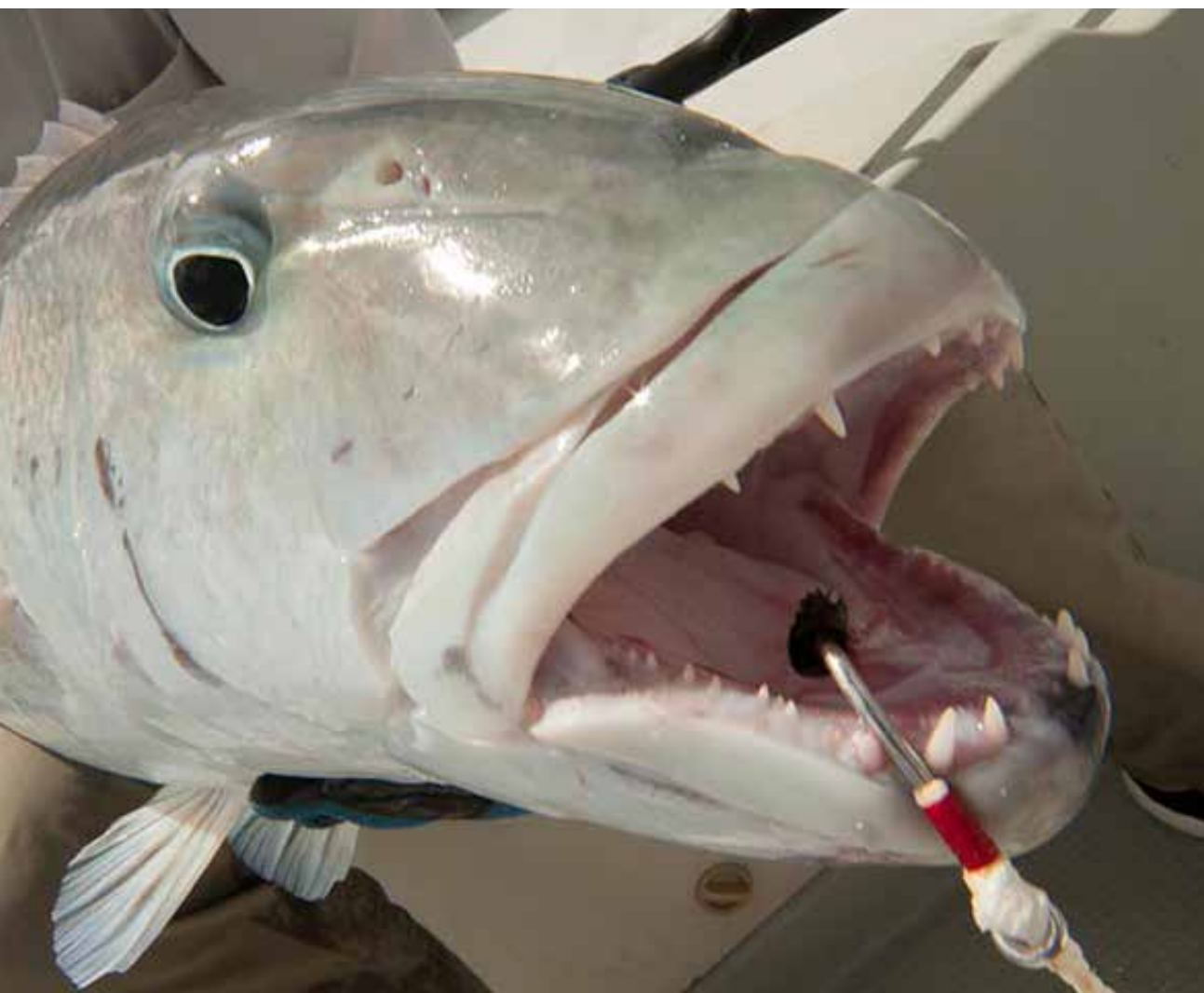
One of the good things about fishing tropical reefs is the level of aggression seem to go up a notch when compared to southern fisheries. There are days when the fish can get a little cagey, but you’re never left wondering whether you just had a bite or not. Most creatures on the reef have reasonable size mouths and when they decide to eat, you know all about it.

In terms of what to catch, it is pretty much wide open - everything from pesky small lutjanids to big pelagics will eat a jig depending on how and where you fish

Demersal Fish

Those species that usually live and feed near the bottom, make up the majority of the fish that anglers usually target on the reefs. We’re talking coral trout, various emperor species, cod, jobfish and so on. They all love to eat jigs worked slowly around the bottom.

A typical retrieve for the bottom dwellers is



The business end of a green jobfish to drop the jig to the bottom, then quickly lift the lure up about a metre to avoid snagging on the reef. Then I just hold the lure still for 5-10 seconds. This gives fish that have watched the jig fall an opportunity to sneak up and strike at the lure. It doesn't seem to matter that the lure is not moving, in fact they often prefer to eat when it is still. If

no bites are forthcoming, then little slow hops and winds, just enough to get the lure shimmying and flicking to the side works well. Throwing in another 5 second pause every so often is handy too. Once the lure has reached 5-10m off the bottom, drop the jig back down and repeat the process. Some days a faster more aggressive retrieve will work better and there are times when the trout and red bass will travel a long way up the water column in pursuit of

a jig. In general though, most of the action occurs close to the bottom and especially within the first few hops and winds. Try not to waste too much time jigging in mid-water if all the action is close to the bottom.

Once the fish is hooked up, it is important to get it away from the treacherous reef as quickly as possible. Actually, more

than that: just get it in the boat as fast as you can. There are a couple of reasons for this; Firstly, most fish on the reef fight dirty. Given any opportunity, they will be down a hole or under a bommie in a flash. Heavier tackle can help but there are occasions where structure like cave and big pinnacles conspire to make extracting even small fish a challenge. Secondly, once the fish is away from the bottom, sharks are the next main obstacle. Other than landing the fish in the quickest possible time, there's not much you can do if a big noah takes a liking to your trophy trout or emperor. Some days they just take the odd fish, while on other days sharks can force you to change spots regularly. For some reason they take a liking to certain species. I think I've seen more green jobfish get the short back and sides treatment than any other

species, while GT's mostly get left alone. I say 'mostly' because every so often a GT will get absolutely destroyed in a foaming mess at the side of the boat. Maybe the Geet said something rude about the sharks mother...

Jigs of all shapes and sizes will work on



A coronation trout took a liking to this FCL jig

the reef but given a choice I would tend towards the shorter styles. Short jigs make a nice mouthful for most fish and they don't have to decide which end of the lure



A comet grouper for Dan Konig

to attack when it is sitting stationary. More important though is the action. As long as a jig has a good fluttering movement at slow

speed then it has a place in the jig bag. Colours come down to personal preference but I would highly recommend having some plain, natural colours such as silvers, blues and greens in the kit along with the commonly used fluoro pinks and glow in the dark colours. Jig weights depend on the depth and speed of current. A 150g jig can work in 100+m of water on a calm day, but a 200g jig may be needed in a 50m deep channel with strong current and wind. On the whole, if you're fishing in 30-50m of water in Northern Australia then jigs under 150g will cover most situations. Going into 80-100m of water will require more 200-400g jigs and beyond that 350+g jigs are the way to go.

When rigging for demersal species I prefer to have two assist hooks hanging off the top of the jig. If in a really remote place, a single barbless hook makes a lot of sense, both from a safety point of view and for a fast release to get back in the action quickly.

Tackle for tropical demersals varies a whole lot depending on the average fish

size and also for the terrain. On flatter rubble bottoms a light PE 1-3 (10-30lb) jig outfit will be a whole lot of fun, but in an area littered with coral caves and ledges, a heavy PE5-8 (50-80lb) outfit may be needed

to stop every fish dead in their tracks.

Likewise leaders may need to be long and quite heavy at times to get the fish away from their coral home. Leader strength could be



Longnose emperor on a Seven Seas hooker jig

anything from 30lb to 150lb depending on the situation but remember that the lighter the leader, the better the action on the jig and hence the more bites you will get. For

4-8m lengths of leader are sufficient most of the time, a length which many anglers would find exceedingly long for most forms of fishing. I believe it is far better to have



GTs like this are powerful adversaries on jigging tackle

this reason I find myself using fluorocarbon leaders more often. Where I used to fish 80lb mono, I can now fish thinner 60lb fluoro without sacrificing abrasion resistance.

a long leader come back chafed than lose the whole leader and jig when the braid touches a sharp edge somewhere down there. The other advantage of a really long

leader is that through the course of a days fishing, the jig can be re-tied a number of times without the angler worrying about it becoming too short.

Trevally

Trevally aren't usually the first thing that comes to mind when you think of jigging, but they are a common catch in many locations. Depending on where you fish, the trevally catch could be any of a dozen or more species. Goldens, tea leaves or diamonds are regulars on inshore reefs, bludgers, gold spots or bluefin in deeper waters, giant trevally on big ledges and dropoffs and even Papuan black trevally from the offshore depths.

Unlike the bottom dwellers, trevallies love a challenge, so work your jig more aggressively and for a longer distance off the bottom. You don't need to pop a hernia with a super-fast retrieve, just a little faster tempo with a more solid rip on the upstroke to get the jig darting and sliding harder

than for the demersal species. Trevally will tend to school around structure and can be found hovering in midwater at times too. Having a drop underneath surface feeding



pelagics will turn up a fair few as well. Often anglers will turn up their nose at trevally when chasing bottom fish because they fight too hard (not a problem in my book) and get in the way of better eating



Yellowfin love to eat jigs, but targeting the right depth is important

fish. The latter may be valid in some cases, but species like bluefin trevally are one of the best eating fish around, especially when served as sashimi.

The same kind of jigs will work for trevally as do for demersals. In many cases they will be less picky about the jig, just so long as it has a nice darting, zipping motion in the water. Many of the smaller trevally species are a ton of fun on 40-150g jigs and lighter PE1-3 outfits, however when you fish locations with big GT's then it is a good

ideal to fish substantially heavier. A PE5-8 weight outfit with 80-150lb leader and heavy duty assist hook like a Shout Kudako is preferable. If anything, GT's go harder on jigs than they do on poppers. When they turn on their sides 40m down even a moderate size GT will have your muscles burning in no time at all. By the time you get to the third or fourth in a session you'll be looking for a good excuse for a little lie down anywhere there is a flat space on the boat!

Tunas

Open water pelagic fish such as yellowfin tuna are another excellent target for jig fishers in the tropics. Most anglers consider them to be a surface feeding target, but they are if anything, more numerous and easier to catch down deep. Exactly where to start looking in the ocean can be a little confusing, but hunting around drop offs and channel edges near deep water is a good start. Current lines and temperature breaks are also prime areas.

Once you have an area to search then it is down to finding fish or bait on the sounder or to look for birds high in the sky. I say high in the sky because birds can track the fish 100m down, by flying equally high in the sky. The closer the birds get to the surface, the shallower the fish are travelling. Finding fish on the sounder will confirm where the fish are. It may seem a little far fetched that birds can spot fish that deep in the water, but it has been proven to me several times while fishing for yellowfin in Kiribati. The

basic boats have no depth sounders or GPS, so the guide would position the boat roughly under the birds and give us a depth estimate to jig at. More often than not the 'fin would find the jigs within a fairly short time. Multiple hookups were the norm on fish anywhere from 3kg to 50kg - brilliant fun!



Dogtooth tuna (actually a bonito, not a true tuna) are a species that many jig fishers want to encounter. Their size, power and stamina is legendary and wherever dogtooth are found there is a trail of broken tackle to prove it. Dogtooth are a predator



The FCL Labo Ft jig is very successful on reef species

of the outermost blue-water reefs and as such, they are not readily encountered in most Australian tropical waters. Around islands and atolls of the Pacific and Indian Oceans it is a different story, where they can be one of the most fearsome predators on the reef. Jigging for doggies have several schools of thought, ranging from flat stick, pump and wind retrieves through to moderately paced twitching retrieves. The fish can hit anywhere from the bottom to the top so the retrieves can be fairly tiring.

Big ledges, pinnacles and channel entrances are all haunts for dogtooth. The main challenge is that they are renown for being completely inconsistent as to which particular ledge or pinnacle that they may choose to

occupy in a reef system. Tides and time of day can be important, with falling tides and low light favoured on many reef passes.

Once hooked, they will head at speed for



At least the shark didn't take the jig...

the nearest deep water. In many cases this results in a rapid and spectacular bust-off with line touching coral or rocks. In some locations PE4-5 (40-50lb) tackle will land a reasonable size dogtooth. In other areas, 80-100lb tackle may be totally undergunned, due to the size of the fish and nature of the terrain. Sharks also love to hang out

with dogtooth and can take a heavy toll on hooked fish in some areas.

Yellowfin and dogtooth have been caught on all kinds of jigs but the most popular are the shorter more compact styles. They are easy to work for long sessions and big fish will generally eat a small jig. If you have to do the warp speed dogtooth retrieve, then it is better to do on a small jig than a big one! Plain colours like metallic silver and grey or blue are also favoured over fluoros and glow in the dark colours

Toothy Critters

Wahoo and mackerel are pelagic species that readily take jigs but not too many anglers are keen on catching them this way, due to the risk of losing too many precious lures. They can most definitely be targeted successfully using jigs. The simple method is to use a short piece of single

strand wire leader. The longer the leader, the less bites you will get, but also you will lose less jigs. Exactly how long is best is up to you, but around 15-20cm should see you stay connected to a few good fish. Spanish mackerel and wahoo are particularly fond of hitting jigs on the drop so a broader jig with a good flutter and slide action will do nicely. I tend towards shorter jigs, due to both these species having quite narrow jaws. They don't tend to swallow a lure when attacking; normally immobilising their prey by slicing through it, then coming back to pick up the pieces. If you use a long jig, the risk is that the fish will hit the middle of the jig, leaving a great set of teeth marks but missing the hooks. Having a hook at either end of the jig makes good sense too. However, don't let a jig with hooks at either end linger near the bottom too much, as it will snag far more easily than a conventionally rigged jig.

Light Jig Tackle

For lighter jigging (50-200g jigs) traditional

length jig rods in the 5'- 5'6" are still the most popular. A great example would be the Synit Deepshot 100 and 150 models - very light in the hand with a nice elastic tip but still with a ton of power down low. They can work a variety of jig weights and accommodate slow and faster mechanical jigging styles. Other rods, particularly those coming from Japan at the moment are becoming longer to suit slow jigging styles. Very small shakes and twitches are all you need to get the lure darting tantalisingly in the water. Many of these rods range from 5'8" to 6'6" but the most extreme examples are the latest rods from FCL Labo. The spin model is 6'7" and the baitcast rod comes in at 7'7" long! this may seem pretty over the top, but when the rod is tucked under your arm and the tip of the rod is down near the water it is very easy to manipulate jigs slowly and deliberately. Whether to use spin or overhead is a personal choice, but there has definitely been a swing towards overhead reels for light jigging applications in recent times. Easier control of the jig is often cited as the reason for this, but the

compact nature of overhead reels probably plays a part with the lighter gear.

Heavy Tackle

For jigging 250-500g+ more substantial outfits are required. The debate between overhead and spin reels remains but many anglers like the balanced feel of a large reel being under the rod rather than on top of it. There are some ways around this - notably with spiral or 'acid' wrapped rods, where the guides on an overhead rod travel from the top of the rod to the bottom as they move up the blank. This helps alleviate the twisting feeling that sometimes happens with overhead outfits and also minimises the chance of the line becoming tip wrapped while jigging. Several custom rod makers use this technique





but Synit is one of the only commercial builders (albeit on a small scale) doing it across the range, in fact they don't build overhead jig rods any other way. The Seriola model is some thing of a classic in the Synit range as a heavy rod that can jig from 200g right through to 500g. For many anglers the physically lighter 250g model covers the most options, without having to resort to the big stick.

Shorter rods below 5' long are a great way to go for either very heavy jigs or deep water. The length gives improved leverage against large fish down deep and takes pressure off the angler when using heavy jigs. Some excellent short rods include the Jigging Master Amberjack Sniper and Fallings limited models. A new brand recently released in Australia, Swage currently build all their rods below 5' long.

Not all heavy duty rods are short however. Many of the rods from Japanese maker Patriot Designs are up around the 5'8" mark and suit tuna and dogtooth

jigging particularly well. The technique with these rods is to go for a long, fast sweeping retrieve. The the big sweeps get the lure rocketing through the water, darting side to side as it goes. Designer Hidekatsu Matsutani also makes his own style of jig to go with the rods: originally seen in the Seven Seas Hooker and now evolved into jigs like the Patriot Designs Blast Edge. Doing this style of jigging in tropical heat is hard work, suited to the fit and the brave, but Matsutani sans results on 50-100kg dogtooth speak for themselves.

While jigging is not the first form of fishing that usually comes to mind when most anglers think of the tropics, it can be a very exciting and often brutal way to fish. Jigging can be kept a pretty simple affair, but by utilising refinements available in tackle and technique, can lead to much improved catch rates on a diverse range of species.



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