









My

Suburban

Heaven

By Tom Slater

There's a lot going on in the canals and urbanised waterways of South-East Queensland. Tom Slater shows you how to get the most out of them.

When most people think of fishing canals, the vision of throwing small presentations to the undersides of boat hulls and pontoons is what comes to mind. Targeting the wiley yellowfin bream with ultra finesse tackle and techniques is where it begins and ends for most anglers. However, while this may be the most popular way to fish a canal system it is definitely not the only way! Experimenting with your lure selection and locations within canals may give you some surprising results!

BREAM

The obvious choice for most anglers; the humble bream has been responsible for many great days out on the water as they are by far the most common angling species encountered in the canals.

Regularly they turn a seemingly fruitless session into a frantic few hours and often end with your lure box feeling just a tad lighter, I may add.

Fishing a canal system for Bream can be both rewarding and heart breaking. It offers possibly the single most enjoyable facet

of fishing: sight! On many occasions you will see your target before presenting a cast and ultimately hooking (or spooking) the fish.

When looking for Bream I tend to favour a higher tide. This means the pontoons, boats and rock walls that line a canal will have more water covering, or underneath them and this usually triggers bream to start feeding. Whether it be the last stage

of the run-in tide or the first period of the run-out tide I definitely think more water = more bream.

Following on from this, water clarity is also important. Gin clear water, although great for seeing the fish is never as good for fishing. Crystal clear water means

the bream can see you and are generally more alert to above water movement.

This however, does not mean they are uncatchable when the water is clear.

Using more care and a stealthy approach



can often see you bagging out in no time. Some of the techniques employed in this situation are to downsize your tackle, use lighter leaders and smaller lures.

Positioning yourself further away from the structure also helps. In canals with sandy

edges, casting onto the bank and then winding the lure back into the water, can further reduce the chance of spooking the fish.

The opposite side of the equation often sees the same result. Fishing in chocolate milk water is very challenging, and for Bream at least

it never seems that productive. Finding that right tint of colour in the water can regularly turn 'lock jaw' into 'I want to murder that Maria Crankbait!' This may mean moving around a fair bit and

searching right up into the back ends of canal systems for a patch of cleaner water, but a small change in water quality can be the difference between no fish and a nice bag. Another trick is to fish the deepest diving lures you have, to get down under

the dirty surface layers to bream waiting in the cleaner saltier water underneath.

Current flow
within a canal
can be quite
important. Bream
are probably the
least temperamental
when it comes to
current (I will touch
on the other species

later), but having water flow past a specific piece of structure usually corresponds with Bream needing to feed in more of a rush than normal. A dead or dying baitfish or prawn sitting in still water allows the



fish plenty of time to amuse themselves, studying carefully to make sure it is safe to eat. With some added water movement this little tasty snack is now going to be there one minute, gone the next. So the bream must make a decision whether to go and grab lunch or to sit and wait for an easier meal. Enter your lure into this equation and the game usually changes to your favour when there is some movement, encouraging the bream commit to the lure you have presented. If it still shies away try a different presentation, make a better cast or simply admit defeat and move towards the next piece of canal candy!

Lure selection is something that comes down to personal preference. Almost any popular bream lure will work on a given day though there are some rules I generally follow.

When fishing tight against pontoons: A lightly weighted soft plastic fished on very fine fluorocarbon trace of 2-6lb, or if hardbodies are more your thing, a









shallow suspending jerkbait or sinking stickbait can work wonders.

If you are cranking the rock walls a deep diving crankbait such as the Maria D38F can be absolutely deadly. A plastic rigged on a slightly heavier head can also work well, but be ready to snag a few.

Fishing the surface bite can be both highly exciting and incredibly successful whilst targeting bream. A small surface lure is generally thought to imitate a small prawn skipping along the surface and if the bream are around than it can make for some awesome visuals.

Small surface stickbaits or 'walk the dog' lures as they are sometimes referred to would be the number one choice for many anglers fishing canals. Anything up to around 65mm tends to work well; anything bigger tends to splash down a little hard and can send the bream running.

Cup face poppers can also work a treat when the bream are turned on and actively hunting. Small stuff around 40-50mm are ideal and they can be twitched slowly around structure which you know holds fish, to great effect. I find when the fish are timid and not fully committing; the splash of a popper can sometimes spook them rather than draw their attention.

MANGROVE JACK

Now is when a lot of ears perk up (or eyes in this case!) If you live in the top half of Australia I would bet my left foot there is probably Mangrove Jack calling your local canal home. These brutes fight hard, hit a multitude of lures and can be extremely rewarding to target and hopefully, catch.

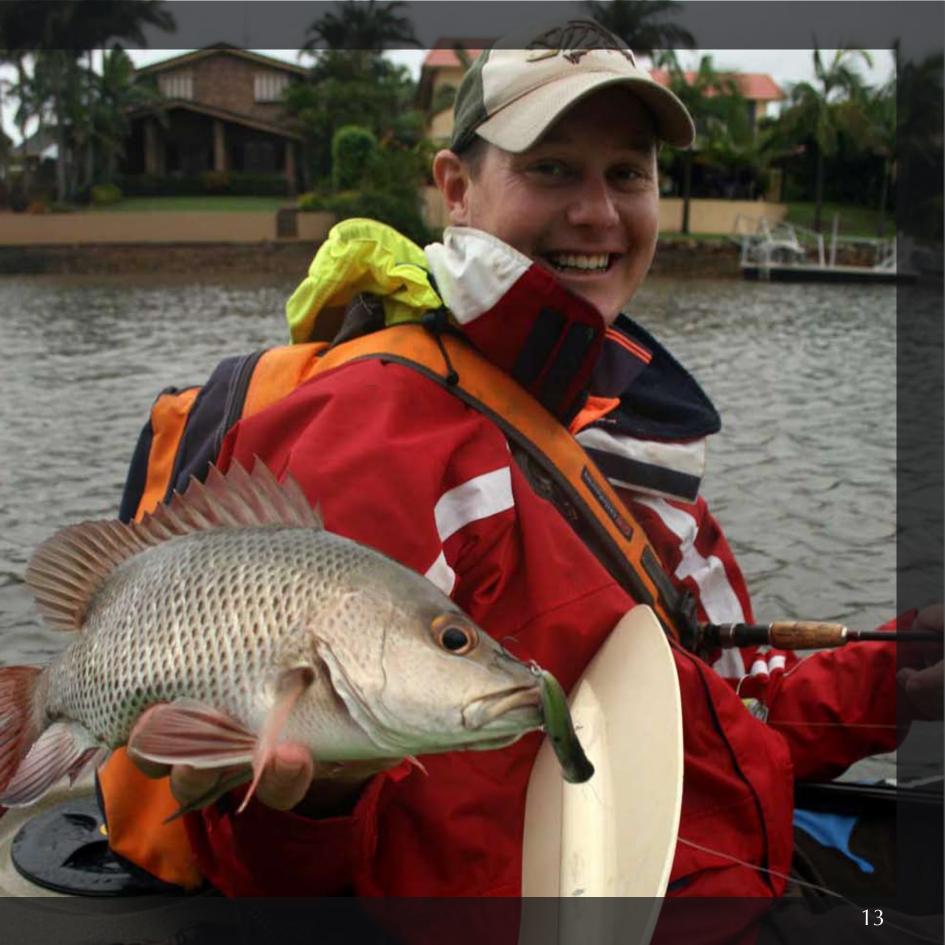
Mangrove Jacks can be flighty at the best of times. Constant noise from boats of all sizes whizzing up and down the canals, as well as other disturbances from houses around the estate can make these fish almost impossible to target during gentlemen's hours, especially on weekends.

Fishing either during dawn or dusk will see the chances of a red terror strike increase dramatically. Hitting the water at these hours often means you are the only one out. No annoying dogs or mowers to create noise. Plus the cover of darkness allows the fish to move more freely.

Jacks are always thought to be very

structure orientated and this is for the most part, a very accurate representation of their behaviour. During low light periods however, jacks will quite happily roam about the open water away from normal areas looking for prey. This allows us anglers a chance to target these line burning brutes in more manageable areas and on fairer terms than what is normally presented to us.

If you take just one thing from this article make sure it is this. Current! Mangrove jacks in canals seem to love water movement. Whether it is due to natural tidal variation or the increased run off from rain, jacks just seem to go bananas for a little current. The entrances to canals quite often experience huge tidal gushes during stages of either tide. That vast expanse of water draining out through a small opening creates a bottleneck, and these constrictions increase the water pressure. Combine this with the fact that almost all canals have nice oyster encrusted rock walls at their entrances for jacks to retreat during daylight hours and you have the





perfect scenario for roaming mangrove jacks.

Quite a few of the canal systems up and down our coast would have some form of drain flowing into them. This could be from the local stormwater pipe or just from a small creek nearby. The water inflow from these often creates a temperature change or colour change, which allows predators like jacks and cod to stage an ambush on baitfish and prawns, which have been disoriented in the confluence of the flows. Traditional larger 80-110mm jack lures will work in the canals at times. However, the increased water traffic and usually downsized baitfish mean smaller, more finesse lures aimed at bream and bass seem to be much more successful at turning a half-hearted follow into a ferocious strike.

Surface fishing for mangrove jacks can be one of the most exciting forms of fishing you can do. Once in a while, mangrove jacks will happily hit surface lures in broad daylight, but generally this is a very early morning or late evening proposition only. Surface lures in the 40-80mm range are ideal. Fast moving stickbaits can be used to prospect open bank areas quite quickly. This is where jacks are likely to be out harassing schools of mullet or hardyheads. Slowly worked poppers and gently twitched stickbaits are perfect for working over structure more carefully, where the jacks will be laying in ambush. Watch the clip below for an example of the sort of commotion these fish make when they hit the surface following prey!

Click here for Jack surface strike on "The Tightline TV"

When fishing sub surface think slim! Slimmer profile lures are less intrusive and generally will see more success in highly pressured waterways. These lures generally respond to twitches and jerks very well and can be suspended beneath pontoons. Alternatively they can be cranked down the face of a rock wall intermittently hitting the rocks, paused and allowed to float over the obstruction before the process being repeated time over.

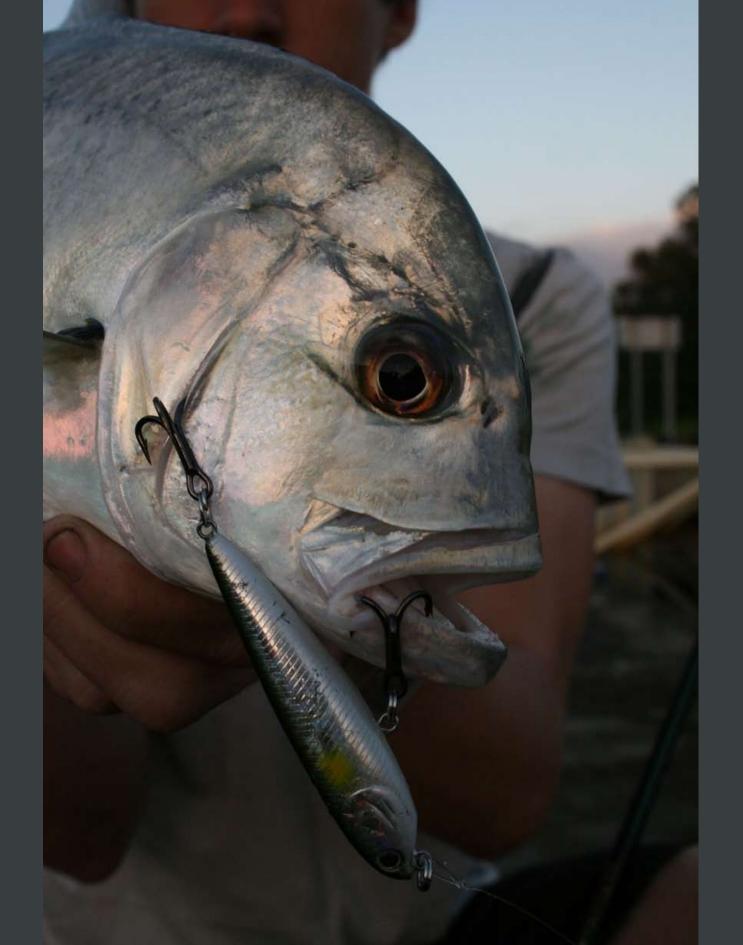
There is no point using these smaller highly tuned lures if you then tie them onto stiff 40lb fluorocarbon leaders. In canals you will have a far greater strike rate with mangrove jacks fishing leaders of no more than approximately 14lb. I would prefer to get the hit and loose the odd lure using 8 or 10lb leader than use 20lb and not get a touch all day. (Tom may be rethinking this in light of some recent losses! Ed) Crimping barbs on your hooks can go a long way towards helping fish unhook themselves from lost lures. Once the pressure is off they can generally shake the lures out fairly quickly. It is not uncommon for anglers to get their lures back a few minutes later after the lure is spat out and it floats back to the surface.

TREVALLY & OTHERS

I've grouped this section together because you can quite commonly get many species of trevally in canal systems along with the occasional Tarpon or Giant herring. These fish all behave in a similar way so can be targeted with usually the same or very similar techniques.

Low light hours are important for many fishing situations, but I believe a canal system is where this rule is golden. As mentioned previously these hours often mean a huge decrease in ambient noise and on water traffic, which is directly proportionate to how willing many fish in canals are to feed.

The estuary speedsters will usually be found wherever there is an aggregation of food. This usually means you are fishing the same sorts of areas you would for targeting mangrove jacks though you might







be less focused on casting towards the edges of the canals and more looking for nervous water within current eddies or simply open water. Drains, eddies, wind lanes can all congregate baitfish and at the right times this can mean a literal smorgasbord for these line burning hoodlums.

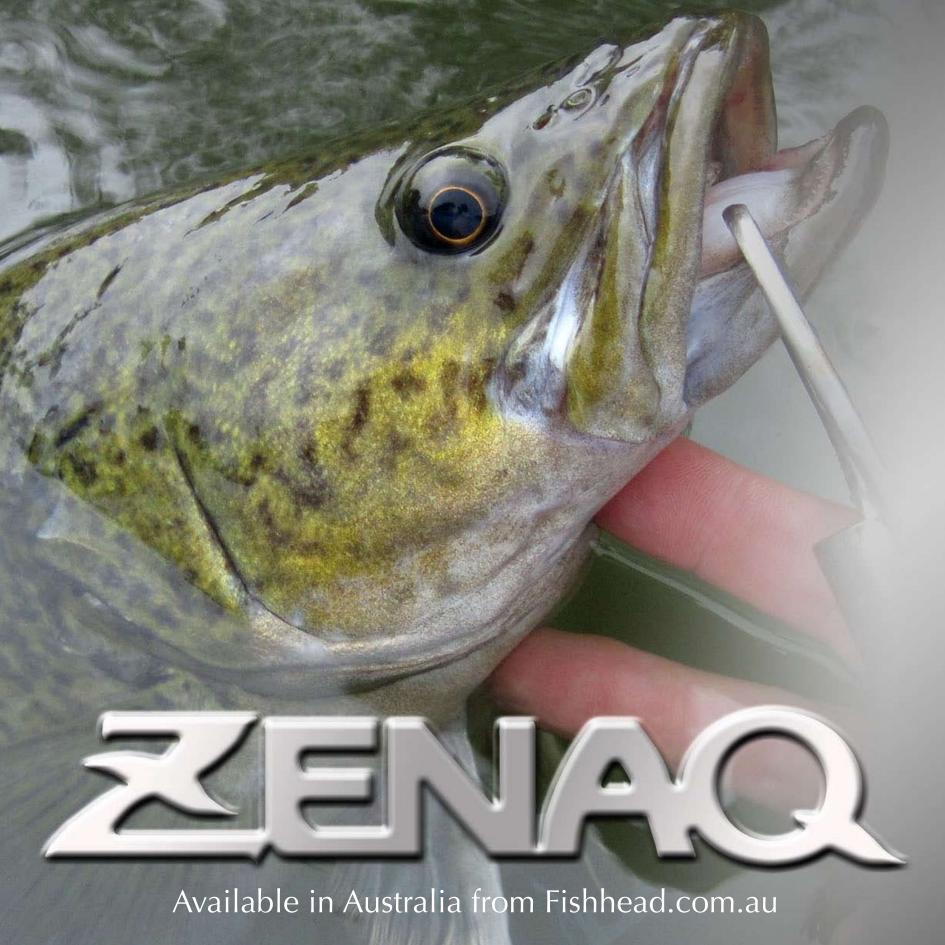
Trevally are relatively clean fighters usually running around structure simply by chance rather than actively seeking it out. So anglers can get away with fishing light and enjoying the power that these little brutes have.

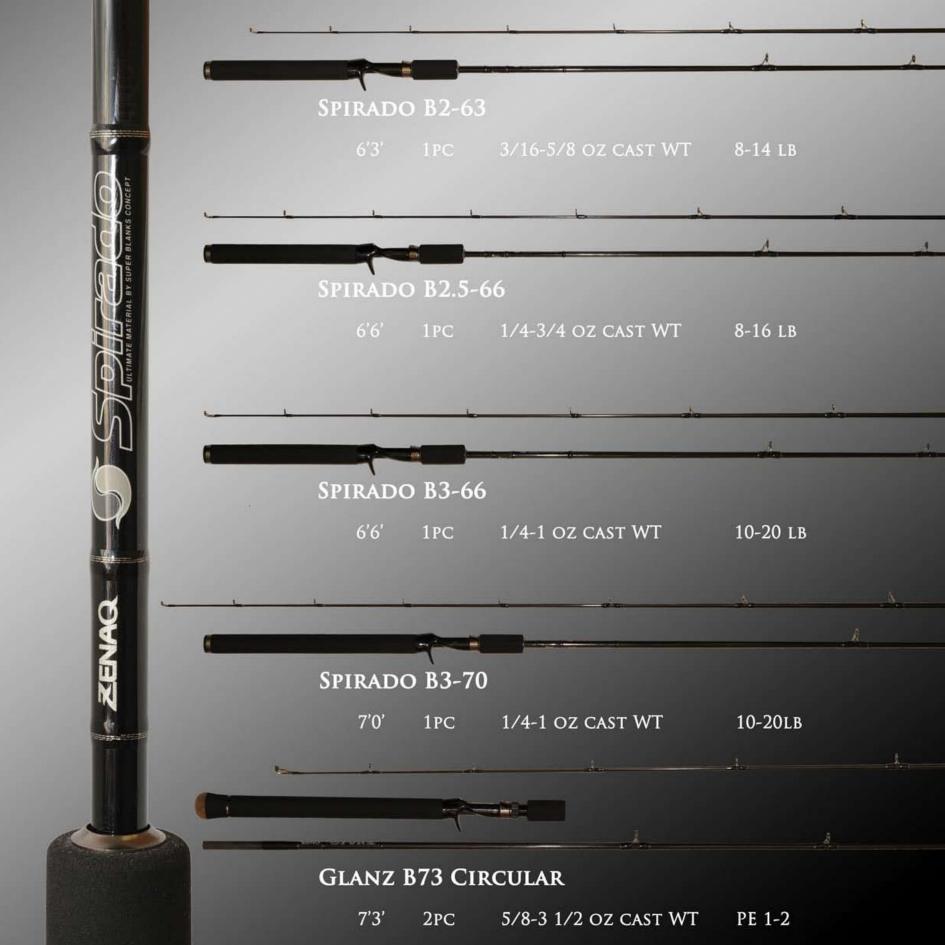
I won't go into too much detail on trevally here as there is a great article in issue #3 by Daniel Fisher on how to find and target trevally in estuaries and rivers with the vast majority of this information being applicable to canal fishing. So make sure you go check it out

Click here for Vol 3 to read Dan's Article

Canals are piscatorial aquatic paradises full of potential just waiting to be uncovered by patient and discerning anglers. Even if catching bream may not be your cup of tea, do not discount fishing canals for a host of other species. This article has simply gone over some of the more popular targets. Other species such as flathead, estuary cod and luderick can all call canals home and can be rewarding to pursue on light tackle.

So next time the wind is blowing and you can't get out to your favourite patch of reef, why not downsize, crank up the electric motor or even the kayak and head down the local canals. You will not only put your skills and equipment to the test, but your wits as well!





Heavy Metal

By Duncan O'Connell

It's been a long run out

in the early morning half-light to the reefs, more than enough time to blast out the last vestiges of sleep from my brain. Anticipation is high with bait stacked high on the sounder. I make a small mental prayer that my rigging was all up to scratch when assembled late last night. Upon inspection, the knots look good, so a quick decision is made to start with a shiny new FCL jig. On the skippers cue, four anglers drop their jigs over the side. I watch them zig zag their way down in the bluegrey depths for a few seconds until their flashing sides disappear from view. After an interminable wait, the line pauses and momentarily stops peeling off the reel; the bottom has been reached. I flick the bail



and begin my retrieve. A couple of guys are already ahead of me, steadily ripping and twitching their lures.

"Hit!" Is the call from the far corner, but no hook up is forthcoming. I continue working the lure at a steady pace and two rips later everything stops dead. A momentary stalemate occurs as both fish and anglers brains catch up with what just happened. The fish reacts first (fish brain beats my brain every time!), by powering to the bottom. The rod is dragged to the gunnels and the drag spits line as the fish attempts to find sanctuary in the trawler wreck below.

"Don't bust me off, don't bust me off"



is my mental mantra as the kingfish rampages across the seafloor trying to do just that. The other anglers are also hooking up: signified by a mixture of grunts and/or laughter depending on how hard their fish is running. On this occasion, the fish tires before it can shred the leader and my heart rate slows a few beats for each colour of braid that returns to the reel. Kings always save something for the end, but after a few anxious moments around the prop and other lines, a fat ten kilo specimen is hoisted aboard. While not the monster hoodlum I have been hunting for, the fight of a kingfish never disappoints as they always give everything they've got.

Looking around the boat, it was clear to see the mood had changed. Nervous anticipation had been swept away by white knuckle straining by the anglers still hooked up and smiles and laughter for the ones who had landed fish.

Jigging in South East Queensland has undergone something of a revival over

the last few seasons. A gradual increase in both size and numbers of kingfish and amberjack has probably played a role in this, as has the availability of powerful, lightweight tackle. Also the move away from heavy tail weighted jigs into wide sliding centre-balanced jigs has made fishing easier, particularly for less fit anglers.

Generally the better quality fish are caught in the Spring and Autumn, while larger aggregations of school sized fish run though the middle of winter. Fishing locally off Brisbane can be very successful at times, though many keen anglers are making the journey to Northern NSW for larger kings or the Sunshine Coast for big amberjack. Some anglers in these areas still regard the Seriolas as vermin which get in the way of good eating species - a viewpoint that I'm sure leads to better populations of these species.

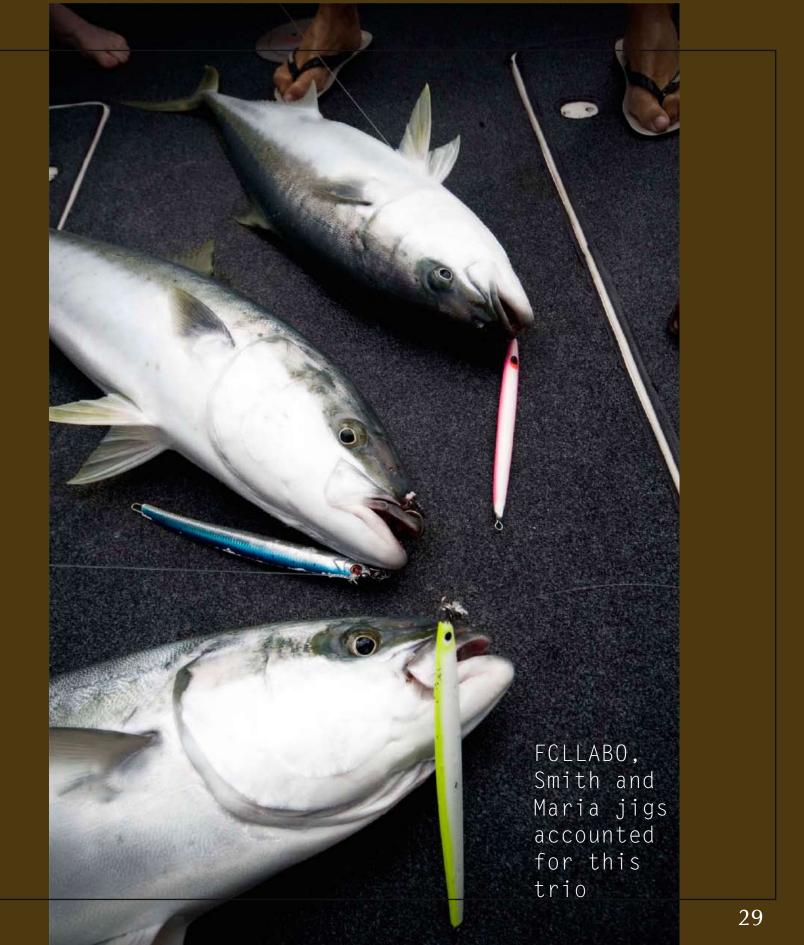
If last season is anything to go by, the months coming up should be something to remember!











Tom and Kye with a pair of bruiser kings wrestled from shallow reef in Northern NSW







FCL Labo SPP



FCL Labo Ebipop EXT



FCL Labo Squid Pen



FCL Labo CSP Sinking



FCL Labo CSP Floating



FCL Labo LB Jigs



FCL Labo VM Jigs



FCL Labo SL Jigs





What Should I throw?

A Guide to Bream Luring Success



What to throw? by Grayson Fong

Have you ever asked yourself the question when heading out for a breaming

I throw today?' When you take into account the weather, the tide, water clarity, terrain, season and finally, what's left in my tackle box, it can leave you in quite the lure dilemma deciding what to tie on. We all have our favourite 'go to' lures that are a guarantee to catch fish and then there are those lures that you have bought because somebody

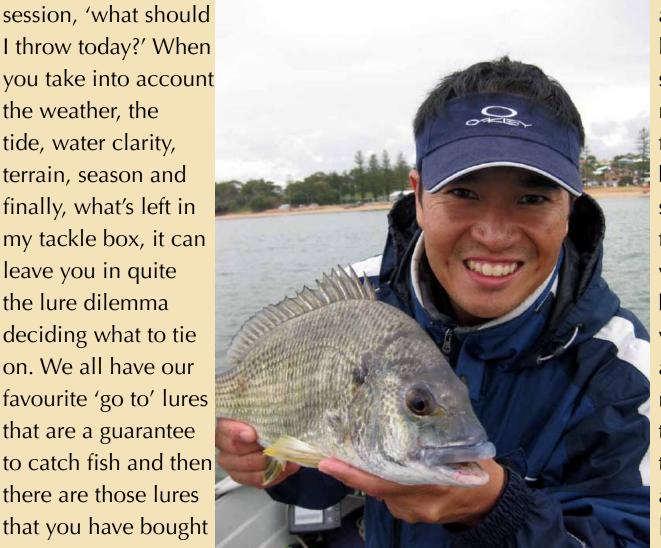
won a comp with! But where does this leave you? Keeping a simple game plan can often reap better rewards which may turn any lure in your tackle box into a 'go to' lure.

TERRAIN

Terrain is probably the biggest influence on lure choice as it is a great insight to

> a bream's eating habits. For example, shallow rubble flats may mean bream feed along the bottom crunching shells and hunting for crustaceans as well as herding baitfish into shallow waters. Hard reef and bommies may mean bream cruise the deeper drop offs to ambush baitfish and target reef ledges for shrimps and other small

resident fish. So taking these factors into account can give you the heads up on your lure choice.



Terrain Types

RUBBLE FLATS

Key: Bounce lures along the bottom in 'feeding zone'

Depth: 1-5ft

Terrain: Rocky bottom, medium boulders, weedy patches



Lure Choices:

JACKALL Chubby 38F (Shallow), Minnow 35, Squirrel 61

CRANKA

Crank

LUCKYCRAFT Tango 45, Flash Minnow 65

MARIA Crank 38 Shallow, Jerkbait Shallow

ZIPBAITS
Khamsin SR, Khamsin Tiny
SR, Hickory SR, Rigge 48
MEGABASS
Baby Griffon

REEF BOMMIES

Key: Bounce deep diving lures on top of bommies and down drop offs

Depth: 4-8ft

Terrain: Reef patches, big rocks, large drop offs, coral and small weed

Lure Choice: JACKALL Chubby 38F (Deep), Squirrel 61

ATOMIC

Crank 38 (Deep), Shad 40 (Deep), Shad 50 (Deep)

LUCKYCRAFT

Tango 45, Cra-Pea Deep,

Pointer 48

MARIA

Crank 38 Deep, Jerkbait Deep

ZIPBAITS

Khamsin DR, Khamsin Tiny DR, Hickory DR

CRANKA Crank

MEGABASS Mr X Griffon, Baby Griffon, Live X Smolt



WEEDY FLATS

Key: Keeping the lure in the strike zone approximately in the middle 1/3 of your

water depth without snagging weed.

Depth: 1-6ft

Terrain: Weedy bottom with sand patches or rock formations



Lure choice:

JACKALL Chubby 38F (Shallow), Minnow 35

MARIA Crank 38 Shallow, Jerkbait Shallow

CRANKA Crank 35 Shallow

LUCKYCRAFT Tango 45, Flash Minnow 65

ZIPBAITS Khamsin SR, Khamsin Tiny SR, Hickory SR, Rigge 48

SAND

Key: Keeping your lure along the bottom to stir up food by dredging the sand

Depth: 1-4ft

Terrain: Sandy flats, sandbank run offs, Sand flats with weed patches.

Lure Choice: JACKALL Chubby 38F (Deep), Chubby 38F (Shallow), Squirrel 61

ATOMIC

Crank 38 (Deep), Shad 40 (Deep), Shad 50 (Deep)

LUCKYCRAFT

Tango 45, Cra-Pea Deep, Pointer 48, Flash minnow 65

MARIA

Crank 35 Shallow and Deep, Jerkbait Deep

ZIPBAITS

Khamsin DR, Khamsin Tiny DR, Hickory DR

CRANKA Shad, Crank Shallow

MEGABASS Mr X Griffon



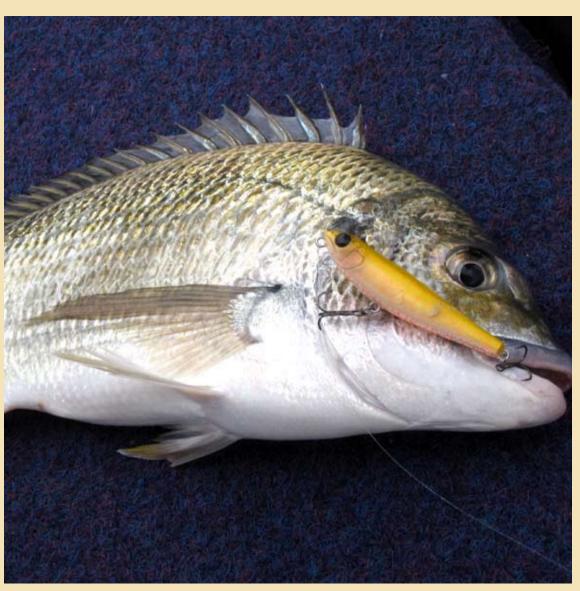
TOPWATER

Key: Working your lure to mimic injured or fleeing bait fish. Long casts

essential.

Depth: Oft

Terrain: Smooth water, Slight rippled water



Lure Choice:

MEGABASS Dog X, Dog X Jr, Pop X

MARIA Pencil 55

LUCKCRAFT Sammy 65, NW Pencil

Zipbaits
ZBL Popper Tiny

BASSDAY Sugarpen 70

LURE COLOUR

This is a topic that has fuelled many ongoing debates amongst anglers for several years with no rights and wrongs. As a 'general rule' transparent coloured lures are suited to clearer water giving them natural tones and subtle camouflage. On the flipside, solid coloured lures tend to hold good contrast in murkier waters giving them outstanding lines and features that tend to grab the attention of feeding predators. Being a general rule it is very open to be proved wrong as many anglers have done in the past. We all have our favourite lure colours for all different situations so finding what works in certain fishing arenas is all part of the fun!

LINE CHOICE

As I was first introduced to breaming using a braid/fluorocarbon line combination it is certainly my preference when throwing hardbody lures as the sensitivity suits my style of fishing. Gaining in popularity is fishing hardbodies with straight through fluorocarbon line. Both techniques have several pros and cons, but I believe at the end of the day it really comes down to the angler. Braid certainly gives great sensitivity, durability and versatility as it can be matched with several different strength leaders. On the flip side, braid can also have too much sensitivity that can tend to spook flighty fish when the bite has shutdown. When you are matched with the tedious job of re-tying leaders, this can be enough to sway many anglers to the straight through fluorocarbon option. Fluorocarbon also has great versatility and durability but its true strength lies in its flexibility. Fluorocarbons stretching capabilities can be an anglers' best friend when fighting stubborn bream as their runs and lunges can be absorbed through the line, therefore reducing the chances of pulled hooks and lost fish. But this option also has its disadvantages with the biggest being the lack of sensitivity especially when setting hooks in a bream's mouth. Line stretch can add a time delay to the angler when

feeling a lure hit or a take which can lead to missed hook ups or 'spat' hooks therefore decreasing the number of fish caught. Also the lack of opportunity to change leader strength while fishing can leave an angler fishing too light or to heavy depending on changing terrain. As stated before it really comes down to what the angler feels best suits their fishing style as this may vary between each angler and their surrounds.

CONFIDENCE "GO TO" LURES

As most seasoned breamers have at least one or two (or a dozen of the same colour!) of these essentials in their tackle box, it's usually the model that has 'smashed them on the last session' or 'nabbed me my PB' over the years. But be warned, this can also be a trap for young players as what may have worked last week may not work this week. So when recreational and tournament fishing, thinking outside the square and trying new lures can sometimes reap rewards as a lot of lures have the potential to turn into a new 'go to' lure.

In closing, using your general rules of thumb when picking your next lure to throw,

as in terrain, depth, colour and action, gives you a start on creating more opportunities on catching your next fish. Patience and persistence also plays a part when finding your next favourite lure as giving each lure a good run will definitely satisfy your curiosity on whether something works or not and who knows your next cast may be the one that beats your previous personal best!



Random Tackle Stuff

Toray Saltline Light Fish PE is amongst the thinnest braid available on the market. I have had this line in multiple

strengths on some of my reels for quite some time now and have been very impressed with its performance. Being so thin it enables the angler to cast even the

smallest of lures out of sight and when fishing in windy conditions, the thinner diameter does not get blown around as badly as some other braids. The downfall of many super thin braided lines is

their knot strength. After experimentation with the Light Fish PE tying some of the more popular leader connections

such as the Slim Beauty and

Surgeons knot, we have had no issues at all with knot strength.

If you are looking to re-spool some of your light tackle reels in the coming weeks I can definitely

recommend the Light Fish PE for unmatched performance. Available in 100m spools in 41b (PE#0.3), 51b (PE#0.4) and 6.51b (PE#0.5) and coloured white for high visibility. Tom Slater

OSP Bent Minnow

A first look, the OSP Bent minnow is an intriguing lure. No bib, lies on it's side like a dead fish. Looked like something I wanted in my collection. but wasn't too hopeful about it catching any fish. Now I can say I am a convert on the Bent Minnow: it's a really cool topwater lure! At rest, it does look like a dead fish on the surface. With tiny twitches the lure darts side to side. On a constant retrieve, it makes a wide S-shaped roll under

the surface. With a quick upward rip of the rod, the minnow can be made to jump and skitter across the surface like a fleeing baitfish. This lure has racked of plenty of species to its credit, including jacks, trevally, bream, bass and flathead. The Bent Minnow comes in 86mm and 106mm sizes and while it is not for the lazy angler who just wants to crank

it is spot on for the topwater enthusiast. Duncan O'Connell

the lure,

Heartland Z 6101 Saegake

Is this the best bream rod of all time? Many anglers think so: enough in fact to convince Daiwa to reproduce this limited edition Japanese domestic model for the Australian market. As you would expect, the rod is delightfully light and beautifully balanced with a 2000 size Daiwa reel. The tip is soft but not noodley and the power comes on nice and progressively down the butt. Check them out in store now



Synit Rods

The name Synit probably doesn't mean much to many Australian anglers at this time. However, this little New Zealand company has been quietly making some of the finest jigging rods in the world for the last couple of years. Their fans range far and wide from local kingfish hunters to Japanese jigging gurus and bluefin tuna addicts in the USA. The rods are light, responsive and very powerful. Synit make custom builds, for those who want something a little different and their spiral bound overheads really turn heads. The Fish Head team flogged their little

Deepshot 150g last season on kingfish up to 20kg and were extremely reluctant to give it back. The 150 is currently the baby of the range, which runs through to 450g brutes and the Seriola, which matches a light tip section to a PE10 butt for anglers chasing monster bluefin, sambos and dogtooth tuna. Fish Head is proud to be appointed the Australian dealer for these fine rods: check them out in store or online today!



Evergreen Kaleido Alleyoop

Evergreen is a name synonymous with the very best fishing tackle. Many anglers familiar with high end Japanese tackle would be aware of this prestigious brand, especially through their lures. Recently I was fortunate enough to get hold of one of their latest releases, the top of the line 'Kaleido Alleyoop'.

Using their new 'Kaleidoscope' graphite technology allows Evergreen to make a rod with such incredible sensitivity, it might cry if you yelled at it. No, that isn't entirely true, but seriously it's sensitive! I cannot believe how well the rod transmits vibrations, making even the most subtle of bites feel like you have just been hit with a phone book!

At 6'4" in length this rod is right at home wherever accurate casting is needed. As an oyster rack bream rod I have really found no better. On a recent trip I found myself fishing the racks of St Helens down in Tasmania and was able to extract every single fish hooked.

Back here in QLD, I've used the rod for tight cover bass fishing predominantly with hard bodied jerkbaits such as Jackall KII, Daiwa Double Clutch, Luckycraft Bevy Shad MK-II and Zipbait Khamsin Tiny which the rod handles extremely well.

As you would expect from a rod of this caliber the finish of all the bindings and the components used are second to none. Carbon inlays in the foregrip really make the rod stand out from the crowd in the aesthetics department.

I carry this rod when fishing any river or creek system as its versatility is something I value highly. Within the space of a few hours I could go from catching bream to targeting mangrove jacks or bass and this rod is a definite favourite of mine for all of those scenarios. Tom Slater



Missed a copy of the tight line?

Volume 1

Bream and Bass

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Jack Fishing

Ribbon Reefs

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Works Lure Exhibition

Volume 3

Squidding

PNG Black Bass

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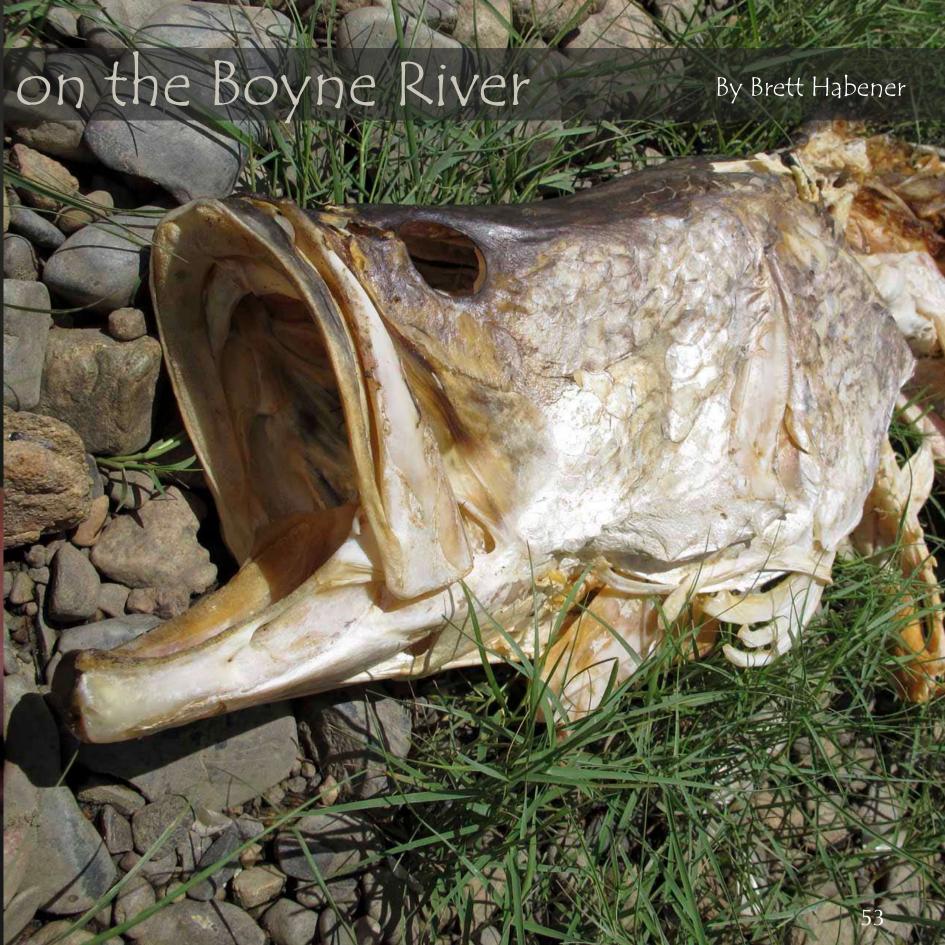
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Summer 2011: life and death





On Tuesday the 28th of December, Lake Awoonga reached its highest ever point,

at 44.160 metres after a massive amount of rain fell throughout the Boyne Valley Catchment. This equates to 140% capacity and caused the spillway to flow for the first time, by over four metres!

Barramundi are heavily stocked within Awoonga and since the project began there has been over 3 million fish released into the lake for recreational anglers to enjoy. The heavy rains of December and January coincided with the Barramundis natural breeding cycle, which in turn triggered their natural instinct to swim downstream towards the saltwater reaches for spawning. The fishes natural instincts ultimately led to a huge number of fish to make the drop over the floodgates and into the Boyne River below.

In the passing days large volumes of water pulsed out toward the coast and with it, multitudes of massive dead barramundi. As the water subsided, anglers made their way





upstream to investigate the possibility of a new fishery developing. The initial perception that the vast majority of fish which took the leap of faith had perished was worrying, but as it turns out the mortality rate was small and a large percentage had survived.

A Change of Plan

Whispers of some epic "fish a cast" sessions soon filtered through and got a lot of people excited: including myself! Luckily I was heading north with my good friend John Goodwin in early February, so we decided to give the barra a solid shot while we were up in the Gladstone region chasing Giant Trevally. We arrived in town at 10am and were met with dirty water stretching up the coast as far as the eye could see. GTs were out and barra were in!

A Fish to Remember

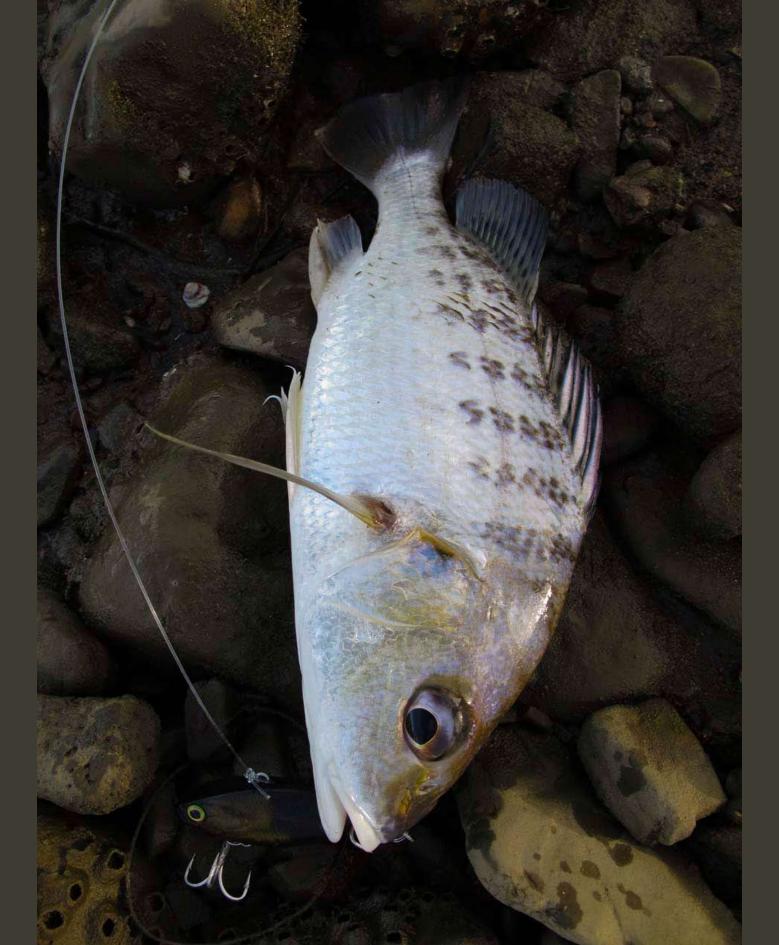
The following morning we arrived at the Boyne River not really knowing what to expect. Within seconds a number of large Queenfish were seen rounding up baitfish on the opposing bank, so things looked promising. It was an outgoing tide and the river had good flow with a few nice eddies pushing out into the current. The eddies

appeared to be holding good numbers of baitfish so hopefully barra would be present too.

After a few casts we noticed the baitfish getting nervous and a huge swirl appeared in a small back eddy just a metre off the bank. John hastily cast and within two cranks of the handle had a big hit, followed by an even bigger swirl! Next cast was put out into the current and the slick rig was slowly rolled back through the eddy in mid-water. As soon as the lure met the current change it was annihilated. The Loomis BSR852 buckled, line peeled off the reel and the fish tore off 50m of line in the first run as it pushed out into the current and breached. At this point it was clear that it was a special fish. The fight went for what felt was an eternity with only a light 40lb leader and 16lb braid but after about ten minutes the fish was brought ashore. It was even bigger than we first thought at 124cm and an estimated 28kg. A good old fashion 60lb and was a great way to start the trip.

Big Fish, Big Numbers

Over the next three days we walked only a small section of the river, fishing rock bars and holes. A pattern soon emerged and we were able to track where the fish







would be sitting at different points of the tide. The most productive area was where the river narrowed and then opened up on to a rock bar with a hole in behind. As soon as the tide turned, pushing water over the rockbar and over the depression in the river bed, the fish schooled up out of the current ready to ambush any

unsuspecting prey moving upstream with the tide. Here the barramundi could be successfully targeted using a variety of techniques.

A great way of getting bites was to bump a large soft plastic such as squidgy slick rigs

or berkley hollowbellies along the bottom with a slow steady roll. This worked well but the fish wised up quickly and a change of technique was required to retain the bites. Downsizing to a smaller sized lure with an erratic retrieve helped to stay in the action. Jackall Tranzams and Mask Vibes worked erratically with lifts and pauses across the

bottom proved to be one of the better techniques of the trip, accounting for many barramundi including three fish in three casts at one stage. The use of large loud rattling lures that you would normally associate with barramundi fishing in the dams and northern tropics proved to be futile, as the more subtle presentations

came out on top in the areas now seeing heavy fishing pressure.

Take two with a Twist

One thing that I have always wanted to achieve is to catch a metre long barramundi out of a kayak in a creek or river. Generally the more prolific barra spots are in crocodile populated waterways so going for a paddle generally

isn't the best idea! After the success of the trip only two weeks prior I found myself packing up the gear and strapping the kayaks onto the roof of my good friend Ryan's car at midnight for a whirlwind trip north for a couple of days. This was set to be one of the best opportunities to tick a few things off the bucket list.

Arriving early morning after some heavy rains throughout the region, once again the river was on the rise. The paddle upstream to the spot we had mapped out proved to be a struggle. The river thinned out as we headed upstream and the current's strength increased which left the arms burning! The view of the river widening to a great looking pool was a relief after all the hard work. The extra influx of water had a positive impact on the fishing; as the river height began the rise the fish came on the chew. We recorded consistent hits and hook ups landing nine for the afternoon session, one of which was Ryans first ever barramundi. The fish were there but not easy to catch with many changes of lure and technique needed to find the recipe for success. Twitching lures such as the Megabass Diving Flapslap and Jackall Super Squirrels got the fishes attention. As they were retrieved slowly and erratically into the current we had many strikes that were not finding the hooks. Adding a slightly longer pause to the retrieve was the key, once perfected this accounted for most fish with solid hook sets. After a long session it was on the last few casts that I nailed the best fish for the day. You could tell from the

hit it was a good fish and took me for a ride with a few jumps and erratic runs spinning the kayak violently until it gave up the fight and was hauled aboard. It certainly was good to catch a few metre long barra out of the kayak but the last fish certainly was something special.

Kayak fishing in areas of heavy current with underwater obstructions can be dangerous. When you have a raging barramundi on the end of your line pulling out drag it is easy to catch an edge in the current, fall and be swept away. It is important to assess the conditions and know your limitations before you set out in search of fish.

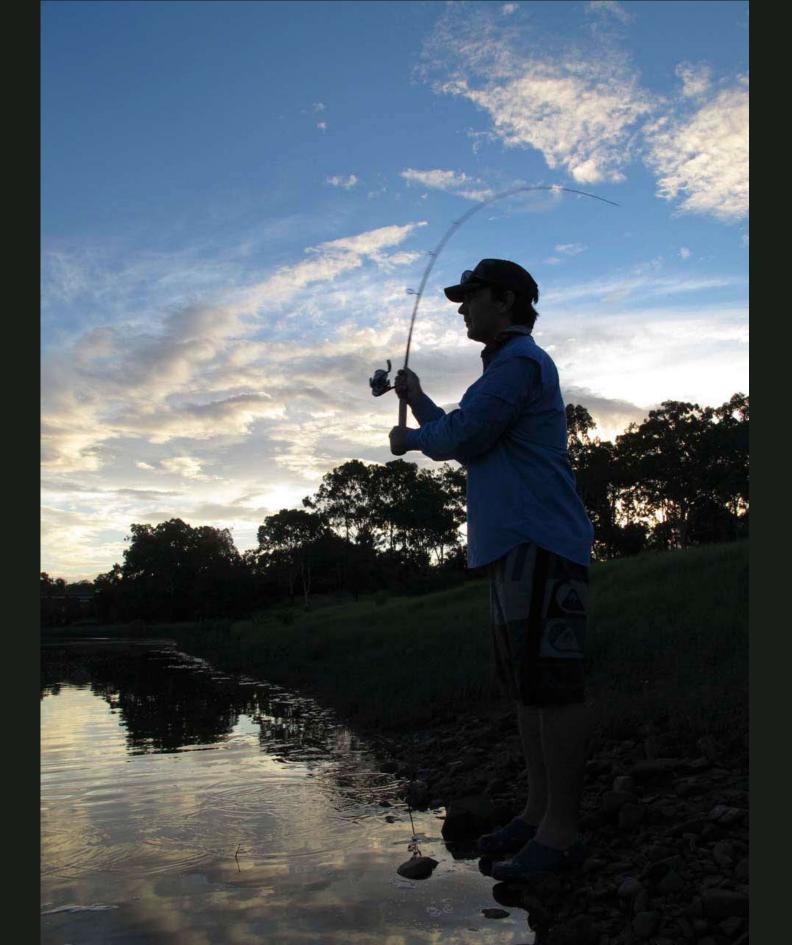
Tackle

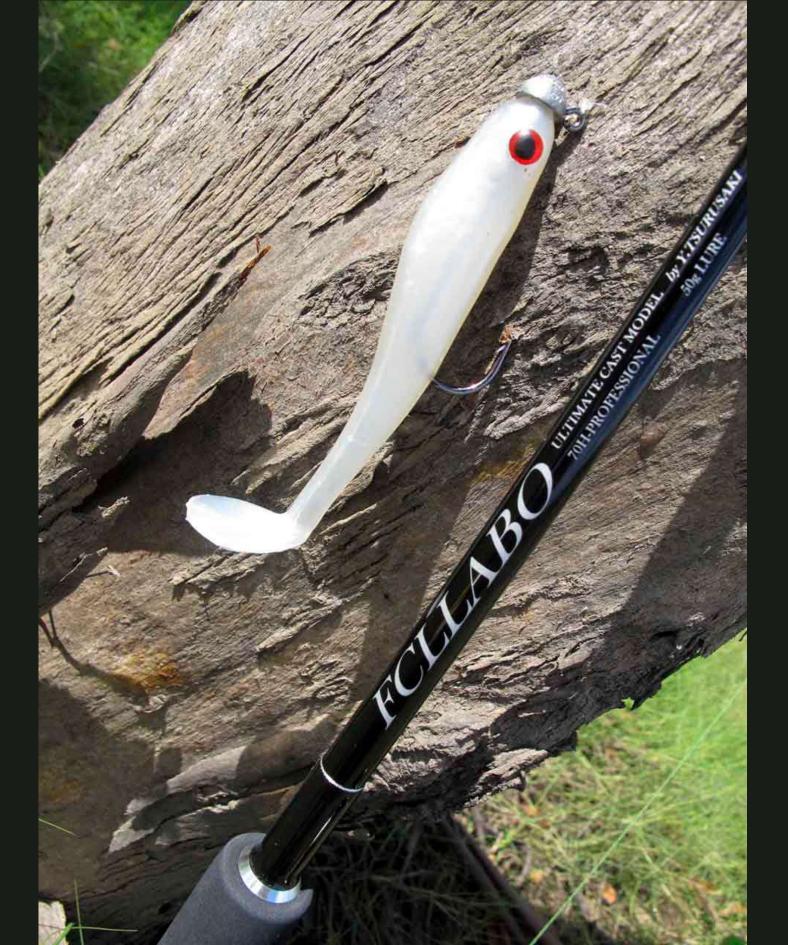
My preferred rod for targeting large barramundi in both Dams and Rivers is the FCL Labo 70Pro-H matched to Daiwa Certate 3500HD. The 70Pro-H is built for casting and carries stiffness all the way through to the tip, providing great casting distance and solid hook sets which is crucial with big barramundi. I usually run 25-40lb braid and 40-80lb fluorocarbon leader. Sunline V-Hard is a great leader for Barramundi fishing as it very abrasion resistant but remains pliable so it ties











well. The Certate 3500HD as the name states is heavy duty and is ideal for barramundi fishing as it has plenty of power there when you need it as well as the capacity for the heavy braid required for fishing around structure.



The Future

There is no doubt that a lot of fish went over the wall at Awoonga but the lake still holds large numbers of trophy sized barramundi and will remain a major attraction for the region. The Gladstone Area Waterboard has stocked 208,000 fingerlings post flood to further bolster the fish numbers within the dam. The lake is one of Australia best impoundment Barramundi fisheries and is set to stay that way into the future.

The large influx of mature barramundi is sure to have a big impact on the population of the Boyne River and surrounding creeks. Hopefully the stray fish can spread throughout the system before the commercial netting closure ends midyear. If a large percentage make it through to spawn it will boost stocks in the river for years to come and will hopefully become a great wild barramundi fishery for the long term.

The opportunity to catch fish of this quality in such large numbers does not come across often and I am glad we made the most of it. I urge any

anglers heading to the Gladstone region to experience this now unique fishery to do so responsibly and be mindful that the big barramundi are now part of a breeding population and need to be conserved for the future of the fishery.





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