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Hijinks @ Hinch Pt. 2

Angler: Mick Horn

Fish: Flathead

Lure: ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Natural

Jighead: TT Lures Head Hunter Extreme 1/2oz 3/0XH



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Bread & Butter

By Ryan Dixon

Bream, whiting and flathead are commonly referred to as bread and butter species when it comes to fishing. This means that they are the most common species that anglers catch and target. In my local area bream, flathead, bass and mangrove jack are the species that I target most and have the most success catching. In this article I'm going to outline my techniques, gear and what I look for when chasing my bread and butter species.

Flathead

Without a doubt flathead would be the most common species lure fishos target.

Personally I love catching flathead as they are good fighters and it is a very satisfying feeling releasing a large female lizard after a few quick photos. When chasing flathead, likely areas I look for are drop offs, sand flats, and places that hold plenty of bait fish. As flathead are a bottom feeder, using soft plastics with a jig head that is heavy enough to keep you in contact with the bottom is imperative and I always retrieve my lure with the current, as flathead sit facing into the current.

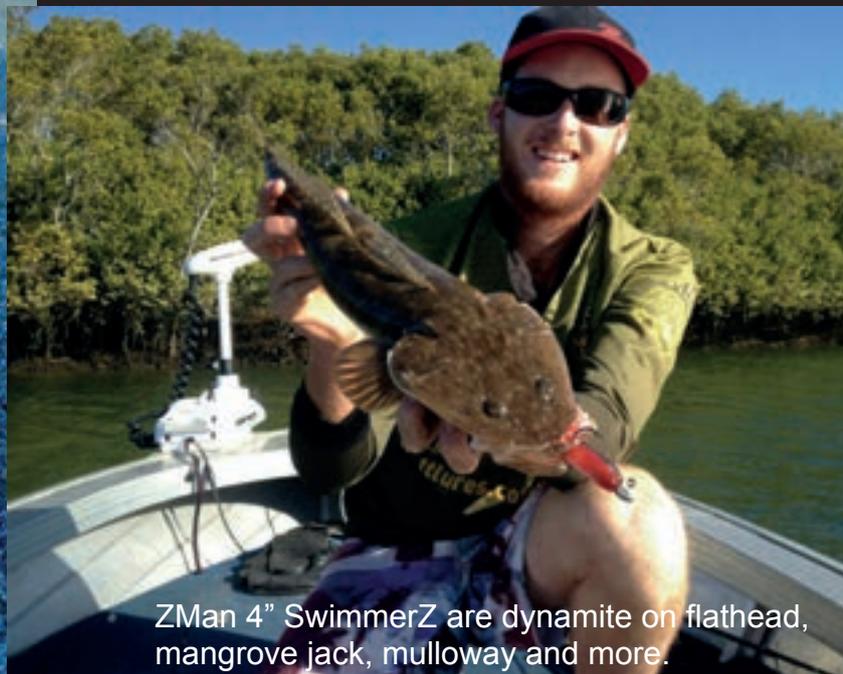
Line size is also important when targeting flathead as they have very sharp, fine teeth and a lot of the time they inhale the lure enough to easily bite you off with their vigorous headshakes. I never use less than a 10lb leader and the plastics I use most often for flathead are the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, ZMan 3" MinnowZ and the versatile ZMan 2.5" GrubZ matched with TT jigheads to suit the depth and current.



Ryan with a solid flatty



ZMan 2.5" GrubZ appeal to a wide range of species

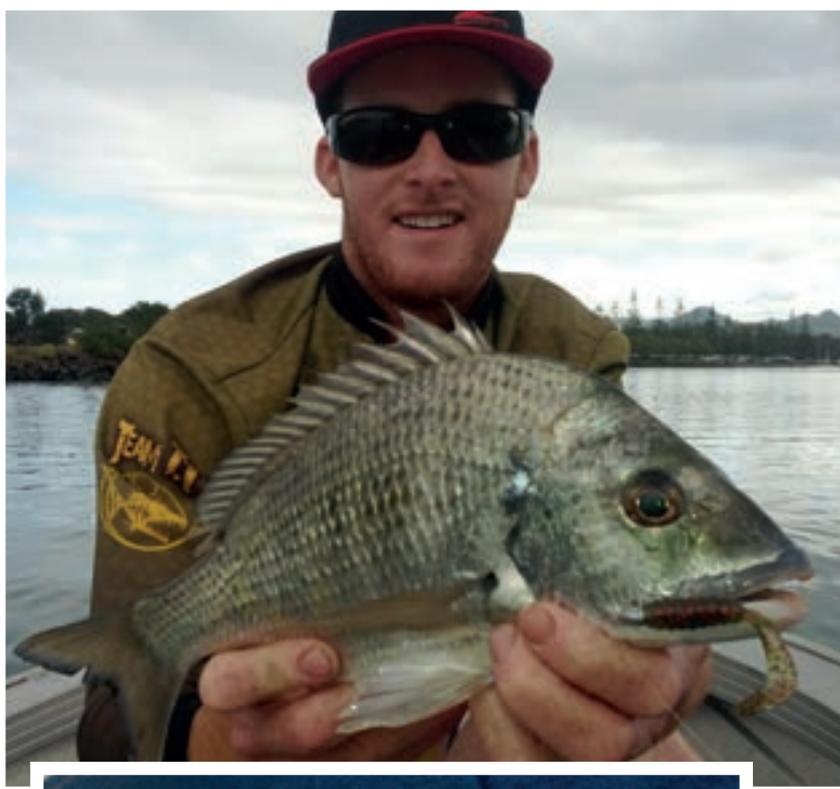


ZMan 4" SwimmerZ are dynamite on flathead, mangrove jack, mulloway and more.

Bream

Yellowfin bream are the species that I target most in my area. They can be one of the most challenging species and I've found they are getting smarter over time. This sees me constantly having to change my techniques to catch them on a regular basis. Bream can be found in a wide variety of areas, including shallow sand flats, weed beds, rock walls, canals, moored boats, deep holes, oyster leases, bridge pylons, shallow reefs and natural structure. I find that most structure will hold bream, as it provides plenty of food for them. Whether it's barnacles on rocks, bridge pylons or the underside of a moored boat, or just trying to find small crabs and other critters that also call the structure home.

Choosing your line size for bream can be very difficult as you need it to be light enough to get them to bite but heavy enough so you can extract them from their structure. The clarity of the water will also influence your decision, with super clear water making it hard to catch bream with any leader over 4lb. My favourite lures for bream are ZMan 2.5" GrubZ, ZMan 3" ShrimpZ and the TT Lures Switchblade or Ghostblade. When fishing plastics a key consideration is making sure they are perfectly weighted so you can leave the lure in the strike zone for as long as possible.



(Left) Ryan with a bream on one of his go-to combos, the Zman 2.5" GrubZ and TT Lures 1/12oz #1 jighead.

(Below) Mitchell Frei with a GrubZ bream. This small plastic appeals to a wide range of fresh and saltwater species.



A solid jack that crunched a ZMan
Scented ShrimpZ in Natural



MANGROVE JACK

Mangrove jack are my favourite fish to catch. They are definitely the most challenging species I encounter in my area and are well renowned for being the ultimate fighters. Jacks can empty out your tackle box in the blink of an eye and often have you busted off before you even know they are on the end of your line. In saying that the feeling of slipping the net under a mangrove jack is extremely satisfying and keeps me going back to try and catch these thugs of the creek, again and again.

Most commonly caught in the warmer months, mangrove jack live in areas very similar to bream, they love structure, current and places that hold plenty of baitfish. Canals and rock walls are very common places to encounter mangrove jack, but I've had the most success casting lures at natural fallen tree snags. I find the best snags are the ones that have plenty of water over them at both high tide and low tide, with the best time to target them at the end of low tide. Heavy leader is a must when chasing jacks, with 30lb leader a minimum for me, with a heavy spinning or baitcast outfit. My choice of lures for mangrove jack are ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, ZMan 4" ShrimpZ and ZMan 3" MinnowZ matched with the appropriate TT jigheads.

BASS

Bass fishing is becoming more and more common in my area with the number of fish in the local creeks soaring due to the 2011 Brisbane floods. I love nothing more than heading out after work, slipping my canoe into the water or walking the banks of my local creek for a couple of hours and catching a few of these bronze battlers. Not only are bass hard fighting, they love smashing lures, with surface feeding fish very common in the late afternoon and early morning.

In the creeks, bass will more often than not be found holding close to structure, with fallen trees being the most common snags to be found. Patches of lily pads, steep banks and deep holes are also likely spots where bass will hold. Keeping a keen eye out and casting to any surface movement can also be effective. When chasing bass your outfit can vary from a light spinning outfit to a baitcast outfit, depending on what lures you are using. When casting TT Vortex spinnerbaits and ZMan ChatterBaits, I use a baitcast combo and when using small plastics I use a spinning outfit. For bass my choice of lures includes the two mentioned above, as well as the 4" ZMan ShrimpZ rigged on the surface and also the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ rigged with a TT Jig Spinner. I mainly use 8lb leader for bass, but depending on the structure I am fishing this will vary from time to time.

Hopefully the gear and techniques I use for my bread and butter species can help you with yours, whether you're just getting into lure fishing or you're already hooked on this fantastic sport.



TT Lures jighead and Jig Spinner, combined with a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ - Bass On!



ShrimpZ Bass



There's a ZMan in there somewhere! Mitchell with a creek bass.

ZMan Marlin!

Story - David Granville

Photo - Craig McCulloch

Being a keen marlin fisherman and having caught many marlin on artificial offerings over the years I was pretty confident I would be able to catch a marlin on several of the lures in the ZMan range.

I assumed that the first marlin I caught on a ZMan would fall to a BallyhooZ, RibbonZ or maybe an 8" StreakZ XL, which all resemble marlin fodder. But no, just when you think you understand a fish it does something totally out of character and makes a mockery of your so called expertise.

I was looking forward to ringing up the TT/ZMan crew and telling them how I skilfully rigged a BallyhooZ or RibbonZ and converted it into my first ZMan billfish capture. However this couldn't be further from the truth – my first ZMan marlin was a total fluke. Yep pure arse!

You see I was working a 9" GrubZ in Electric Pink on a 4oz TT Tournament Series SL12 jighead on the bottom hoping for a pearl perch or snapper. We were live baiting at the same time in an area known for marlin but the GrubZ was the last thing I expected one to eat – especially on the bottom.

My plastic had just hit the sea floor in 60m of water – I engaged the reel and gave it one lift of the rod tip when it got slammed. I hooked up straight away and line spewed from the reel momentarily before going totally slack. I thought I had pulled the hook and started winding flat out just in case he was coming at me. Coming at me alright – next thing this baby black marlin came rocketing out of the water just metres from the boat. Eventually everything came tight again and to my surprise the hook was still firmly lodged in the corner of the mouth.

It was only a little fish – around 8 to 10kg I estimate – so he spent most of the time just jumping around without taking a heck of a lot of line. I don't normally lift marlin into the boat – preferring to release them in the water – but this little tacker was destined to become famous and I really wanted a photo with my first marlin on a soft plastic.

I was only using 40lb leader so it was with some trepidation that I grabbed the leader half expecting it to snap. It didn't though and I was able to grab his bill and support his body weight as I lifted him for a quick photo before releasing him none the wiser. Interestingly as I held him up for the photo he spewed out five slimy mackerel and a big squid – no wonder they grow to 1000lb!

I guess the lesson is you never stop learning and I'm sure most people expect marlin to do most of their feeding on or near the surface. However this little guy hadn't read the text book as he was down there scrounging along the bottom with the pearlies and flathead looking for GrubZ!



David with his GrubZ Marlin, the last thing he expected when fishing the bottom!



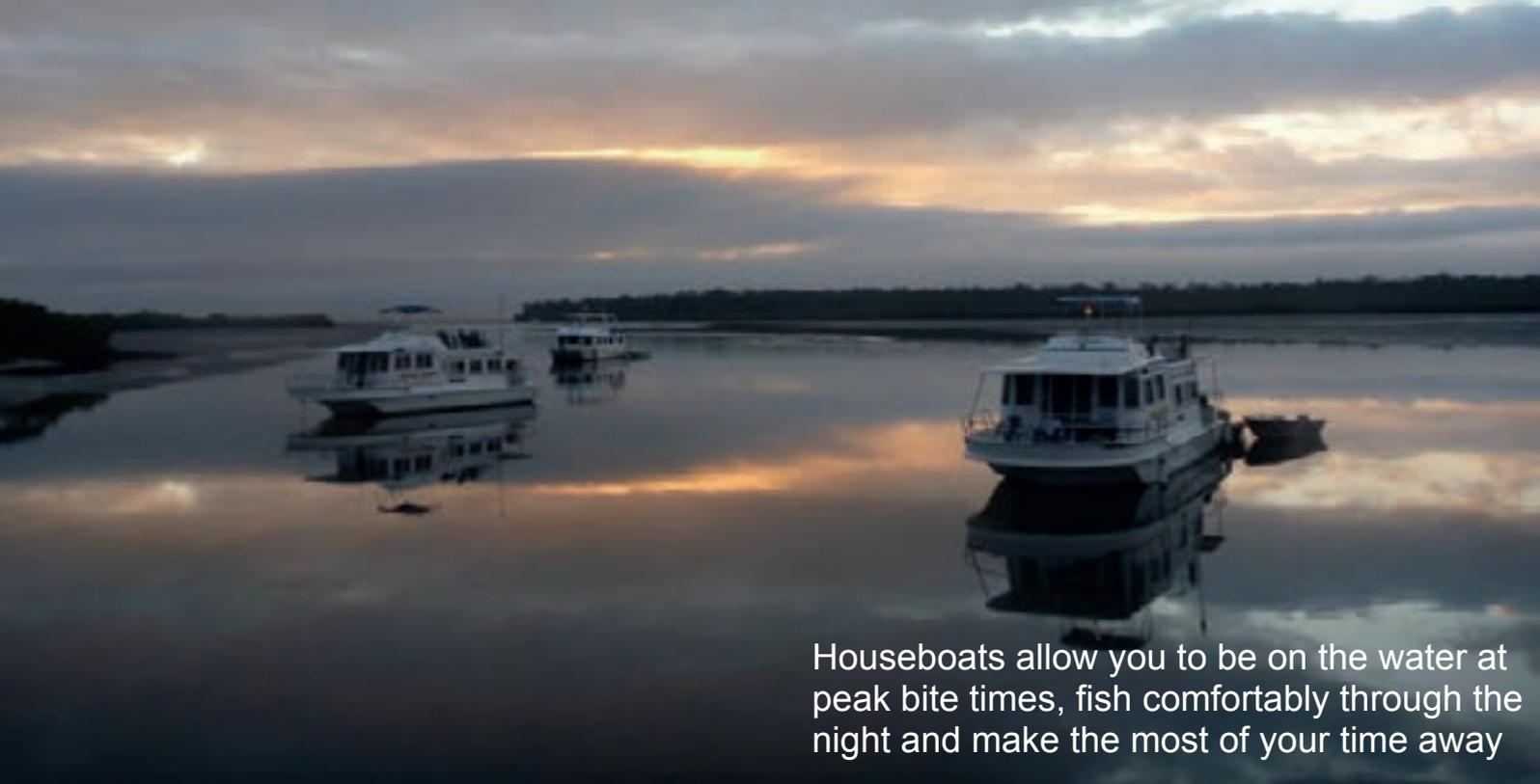
A tonne of fishing gear & the kitchen sink! *By Aidan Robertson*

The School I go to was having a houseboat trip for our Marine class, so I jumped at the opportunity to get out fishing with the ZMan / TT Lures gear! We arrived at Tin Can Bay Monday morning, boarded the houseboats and headed to Kaurie Creek in the Great Sandy Straits, inside Fraser Island. On the way I rigged up my rods, the lure of choice being the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Motor Oil rigged on a TT 1/4oz Jighead. We arrived at Kaurie creek, anchored up and put out the pots in search of a feed of crabs. The fishing was very slow because of the dirty water from the outgoing tide, although we did find some awesome looking creeks that I was keen to fish the next morning on the incoming tide.



Aidan with a nice flathead on the ever reliable Motor Oil 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ

The morning came around and it was perfect weather! Greeted with glassed out conditions and plenty of fish life moving actively on the surface, we set off in the tinnies and headed up a few creeks we had discovered the previous day. The creeks were alive with fish life, spooking bream and flathead as we came into the creek. We cut the engine and set up for a drift. After a couple of casts with the ZMan Curly TailZ the fish came to the party with a few flathead around 45cm caught, along with a couple of small bream.



Houseboats allow you to be on the water at peak bite times, fish comfortably through the night and make the most of your time away

After reaching the end of the creek we made a move to another good looking creek nearby. We set up for another drift at the mouth of the creek and the slow incoming tide took us up the creek at a perfect speed. It wasn't long before we were hooked up to more fish, in fact for about a thirty minute period it was a fish a cast! Casting out the Curly Tail plastic in Motor Oil and letting it sink to the bottom, before giving it two short sharp flicks, was enough to entice the bream and flathead to bite.



We reached one really nice corner in the creek where I cast out the 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ plastic, let it sink to the bottom, gave it two short flicks and BANG! I was on. The fish screamed back to the bottom and it was definitely not a flathead or a bream. As it came up to the surface to my surprise it was a mangrove jack and there was a bigger one with it! After a cracker fight the jack was landed and this was my first lure caught jack, measuring in at around 30cm on the Swivel's Fish Measure. After a few photos it was slid back into the water to fight another day.

After re-rigging we headed back up past the hole to give it another go. This time I cast out along the mangrove lined creek and let the plastic sink to the bottom and before I could even give it a flick the line pulled tight and I was on again. The culprit this time turned out to be a better sized flathead. After some rod bending action I landed the flathead of around 55cm, which after a few quick photos was also released. The day went on and the fishing action didn't seem to stop, but we had other work to do so we left a hot bite and headed back to the houseboat.



Jacks of any size are good fun and put a smile on your face!



After having such a good session at Kaurie I was keener than ever to see what the other two spots we were visiting had to offer. We pulled up anchor on the houseboats and set off again, this time for Garry's Anchorage. After doing some sightseeing on the way up, including spotting some dolphins and a seal, we arrived at Garry's. We set out again in the boats and fished some nearby mudflats for dusky flathead, landing a couple of around 45cm and losing a couple of bigger ones. It was another great spot to fish, not as many fish as Kaurie but still a great experience. The flathead were caught on mud / sand flats in 0.5m to 3m of water. When chasing flathead around spots like this I like to look for bait, drop offs, weed, shelly bottoms, drains and water movement pushing off the flats.

The next day rolled around and we arrived at our final stop for the trip, Teebar Creek. The fishing wasn't too bad, still landing a few bream and flathead on the plastics. A beautiful sunset on the last day ended a perfect four days living aboard the houseboat. It was a great experience, I had an awesome time and the fishing was a bonus... not to mention I used one plastic and one jighead for the four days, the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Motor Oil rigged on a TT Lures 1/4oz Jighead. Luckily the ZMan plastics are 10X Tough!

Cheers Aidan



FISHING THE FLATZ

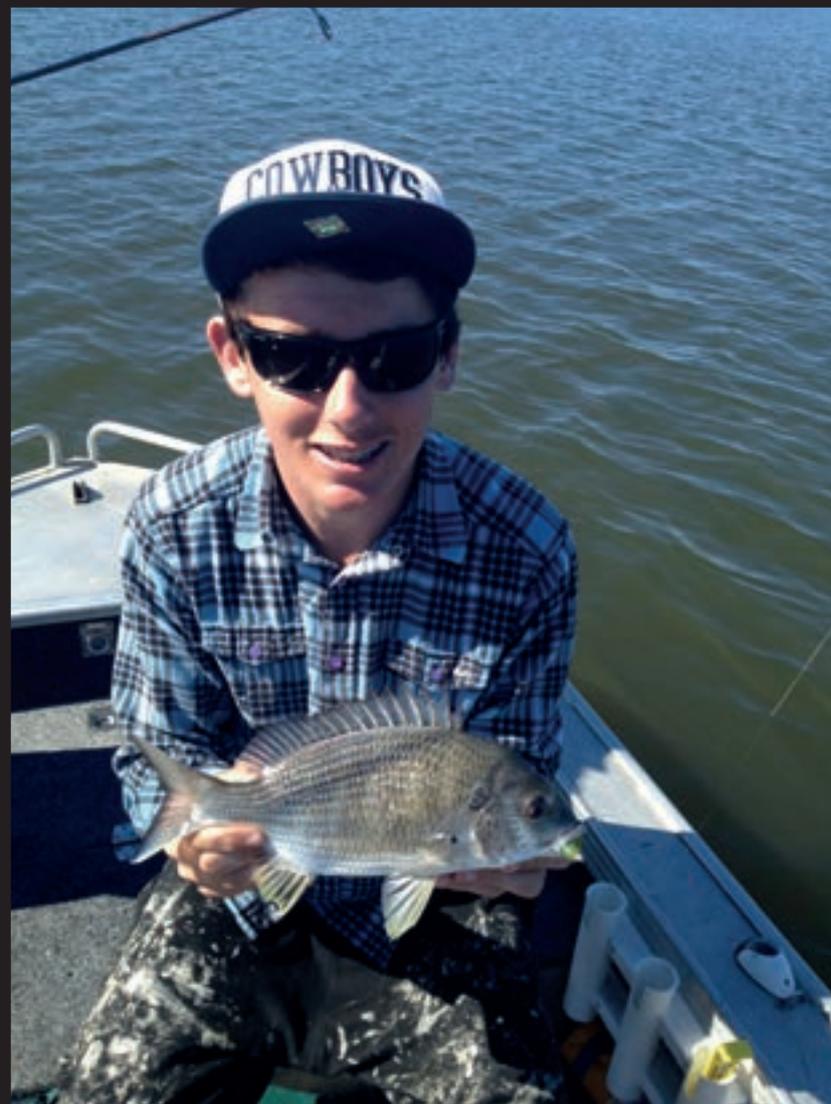


The flats are home to a variety of species.

All over Australia in estuarine rivers and creeks there are sand flats, some shallower than others but they all hold good fish. There are many different species, particularly in South East Queensland, you can target when fishing the flats, including bream, flathead and whiting. Flats hold many types of food, including worms, yabbies and smaller bait fish and this is what brings the fish onto these shallow areas. Some flats hold consistent and good numbers of fish, while others hold only a few fish or have fish moving through the area, so it pays to look around and just give them a try first hand.

Not too long ago a mate and I decided to give the local flats a working in his tinny. The plan was to hit the water nice and early to catch the last two hours of the run out tide and then just fish the rest of the day in the canals. So we put the boat in at around 5:30am, just as the sun was rising and headed towards our spot. Upon arriving we cut the motor, just before the flat, to rig up our rods. Both of us opted to go with a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ, one in Motor Oil and the other Bloodworm, matched with a TT Lures 1/12oz and 1/20oz jighead. These are the plastics and jigheads we have had success on in the past so no need to change it up!

Once rigged up we positioned the boat upstream of the flat to catch the tide across it (unfortunately the Minn Kota electric motor was out of action for the day). We cast our GrubZ as far as possible ahead of the boat and drifted towards them so the plastics would appear a lot more natural and not have any drag through the water. It didn't take long to get the first hook up of the morning. A lovely acrobatic tailor had engulfed my mates ZMan and was determined to stay away from the boat, but after a short tussle it was in the boat and measured in at 37cm. Even a toothy tailor couldn't bite through the ZMan with its 10X Tough ElaZtech construction!



No more than a minute after, I hooked up to a decent bream which gave me a workout on the light line, but it was hooked perfectly in the corner of the jaw so wasn't getting away. It went 35cm on the measure and we both smiled for a photo. We continued our drift, picking up a few smaller bream, before a move to the other side of the flat was on the agenda.

Not long after arriving at our new spot a good-sized flathead was connected to the end of my line and my reel started screaming! A few minutes later a 56cm lizard was netted and after a couple of quick photos was released to fight another day. We continued to drift and I turned around to see tailor busting up small baitfish. Seconds later my ZMan was crunched by what I assumed to be a decent fish, so I played it slow and a respectable 38cm bream was slid into the net. We then resumed our drift and picked up a lot of little fatties and bream but nothing worth writing home about.



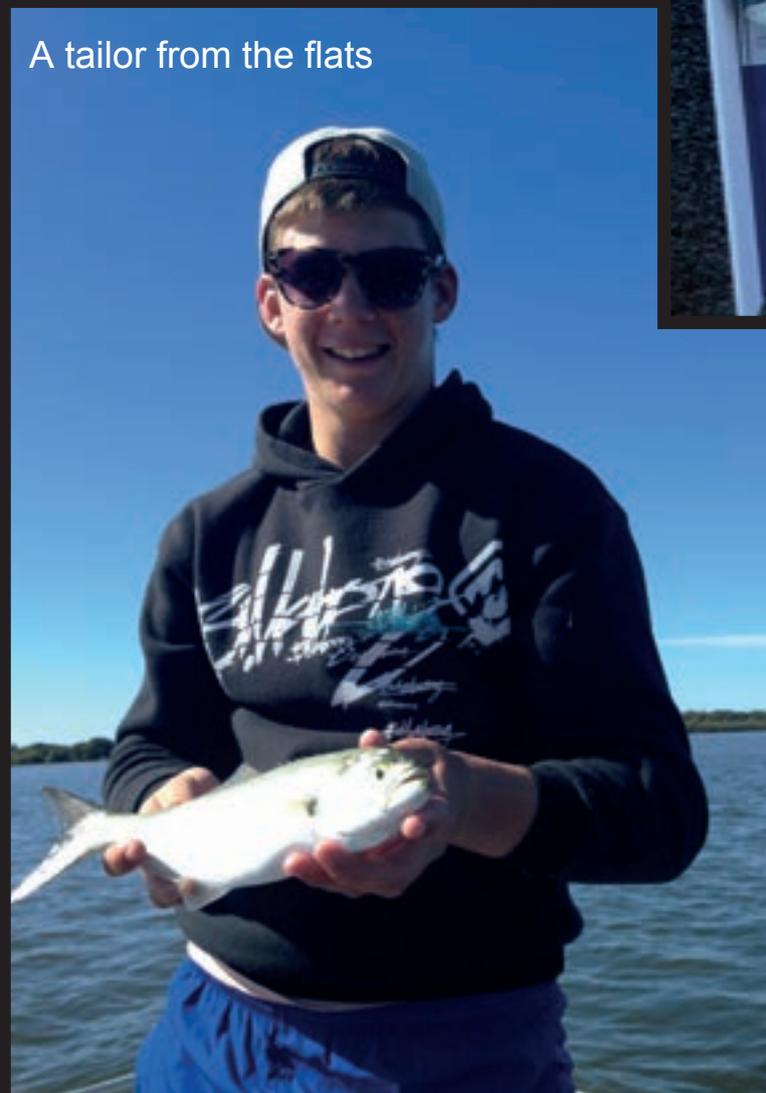
A solid bream on the TT HWS jighead and ZMan 2.5" GrubZ.



The gear that we were using included Shimano 1000 Stradic and Sustain reels matched with G-Loomis 2-6lb GL2's and Shimano 1-3kg Raiders. The braid spooled on the reels is 6lb Sunline Super PE and 3lb Stren Microfuse. The leader we opted for was 3 and 4lb fluorocarbon, and although it seems light we find that you have to use light leader in the clear shallow water. We have even landed max limit (75cm) flatties on this light leader, so it can be done as long as you take your time and let them do what they want.



A tailor from the flats



The advantage is that there isn't really much structure on the flats, so all you have to do is wait for the fish to tire and it's all yours! The standout plastic we have found on the flats is the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Motor Oil, Bloodworm, Bubble Gum, Copper Penny and Pumpkinseed. We rig these on TT 1/20oz through to 1/8oz jigheads, depending on tidal current and depth.

Head out onto your local flats with a packet of ZMan plastics and TT Jigheads and it won't be long until you're connected to a fish of your own!

Search for Perch

By Cameron Cronin



Cameron with solid EP
on a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ

With summer coming up fast, most of us are looking forward to the hot fishing that is now just around the corner. If I asked any keen lure angler what they planned to target this summer, you could almost guarantee that species like bream, whiting, flathead, bass and a variety of pelagics such as bonito and kingfish would be at the top of the hit list. There is one species however, that I find misses out on some much deserved limelight, especially in my local waterways around Sydney. That fish is the estuary perch.

In the Sydney region, there is a general consensus among anglers that the estuary perch is a species that is only available in small numbers. The next time a passer-by tries to tell me of the rarity and mysterious nature of perch, as I unhook my catch, will definitely not be the last! The reality of the situation however is that estuary perch or EP's for short, are actually an extremely viable angling target in Sydney and once you have broken down the 'perch barriers' and caught your first few, it almost becomes too easy to track down a perch or five!

The Perch Barriers

No matter where you fish, Estuary Perch are just one of those species that seem to be shrouded in mystery. Those who have not caught perch before often think of waking up at the crack of dawn to fish a glassed out creek with morning fog rolling across the water's surface and timber snags lining the banks. Although perch will be quite often found in a scenario like this, there are plenty of other places to begin searching, with a lot of them being much closer to home. I think the reason why people don't target perch in the first place is because they believe they just aren't there. Often, all you have to do to encounter your first perch is actually target them...

Targeting Perch

Firstly and most importantly, you must choose a location that actually holds fish. I would suggest first trying a location in brackish to salt water. Because perch move around a lot, they can be found anywhere from gutters and channels near the mouth of the estuary, to tree lined banks right up in pure fresh water. Probably the best place to consistently locate perch, in my opinion, is around bridge pylons.

These areas hold plenty of bait and provide our quarry with cover to shelter from the current, so it makes perfect sense that an aggressive predator, such as a perch, would call such a place home. Other places worth a look include deep holes upriver, snaggy tree-lined banks, weed beds, marinas and pretty much any form of structure that will provide both shelter and food.

As a general rule, you can maximise your chances by fishing further downstream after rain and vice versa, although this often does not apply for smaller estuaries. You can also help increase your chances by fishing at night and by reading posts on online forums to help out with finding successful locations. It also pays to remember that perch are one of those species that get easier the more you target them: once you catch a few and crack a pattern for your local system, everything will soon fall into place.



Another EP that couldn't resist a ZMan Scented ShrimpZ

It may seem obvious, but you are going to catch nowhere near as many perch if you don't use techniques specific to the species (although when selecting a rod, reel and line, look no further than your favourite bream gear), just like when you would fish for other species like bream, jewfish and whiting on lures. Because perch are aggressive implosion feeders, there are a wide range of lures that will all catch perch on any given day. I find that the sole most important factor in consistently locating perch is to make sure you are using a lure that is matching how and what the perch are feeding on. For example, in my local waterway there has been a large influx of small mullet and the perch are holding in deeper water, waiting for the mullet to pass overhead before smashing into the hapless school just under the surface. This calls for a different approach and I have been using larger super deep hard bodied lures and larger vibes and plastics to great effect to target these deep water mullet feeding fish.

So when you arrive at your next perch spot, take a look around. What types of bait are visible? Is there no bait at all? How big is the bait? Is the water deep? Is there any current/snags? Asking yourself these questions can almost always bolster your catch rate, especially when you are first starting out.



Matt Fieni with a solid ShrimpZ EP

Once you have assessed the situation, it is time to tie on a lure according to what you have found. When I am fishing over an open sandy bottom in deeper water, I will almost always tie on a blade first. This type of lure always seems to get a take from fish holding in deeper water and even if the school is not actively feeding they will often hit a small and noisy presentation out of pure aggression. In my experience, the best blades I have ever used for my perch fishing are the TT Switchblades in 1/8oz and 1/6oz, along with the TT Lures Ghostblade in 1/12oz in low current / shallow water situations. By hopping these presentations across the bottom, I have found that I can rack up a good catch of perch even in the toughest of conditions. I have also noticed that the Switchblades slightly larger profile and stronger action often seems to pull much bigger fish when compared to other popular blades from other manufacturers.

However, while fishing a more snaggy area, such as that typically found around areas like bridge pylons it is often near impossible to fish a blade without racking up a serious bill to replace all the lures you just lost to snags! This is when I switch to a different lure, such as a soft plastic. These can be worked slowly and subtly past heavy structure, with the added benefit that if you do snag up, they will cost you a hell of a lot less.

So far I have had a lot of success casting the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ and the 3" ShrimpZ around structure. Recently I have also had success casting the larger 4" ShrimpZ to fish feeding on prawns skipping across the surface. When I fish a plastic near structure, especially a curl tail lure such as the GrubZ, I find that the best way to fish is to do nothing! What I mean by that is to sit down current and cast up current as close to the structure as possible. By simply winding to keep in loose contact with the lure, your lure will drift past the structure not unlike an injured baitfish too weak to fight the current, drawing a strike from any waiting perch.



GrubZ EP



SwimmerZ EP



ShrimpZ EP



Switchblade EP

Sometimes though, there may not be any current to drift your lure. This is when I prefer to switch to a standard retrieve, allowing your plastic to sink as close to the bottom as possible (without touching it) and proceed to impart a couple of small jerks before allowing the lure to sink back down before repeating.

When fishing soft plastics, I find that the 1/20oz TT Hidden Weight System (HWS) jighead is a good starting weight when dead drifting, while 1/12oz TT Tournament Series jigheads are a favourite for casting, keeping in mind that you will sometimes need to alter these weights depending on the current.

One thing that is very similar with all kinds of perch fishing is the subtlety of the take. What may appear as the lure hitting a small obstruction can easily be a fish hitting the lure, therefore it is imperative that you carefully watch the braided line for any sudden movements or a stop in movement before the lure is meant to be on the bottom. Remember, strikes are free and if you suspect a perch has eaten the lure but do not strike, there is every chance that the fish will realise something isn't right and eject the lure, leaving a chance at another fish begging.

Last but not least remember to experiment! Using larger lures like the 3" MinnowZ and even the 4" SwimmerZ, or using completely different lures altogether such as the TT Vortex spinnerbaits can sometimes result in some awesome fish, especially in highly pressurised waterways where the fish have seen plenty of conventional presentations before. Give it a go you may be surprised by the results!

So now you know a bit about perch and how to catch them. The only step left is for you to get out there and fish for them yourself. But don't say I didn't warn you! Once you catch your first decent EP the perch addiction can be very hard to break!



TEAM **TT** LURES / ZMAN

Gold Coast Flathead Classic 2012

The Flathead Classic is run annually by the Gold Coast Sportfishing Club. Kicking off in 1994, it would have to be the premier flathead fishing tournament in the country. The location is magnificent, the club do a fantastic job of running the event and your entry covers dinner and dessert for the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night, plus lunch on the Saturday. Entry also includes a tournament shirt for each angler in the team, a massive bag of sponsors' product, including line, leader, hats, stubby coolers and tonnes of lures, along with entry into stacks of random draws. Seven names are also drawn randomly each day over the four days, making 28 entrants in the final draw for prizes ranging from and icebox through to a \$30,000 Bluefin boat, Suzuki outboard and Oceanic trailer package. The juniors don't miss out either with their own random draw with a major prize of a tinnie and outboard motor.



The random draw prize boat.
You could have taken this home just by entering!

Day One

We reached our first spot just prior to the 6.30am 'lines in' time and there were a few boats milling in the area hoping for an early deep water bite. Fishing in a few metres of water, with a bit of run, it was 1/2oz jigheads all round and a mix of plastics including ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, 3" MinnowZ and 4" SwimmerZ. We picked up a couple of small flathead early and then Mick came up solid on a big fish. It was at this point that he informed us that he was fishing 6lb leader and we all proceeded to pray to the fish gods as a big flathead is worth a lot of points. After a couple of solid runs the flathead just held in the current and wouldn't budge on the light leader, so it was over to plan B. Using the electric we led the flathead into shallower water and an eddy that took away the advantage of current. A minute later we saw the big girl and this was followed by some tense seconds as her head slid into the net. High fives all round!



Not a bad way to start the event!
'Largest Flathead on a Soft Plastic' 2012

On the Flathead Classic measure board the fish went 91cm and took out the trophy for '2012 Longest Flathead on a Soft Plastic'. The lure was a ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Natural, rigged on a TT Lures Head Hunter Extreme 1/2oz 3/0XH jighead. The deep bite shutdown not long after this fish and we decided to work some creek mouths, flats and drains. We managed to put together just over 20 flathead for the day including some high 40's and 50's and another nice flathead over 60cm. On returning to lodge our paperwork and card we discovered many had battled to find fish and quietly we hoped to be sitting in the top twenty, out of 178 teams, at the end of day one. To our surprise we had managed to finish 5th for day one, an awesome result. Lures that produced fish on day one included the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly tailZ in Natural, Space Guppy, Motor Oil and Pearl, 3" MinnowZ in Electric Chicken and 4" SwimmerZ in Hitch and Pearl.

Day Two

After a fantastic day one, we were now placing a bit more pressure on ourselves to do well and try and hold a spot in the top ten. There are a lot of skilled anglers that fish this annual event and we were pretty confident that some teams who had struggled day one would quickly adjust their plan and find fish on day two.

The wind was blowing hard making fishing a little trickier, but we slid into position ready to fish the deep water bite that had produced on the morning of day one and unfortunately this resulted in... nothing. Ok, time to work our way through the spots that had produced on day one. We persisted all day and Troy managed to tick over a few fish on the 4" SwimmerZ in Hitch as well as landing a tailor that ended up taking out the 'Longest Tailor' for the three day tournament at 54cm.

With only a couple of hours left in the day our score card was looking pretty sad compared to day one, with only nine or so flathead and Troy's solid tailor. By placing the additional pressure on ourselves we had changed lures frequently, travelled long distances and changed locations a lot, in the process not putting the fish on the ruler. It was time to make a call and fish hard for the last two hours. Mick made a call that saw us working an area of shallow flats that were covered in rubble, weed and patches of sand. The call was a good one and within minutes of reaching our new location Mick had a 66cm flathead in the net and I was hooked up.

What followed was a hot bite that saw us lift our total for the day to over twenty fish again and the mood in the boat lifted from glum to party time! The quality of the fish weren't there though and we didn't have the big kicker fish, so heading to drop in the catch cards our hopes were that we could hold in the top ten. Lures that did the job included 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, 3" MinnowZ and 4" SwimmerZ. The standout lure and the one that fired for us over the weed in the afternoon was the ZMan 3" MinnowZ in one of the newer colours, Gold Rush. The black back and clear belly loaded with gold glitter looks awesome in the water and created a good silhouette against the dark weedy bottom. We were also testing the new TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads, designed with a split grip grub keeper to lock the ZMan super-soft and flexible plastic onto the jighead, and the result was a double thumbs up, with plenty of fish landed and no slippage of the plastic on the jighead. When the final results came through for day two we were sitting in 7th with a few not far in front and unfortunately a few not far behind!

Troy Wegner takes out the longest tailor



The juniors gather for their random draw



Winner!

Day Three

After the slow start on day two we decided to stick close to home on day three for the shorter session and concentrate on fishing hard in the area where we had our hot bite the afternoon before. Gold Rush 3" MinnowZ all round and the bite started early in the dirty water, with a dozen flatties in the first couple of hours. As the tide started pushing in and the water cleared the bite became tougher, we changed to natural colours and fished hard. The 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Baby Bass produced a few fish, but it was a bit of a grind to the final siren with no real standout fish for the session. We had again managed over twenty fish for the session, but no size. As the length of the fish increases so do the points, with an undersized fish worth 5 points, while a 40cm fish is worth 40points and the points increase as the fish do. Every fish that is 40cm plus is welcomed aboard with a woohoo! We dropped in our catch cards, dropped off the boat and arrived back at the venue in time for a feed and a coldie.

While we caught up with mates fishing in other teams there were raffles, random prize draws, sponsors stalls, casting comps and more! Then it was down to the announcement of the junior winners, individual winners and top 10... and in 7th place, Team TT / ZMan. We were absolutely stoked, this was my first Flathead Classic and we had no time to pre-fish, but we had a selection of the right plastics and jigheads, a bit of a plan, plenty of sunscreen and munchies and we fished hard, while also trying to keep it fun and relaxed with plenty of sledging! The 2012 Flathead Classic was hands down the best comp I have fished and I am looking forward to next year. For a full wrap up and more, check out www.goldcoastsportfishingclub.com.au.

Gavin Dunne is all smiles after winning the boat package



Another shot of the big dog!

Hijinks @ Hinchinbrook Pt 2

By Robbie Wells



Robbie with a Hinchinbrook Channel Barra

After two days spent around the jetty of madness reality hit hard the next morning as we awoke to a stiff 20-25 southerly and plummeting air temperatures. Our only realistic option was to head up the channel chasing winter barra. With no real Solar/Lunar phase to get excited about and 17.9 degree water temperature, there was no doubt we would have to work hard to pick up a few fish.

The Plan was to fish the waters around the Herbert and Seymour, in particular the heavily timbered area around the old fishing huts. As the tide drops fish head to the shallower flats and drains out the front. Upon arrival at the huts the Humminbird side scan showed awesome country, with a couple of nice ledges and drop offs, all covered in heavy timber... but no real shows. We had an ideal slow drift so I dropped a 1/4oz TT Snake Head jighead, rigged weedless on a ZMan 5" Grass Kicker. I could feel it bumping and rolling over every bit of structure. My wife Sue opted to use a green ZMan 4" SwimmerZ rigged weedless and Jeff was peppering the banks and bumping a Halco Scorpion through the timber. After four drifts and not a rattle from even a fingermark, it was time to move as this spot usually produces reasonably quickly before they shutdown. A spot that just screams Barra and Fingermark, but not today... conditions were tough.

A ZMan Scented ShrimpZ drifted into a snag is a deadly presentation.



With around an hour before low, we fished a section of sloping flats with a few drains that were just starting to show the last of the mangrove roots, as well as a promising increase in water temperature. Again the drift was kind to us as we proceeded to pepper every nook and barra cranny we could see. This produced only a couple of rat barra caught after changing to a 3" Glow ShrimpZ rigged on a Snake Head and using a really mega-slow hop and retrieve technique. We approached a small, but deeper and longer drain and Sue fired out her 4" SwimmerZ and again commenced a mega-slow retrieve. About halfway back she gave it a five second pause and two winds later the shallow water erupted and a solid barra started zig zagging its way towards the boat, with Sue frantically trying to get some slack line back. The barra was no more than three feet away when it proceeded to do the u-turn from hell, followed by a humongous jump beside the boat. In classic barramundi fashion, mouth open, head shaking, it was like slow motion as I watched the poor old ZMan fly towards us and hit the side of the boat.

A solid chrome, 80cm plus barra raced off as if still hooked. Sue was not impressed and I swear that if we were on it more with the landing net in hand I could have scooped it mid flight it jumped that close!

Another hundred casts later and in a similar drain, my 3" Holographic ShrimpZ rigged on a Snake Head was engulfed and after the usual barra aerals we had a nice mid-sixties model boated and after a couple of photos, released to fight another day. Ten casts later, Jeff landed a 59cm barra that played up for its size.

By this time the tide was rising, the wind had dropped, the sun was sinking into the horizon and it went from quiet to super quiet. With the lure of the jetty always on our mind, the call was made to fish the three groups of pylons beside the old jetty. Between the second and third pylon group there is a small lump where bait holds and this is a good area for dropping a few ZMan 5" StreakZ, especially Opening Night, down to harass the trevally population that frequent there.

Upon arriving at the spot the sounder screamed and the small lump appeared with a few nice fish holding on the bottom, but no real bait shows midway. Before I was even in neutral Jeff yelled 'fish on' as his rod bent and reel screamed. A few minutes later a nice fingermark was doing its best not to swim into my landing net. In three drops Jeff smashed three fingermark and then I looked around and Sue's rod was also loaded up to no doubt another one of these brawlers. The next ten minutes was fingermark central as nine fish were landed and released, by no means large fish but awesome fun. Seven were caught on Opening Night StreakZ with TT 1/4-3/8oz jigheads, a favourite combo for this type of fishing.

Just like it started, it stopped again and it was off to the boat ramp for home and our last day of fishing.



Jeff with a fingermark landed during a hot bite - Zman 5" StreakZ in Opening Night.



Another sleepless night passed and our last winter barra session was upon us. We headed to Neames Inlet to fish the series of drains, but this time we left a little earlier as this location drains faster than others. As we entered Neames, around the first bend we were greeted with a rather respectable size snapping handbag of around 3.5m. Spotting a crocodile of this size sure puts a shock in the system, as I find you become a bit complacent when you don't see them all the time. That's what I love about the Hinchinbrook region it's still so raw and untamed and winter is the prime time to see these dinosaurs sunning themselves on the mudflats.

A bit further on and we arrived at the 200m stretch loaded with drains, lay down timber and a few isolated trees. This looked inviting and there was the odd 'boof' smashing up the bait fish so we were confident off at least a few rattles.

The first two drifts were so frustrating with barra feeding around us and no one getting a touch. On the third drift Jeff hooked up to a 60cm barra missile that gave him a bit of curry before being boated. The next hour was again dead quiet and the tide had now reached its lowest.



Zman Grass KickerZ & TT War Head = Barra!

This quiet period encouraged me to change tactics. I kept the 5" Grass Kicker on and swapped the Snake Head to a 1/4oz War Head jighead. This combo was then dropped effortlessly beside the boat over a single tree root snag. Three seconds into the drop the line darted off and a really nice barra launched in the air and again ejected the plastic skyward. The next two drops on the same snag consisted of two mid-sixties barra, hooked by simply dropping the plastic or they hit just after the first or second wind.

One thing I learnt that day was that color change of your plastics is important, but it is also extremely important to select and change the jighead for perfect plastic presentation on the day. It only takes a small change in the way the plastic swims, just like the differences in techniques used while retrieving them, to make or break your day. Even though the bite was tough we persisted with the lures and jigheads that we know work and even in less than ideal conditions managed to catch a reasonable number of fish.

Time had now got the better of us and our Hijinks @ Hinchinbrook had come to an end, with four quick days spent in an awesome part Queensland.

PS: We did sneak out to the jetty the next morning for a madness session on ZMan 8" Pink StreakZ XL, boating crazy Queenfish and GTs, but that's another story.

How Goods Australia...

Check out more of Robbie & Sue in action on Facebook @ <http://www.facebook.com/#!/Sun2SeaUVProtection?fref=ts>



Jeff with a solid jetty Queenfish

Robbie and Sue are also responsible for a range of quality Australian Made UV protection clothing and one of the most versatile fishing and boating apps for your iPhone. Check out -

www.sun2seauvprotection.com.au

www.fishboatnav.com



Sue had tonnes of fun on the trevally using a TT Lures Tournament XHD jighead and ZMan 8" StreakZ XL.

For more fishing, species and gear guides, video links, pro angler profiles and to sign up for the E-Mag or view back issue, check out...

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