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Angler: Sam Hitzke

Fish: Dusky Flathead

Lure: ZMan 4" SwimmerZ - Black Back Shad

Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD - 3/8oz 5/0XH



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Soft Plastic Lure Guide



ZMan 3" MinnowZ



The ZMan 3" MinnowZ is a realistic baitfish profile with a lively little tail action that has been the undoing of everything from flathead and bass, to trevally, mangrove jack, barra and bay snapper. It is that perfect bite-sized bait that will appeal to smaller species, right through to the many metre plus barra that it has accounted for.

The tiny split fin on top of the MinnowZ allows you to conceal the point of the hook when snagless / weedless rigging, to minimise fouling with weed or snagging. The softness of the ZMan ElaZtech plastic ensures that when the fish strikes the plastic folds away and the fish finds the hook. Being 10X Tough allows you to rig the MinnowZ in a variety of ways without it being ripped or torn by pickers or during the strike and the buoyant material ensures a lively tail up action when at rest on the bottom.

The ZMan 3" MinnowZ can be rigged in a variety of ways, with the most common being a standard jighead. Simply thread the MinnowZ onto the jighead and pop the hook out through the split fin on top, about halfway down the back, ensuring the plastic is rigged straight. It can be fished with almost any retrieve, including a slow roll (slow wind), burn and kill, or a series of hops and pauses, adding to it's versatility. A 1/8, 1/6 or 1/4oz jighead is a great starting point for shallower water, less run or fishing higher in the water column, with a 3/8 or 1/2oz jighead a popular option for faster currents and deeper water.

Suitable standard jigheads include -

TT Lures Tournament Series

Hook Sizes - 2/0, 2/0H, 3/0, 3/0H.

The 'H' or 'HW' means heavy wire - a thicker, stronger hook for beginner anglers, heavier drags and jighead destroying species. The light wire is often preferred by those looking for maximum penetration when fishing light drags. Built on Gamakatsu hooks.

TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads

Hook sizes - 2/0HD, 3/0HD.

The ultimate jighead to suit the ZMan soft plastics, featuring a split grip grub keeper to lock the plastic onto the jighead without the need for a tiny dab of super glue. Built on a brutally strong Mustad hook to handle heavy drags, jighead destroying species and big fish!



The ZMan 3" MinnowZ locked onto a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD

TT Lures Head Hunter Extreme jigheads

Hook sizes - 2/0XH and 3/0XH.

Built on a brutally strong Mustad hook, the Head Hunter Extreme is ideal for targeting jighead destroying species and when fishing heavier drags or lines.

Depth Charge Light & Heavy Wire

Hook sizes - 3/0, 2/0XHD and 3/0XHD.

For those wanting to match the plastic colour to a coloured jighead for the ultimate realism. Painted head, available in light and heavy wire Gamakatsu hooks.

Snagless / Weedless options

TT Lures ChinlockZ - 3/0 or 4/0

The ChinlockZ is designed to lock the plastic onto the jighead, while maintaining very little weight so that you can fish the MinnowZ on the surface or a dead slow sink. This is an ideal technique for targeting bass and saratoga over the weed or around snags, catching barra and jacks on the flats or around mangroves and prop roots, or any other surface or dead slow sink application.



TT Lures SWS (Snagless Weight System) - 4/0

For a bit more weight, while still fishing snagless, the SWS features a weight on the belly of the worm hook that creates a slow, natural horizontal sink, for drifting that 3" MinnowZ into snags and around structure.



TT Lures Snake Head - 4/0

The Snake Head has a free swinging weight attached for maximum action, allowing you to select the weight required to suit the depth, structure and current you are fishing.



Tips

Slow down, vary your retrieve, include a few pauses and keep your twitches small.

Don't mix your ZMan with other plastics and keep them out of extreme heat for maximum life.

For more on TT Lures - www.ttlures.com.au

For more on ZMan - www.z-man.com.au

For more Fact Sheets - www.tackletactics.com.au

What's New?



One of the most popular models in the range, the ZMan 3" MinnowZ, is now available in two of ZMan's most popular colours – Motor Oil and Bloodworm. The 3" MinnowZ is a versatile baitfish profile, with a lively paddle tail that has proven effective on everything from bass and flathead, to trevally, mangrove jack and barra. It has also gained a reputation as a giant killer, ending up in the mouths of many metre plus barra. These additional colours bring the 3" MinnowZ range to a whopping 18 colours!

The other addition to the range is the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Bad Shad. Bad Shad has already been a hit in the MinnowZ, with its realistic, translucent baitfish and prawn colouration, and this colour is sure to be deadly on everything from bream, bass and flathead, to snapper, jewies and barra in this 4" profile.

www.z-man.com.au



After a stack of requests from anglers chasing a larger Ghostblade, Tackle Tactics is proud to announce the release of the 1/6oz (43mm) Ghostblade.

The 1/6oz is the same physical size as the extremely popular 1/4oz Switchblade, but with a finesse design, action and sound that is built around its polycarbonate body. The 1/6oz Ghostblade is available in 12 colours, armed with chemically sharpened black nickel trebles and will be deadly on a stack of species, including bream, bass, yellowbelly, trout, redfin, flathead, grunter, trevally and many more.

www.ttlures.com.au

Barra in the Drainz

By Wayne Harvey

It was the week leading up to the 1st of February; very hot, humid and a fair bit of fresh still in the waterways. I only had one thing on my mind... saltwater barra!!! A week prior to this, I received a phone call from my sister who told me she was coming to town and wanted to go barra fishing. I had planned a trip on opening day with my partner in crime Jo and had a few ideas in mind. Because we had a lot of rain in the area just before the season opened, I thought it was a good idea to have more than one strategy in place. I had two main plans, freshwater runoff and shallow water salt banks. As it turned out my sister was arriving in town the day after barra season opened, so this gave me a perfect opportunity to pre-fish an area where I thought I would find big barra. This wasn't to be as the conditions were windy and uncomfortable, and after two hours of sounding, looking and fishing, we had only managed one fish at 80cm. This didn't bother me too much, although it was now in the back of my head that plan B could be on the cards. The next day saw a completely different weather pattern arrive, with clear blue skies and hardly any wind around, which had me a tad excited!

By now my sister and her husband had arrived and it was time to head off. The four of us jumped into my 16' centre console and set off again in the search of quality barramundi. I started working the same area as the day before, mainly channels and gutters. We were fishing for about an hour without an enquiry when I noticed that most of the bait, mainly prawns, herring and small mullet, were holding in the mouths of small drains up in the shallows. I doubled back and started our run again, this time fishing in about 1-1.5 metres of water and focusing mainly on the mouths of drains.



Wayne with a nice 80cm plus slab of silver to open the barra season.

We would have only been fishing for about 10 minutes when I put a cast right up into the shallows and on the retrieve had a definite 'bump' from a quality fish, as the lure made its way back into deeper water. My sister, not knowing it at the time, also had a really good 'bump'. It was then that I knew the barra were holding right up in the shallows, in about a metre of water. I held the boat in position for another three casts when all of a sudden... Boom, a metre barra exploded out of the water! After a good fight a 100.5cm barra was boated, not a bad start for the second day of the season. After a couple of happy snaps with the Sis, the healthy barra was released. Now with one quality fish under my belt it was time to focus on giving everybody else in the boat a good chance of landing a quality fish.

We worked the same area for another ten minutes without result. I decided to keep moving, so we slowly motored up to the next drain, which was showing all the signs of big fish. We worked our lures in and around the drain for ten minutes without even a tap before I noticed a small junction coming off the main arm, about forty metres away, was being hammered by predatory fish. I motored up to the junction and positioned the boat so we could fire two lures into the mouth and one toward the point of the junction.

A metre saltwater barra is the goal of many northern anglers.



In the meantime I was casting back out into the main gutter in the hope that something travelling through would eat my lure. The silence was suddenly broken when my brother in law's reel started screaming! I knew this was a big fish as the drag was set pretty tight and the fish just kept on running! After a couple of good runs and a great aerial display another good fish, measuring 104cm, was landed. By now there were a couple of high fives being thrown about, along with a few cheers as we had two metre fish in the boat after about 1 ½ hours of fishing.

A couple of quick photos before the fish's release and it was all systems go again, casting back into and around the mouth of the junction, leaving no point untouched. I continued to work the main gutter behind us, where it was deeper and suddenly my line came up tight. It wasn't a huge fish but it fought hard and deep. Calling it for a foul hooked mid-sized barra, I noticed an orange sheen come up under the boat before diving quickly back down to the bottom. I knew then that it wasn't a barra, but a fairly decent fingermark. Once again a few pics were taken and it was back to business.

We worked this area for another twenty minutes, only to move back to the shallow drain that we had previously fished. There was something about this drain that had my attention, even though I wasn't sure what it was... I just had to fish it! The same technique was applied, with all three crew members casting their lures into and around the drain and twitching, hopping and slow rolling them back out again, as I kept the boat in position.



**The author's brother
in law with a 104cm**

The wind was starting to pick up by now and the tide was nearly done. I was just about to call last drinks when bang! The Mrs was on and again it was another good barra! The fish whistled off at lightning speed along the bank, before heading into her comfort zone of deeper water. This fish was hooked solid and didn't jump once, instead slugging it out and fighting down deep with hard, intense runs. After a few tail boils and a head shake, the fish was landed and measured 101cm. What a day! Three metery's and a fingermark in under 2 ½ hours! A couple more quick photos and a release to follow made the whole crews day. After a few more high fives and a bit more cheering, it was time to head for home. The day couldn't have been scripted any better for such a short window of fishing, with every crew member on board stoked, including myself.

The gear of choice on the day was 20lb spin tackle. This makes life easy for newcomers to the game and takes the hassle out of 'bird nesting' and 'over runs, allowing more time for your lures to be in the water. Lures of choice on the day were soft plastic paddle tails and curl tails rigged on the TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 6/0 jigheads. The hooks these are built on are outstanding! The slim profile on these heavy duty hooks means that not only do you get less water resistance, for a smooth action, but you are also getting the strength you need when fighting big fish. I will be sure that I have enough HeadlockZ HD jigheads in my tackle box for my next trip as they have proven themselves as tough and that's a must when chasing big fish like metre plus saltwater barramundi.



Wayne's partner Jo Harvey with a metrey of her own.



Wayne being the good guide and putting his sister onto a solid fish



A solid fingermark was a nice surprise while chasing barra.

Night Fishing

By

Cameron

Cronin



As lure fishing of all types grows more and more popular, we are always on the lookout for that gun fishing method that will get us ahead of the pack and catching more fish. One hot summer's night, a year or so back, me and a friend were returning home from a session on the flats a bit later than usual. We decided to have a quick flick at a spot that usually isn't too productive, however, under the cover of darkness the spot suddenly came to life and in under thirty minutes we had landed around five estuary perch each and a handful of quality flatties. This session made me realise just how productive night fishing could be and not long after this introduction I had taught myself to consistently land numbers of fish and quality fish that simply were not possible during the daylight hours.

So, why is night fishing so effective? It is my belief that in the heavily urbanised waterways that typify Sydney, fish can quickly shut down due to boat traffic and other interference, especially in shallow water. Also, fish that hunt during the daytime are often more at risk of being preyed upon by waterbirds, such as eagles, pelicans and cormorants. At night however, the vast majority of these 'threats' disappear, causing many fish species to feed much more aggressively. Night fishing is also a great way for people with daytime commitments, like work and school, to get a fish in and it is very time efficient, as you will generally spend much less time flicking in between landing fish. Though you can catch any species at night, there are a few certain species that seem to really fire up once the sun goes down. In my local area, these species are:

Flathead

Despite the flathead's popularity as a species, I am constantly surprised at the number of people that believe flathead become dormant at night. This is definitely not the case as flathead are an extremely viable night time target and in my opinion flathead actually become much more active under the cover of darkness. While night fishing for flatties I tend to use plastics that are slightly larger than those used during the day, with my all-time favourite lure being the 4" ZMan SwimmerZ in the Red Shad colour. This colour casts a great silhouette in the darkness and its larger body and deadly roll at slow speeds really lends itself to being crunched by some true croc-sized flatties.

Other lures to consider are the ZMan MinnowZ, Curly Tail StreakZ and ShrimpZ, as well as the ever popular TT Lures Switchblade in sizes from 1/8 to 1/2oz. When I target flathead at night I use the lowered visibility to my advantage and beef up my leaders, with a good starting point being 12lb fluorocarbon and work up from there.

Areas to fish for nocturnal flatties vary slightly to those fished during the day and I find that probably the most successful locations are those lit up by artificial light. This includes the type of light found on bridges and roads fringing the water's edge. Once you are rigged up, cast your offering along shadow lines, drop offs, weed edges and rock bars in your target area, keeping the lure close to the bottom and employing a variety of fast and slow rips with the rod tip. Most hits will occur within two metres of the bottom, so by keeping the lure in this zone you will minimise wasted time and maximise the amount of hits and hook-ups.



Flathead feed aggressively around lights at night.

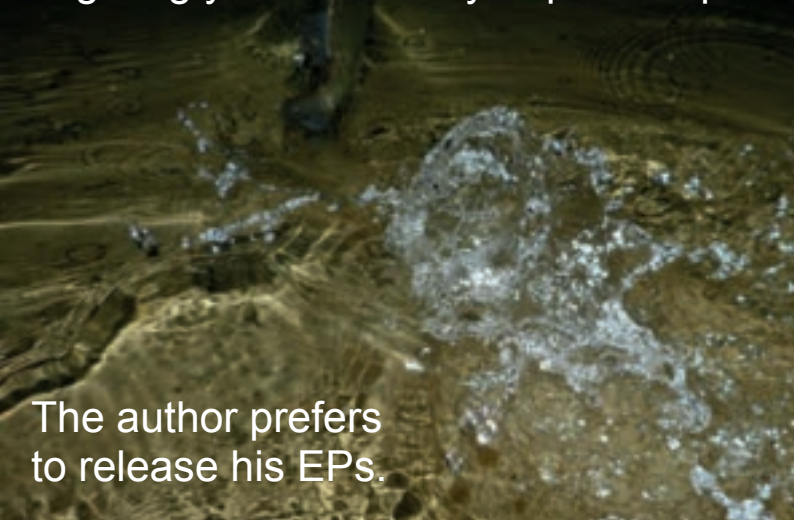


Estuary Perch

Probably one of my favourite saltwater species, estuary perch, can be commonly found in a variety of estuarine environments, from snaggy freshwater creeks in the upper reaches, right down to the crystal clear saltwater weed flats and drop-offs near the ocean. Perch are one of those species that are really well designed to hunt in low light conditions, using their large eyes to track down prey before dashing in and inhaling it with their large bucket-like mouth.

By far the best way to target perch at night is by casting at fixed bridge pylons. I have also had some insane sessions though, in recent times, fishing small plastics and blades through deep holes near the entrance of my local system. When I rig up for perch I usually employ a rod length of 6-8lb fluorocarbon leader, attaching this to 3-6lb braid, depending on the structure. Because of the perch's cavernous mouth, they are able to gulp down a variety of lures, both large and small, although finding the right lure can mean the difference between catching 50+ fish or coming home with a doughnut.

When fish are schooled up near pylons or hunting in shadow lines, flicking a lightly weighted ZMan 2.5" GrubZ or 3" Scented ShrimpZ through the strike zone can pay dividends, especially when the perch are actively feeding off the surface. When the fish are holding deep however, slowly working deeper holes with blades, such as the TT Switchblade and Ghostblade, can result in some cricket score catches, even when the fish are inactive. Because blades are small and extremely noisy, perch will often swipe at or eat them out of pure aggression, even when they are not actively hunting for food. This means that a lot of the time fish are hooked outside of the mouth, so care is advised while fighting your adversary to prevent pulled hooks and lost opportunities.



The author prefers to release his EPs.



This EP had a belly full of prawns

Jewfish


Last, but definitely not least, is the mighty mullock. For many years specialist jewfish anglers have spent countless long nights casting lures and baits for their ultimate prize and it is without a doubt that some of the biggest jewfish ever landed have been caught at night. If the Australian fishing community were to compare the amount of hours spent chasing mullock, to the amount of fish actually landed, I wouldn't be surprised in the slightest if jewfish came out as the hardest fish to catch of any species. The simple fact of the matter is that jewfish are an extremely hard fish to crack and so if you want to target them, you need to be prepared to put in the hard yards. You can increase your chances however, by focusing your efforts on the most likely holding locations in your area. These usually take the form of a deep hole or a steep drop off that offers cover, in either natural or manmade forms.

When rigging up I use a minimum of 15lb braid, with breaking strains of up to 50lb not out of the question where big fish and heavy structure are expected to mix. To this I attach a hard 20-40lb fluorocarbon leader that then is connected to a super heavy duty TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jighead to match the water depth and chosen plastic. When selecting a plastic, my favourite personal choice is once again the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, although recently I had it handed to me by a big fish while using the ZMan 5" Grass KickerZ off the rocks, just before dawn. When working the lure I prefer to aggressively flick the plastic up off the bottom, before giving the lure time to sink again and then repeating. Most hits are received on the drop, so it pays to constantly keep your finger on your braided line, ready to strike at even the faintest of hits.

So as you can see, night fishing offers some extremely productive angling options and the best bit is that anybody can get out there and do it, no matter how busy their daytime schedule may be. So what are you waiting for, get out there and give it a go. You never know, after your first session under the stars, you may find yourself wishing you had ventured out after dark a long time ago!

Cameron Cronin
with an incredible
1.4m jewfish on a
ZMan 4" SwimmerZ





Mick Lee with a tagged Borumba bass on a ZMan 3" MinnowZ, TT Lures jighead and TT Lures Jig Spinner.

Brilliant Borumba

By Will Lee

One of my favourite places to get away for the weekend in SEQ would definitely be Borumba Dam! It's a popular spot for anglers, water sport enthusiasts and campers alike.

Borumba was constructed in 1964 and is situated just outside the township of Imbil. It is approximately a ninety minute drive from the northern side of Brisbane. The dam's main purpose is for irrigation and it is open to all boating activity. Species in the dam include Australian bass, yellowbelly, silver perch and one of the most sought after sportfish in the dam is the saratoga. Borumba has plenty of structure and the fish respond to a vast array of techniques.

The Arms

There are two main arms to the dam, Kingaham Creek and Yabba Creek. An abundance of flooded timber is the main structure in both arms and it produces some heart in mouth fishing!

I've experienced some of my best saratoga fishing in Kingaham. First light and late afternoon are the most productive times when fishing the arms for saratoga. When the fish are active you will see them cruising just below the surface and smashing anything off the surface that moves. The saratoga in Borumba just love eating ZMan MinnowZ rigged on a 1/4oz TT Tournament Series jigheads with a TT Lures Jig Spinner attached.

Will with a solid early morning toga from the main basin.



Mick Lee with an average size toga from Kingaham Creek



I start out with a steady retrieve with the occasional pause thrown in and then work from there, depending on what the fish want on the day. Cast your Jig Spinner close to structure and hang on! As the sun rises the fish tend to go deeper, so try downsizing the presentation to a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ rigged on a 1/8oz #1 HeadlockZ HD jighead. Once again fish tight to the timber. Fish will often grab it on the drop, so watch your line for any hits on the way down.

Yabba Creek fishes much the same, but in my experience it has more weed edges and lily pads. I've done well up here on the bass, casting 1/4oz TT Vortex spinnerbaits towards the weed edges. My favourite technique is to slow roll my Vortex just above the weed. There is also plenty of saratoga in Yabba and part of the fun when fishing Borumba is not knowing what species will smash your lure next!



Borumba Creek

Borumba Creek is a smaller arm that is on the left as you head towards the two main arms. Once again I've had my best sessions here during the low light periods. Some of the biggest bass I've pulled from Borumba have come out of this section. Throwing 1/2oz Vortex spinnerbaits tight into the timber and along the rocky edges is a sure way to knock together some bass, but hang on tight and fish heavy drags because for what Borumba bass lack in size (fish here average between 30 and 40cm) they certainly make up for in their fighting qualities!

The Main Basin

Amongst the madness of ski boats and jet skis there is some fantastic fishing in the main basin. You really don't need to go far from the ramp in Borumba to get stuck into some fish, which also makes it a perfect location for kayak fishing.

If I choose to spend the day fishing the Main Basin, I generally start by fishing the edges at first light. There is some really big toga in this part of the dam. Look for any bottle brush shrubs in the shallows or that are hanging over the water and focus on these areas. Saratoga just love hanging out under these waiting for any bugs to drop into the water. These shrubs are typically in shallow snaggy water so my preferred lure for this type of fishing is a small Jig Spinner clipped to a ZMan GrubZ on a 1/8oz HeadlockZ HD head. Violet Sparkle and Shimmer Pearl are my two standouts when it comes to colours in Borumba.



This bass smashed a TT Lures Vortex Spinnerbait that was run through the weed.

As the sun rises a little I'll change over to a 3/8oz Vortex spinnerbait and focus my attention on the weed edges and rocky banks. There are some really nice yellowbelly (golden perch) and bass that sit on the rocky banks in the main basin.

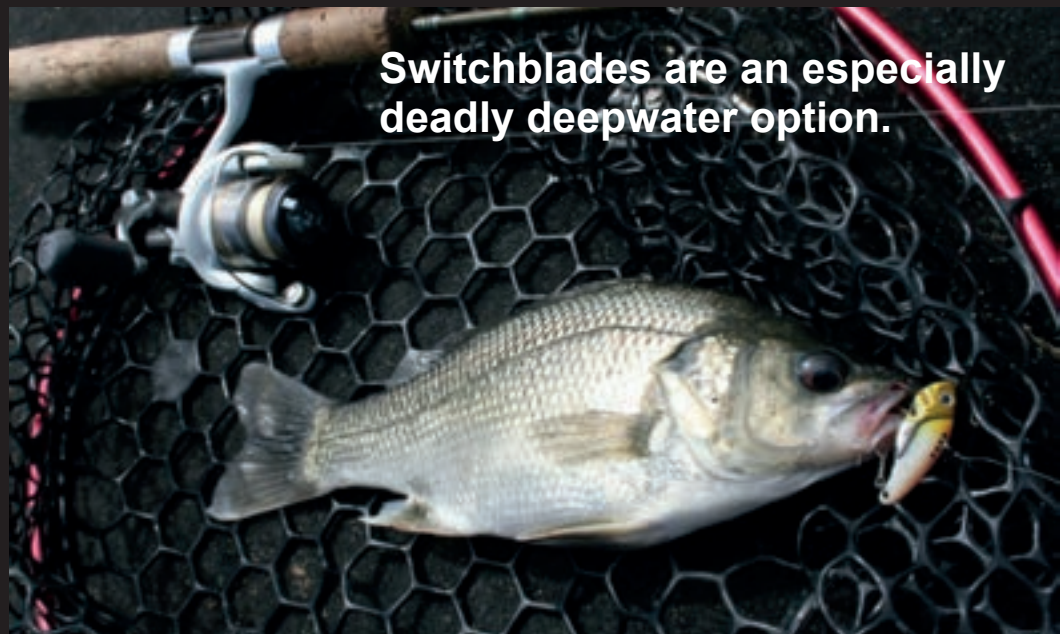
Once the sun is high in the sky and the ski boats are out in full force it's either time to pack up, go back to camp and get ready for an afternoon session, or alternatively look for schooling bass around the first and second points. On a recent trip we did really well fishing 1/4oz Switchblades through the schools. The fish weren't very big but there were plenty of them.

If it's a big saratoga you're after, then Borumba is the place to go. To increase your chances of netting a few, set the alarm clock nice and early and get on the water for sun up! I hope to see you out there.

As well as bass and toga, you will also find Yellowbelly like this nice fish that Jen landed on her favourite TT Vortex Spinnerbait.



Switchblades are an especially deadly deepwater option.

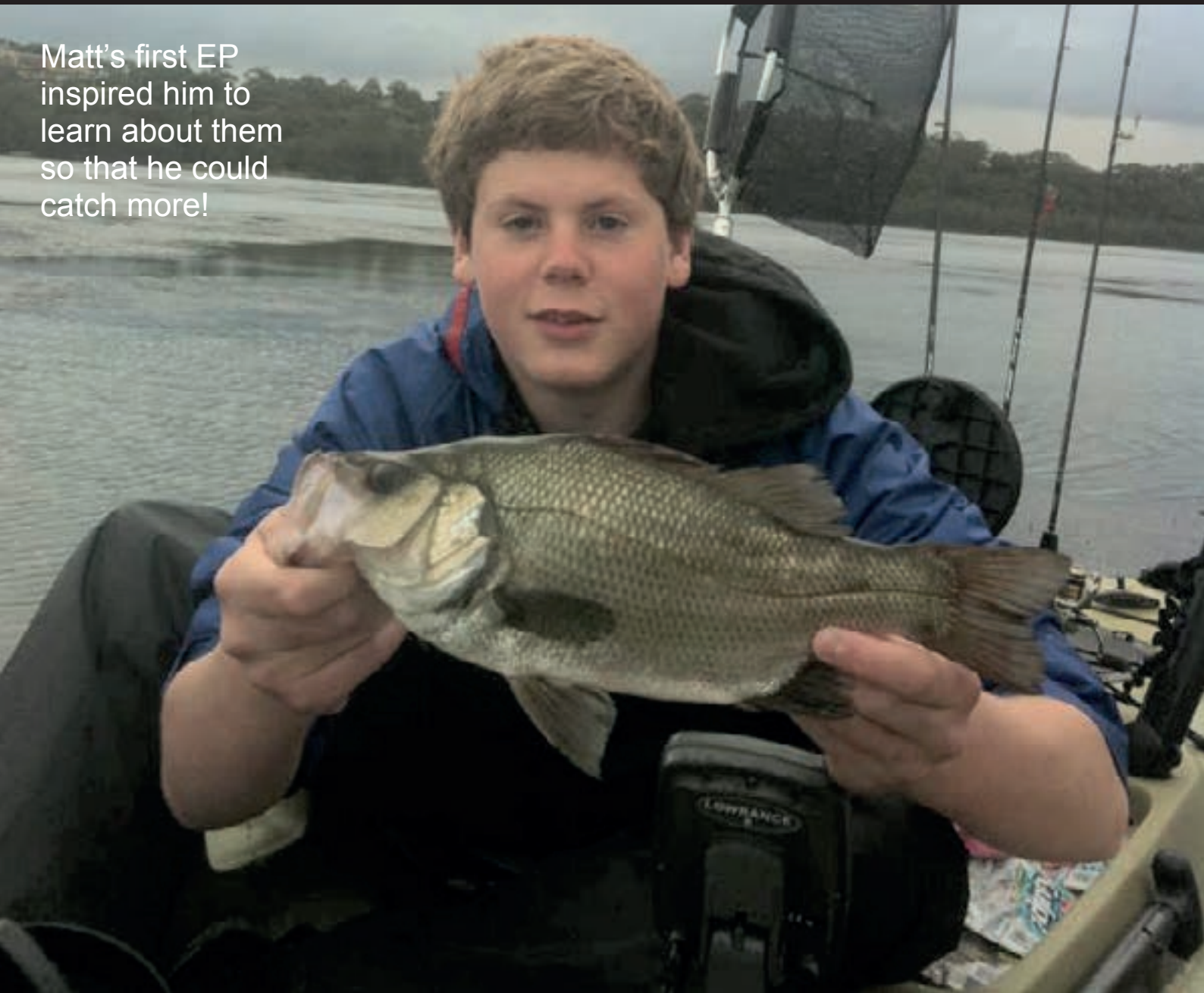


Estuary Perch Adventures

By Matt Reeves

As I positioned my Hobie Mirage kayak perfectly beside an oyster encrusted bridge pylon, I opened the bail arm and sent my shrimp-imitating soft plastic hurtling towards it, landing only a few millimetres away from the desired target. I flicked the bail arm back over and prepared myself. As the soft plastic slowly wafted down through the water column I twitched the rod upwards numerous times, hoping to imitate a fleeing prawn. I must have succeeded as I was rudely interrupted by an aggressive strike and a screaming drag. As the drag sung, my first thought was to rip the fish away from the unforgiving structure that it had been residing in. Unfortunately the fish had other ideas, heading straight for the pylons. I instinctively grabbed the spool of the reel and dragged the fish out. As the fish neared the kayak I leant back, grabbed the net and slipped it under the fish. Yeehaa! I had finally managed my first estuary perch, measuring in around the 40cm mark and I was one happy angler!

Matt's first EP inspired him to learn about them so that he could catch more!



Matt with a pair of quality estuary perch.



After landing my first estuary perch or 'EP' for short, I was hungry for more and my urge to hunt down more saw my knowledge of these fish expand dramatically. I'm more than happy to share what I have learnt, so hopefully you can get hooked up to one of these amazing fish. From its large, powerful tail, to the oversized bucket mouth, they are an amazing fish.

Estuary perch are found in southern estuary systems within NSW, all the way down to southern Victoria. These fish congregate around any type of structure, with the most common being pontoons, floating wharves, fallen timber and the list goes on. They usually hang in schools, so where you find one of these fish there will generally be more, of a mixed size range in the area. The quantity of fish in the school and average size is mainly due to whether the amount of bait in the area is sufficient enough to feed the school of fish. The structure is also a key factor that influences these fish when it comes to schooling up.

One of my most exhilarating experiences when fishing for estuary perch is still stuck in my mind like it happened yesterday! A couple of mates and I were working a bunch of moored boats with our soft plastics and eventually ended up flicking at a moored houseboat that was sitting not too far away from the shoreline. Not thinking much of it, we moved around to the other side of this particular boat and witnessed more perch than the eye could see! They exploded from the surface and ducked for cover as we powered forward with the electric motor. We made our casts toward the bow waves of the fish. Our lightly weighted, grub style plastics hit the water and we braced ourselves ready for impact. Next thing we know, we had a double hookup!

No more than ten metres away, while unhooking our perch, we could all hear a distinctive 'boofing' noise every five seconds coming from under a marina. It was perch... hundreds of them, all feeding on small baitfish on the surface! At the time I had a 2.5" ZMan GrubZ rigged and I flicked it towards the feeding frenzy. In no time at all the soft plastic was inhaled, I set the hook, fought the fish to the boat, slipped the net under the EP and landed it. Shortly after admiring this beautiful fish I unhooked and released it. While I was making another cast towards the frenzy both of my mates were hooked up! They both landed their perch and I hooked up again, landing another fish of similar size. This continued for the rest of the session and a memorable session it was! A combination of bait, structure and correct water temperature this far up the back of the large estuary system we were fishing was what sent the EP's insane.



ZMan CrawdadZ EP



ZMan 2.5" GrubZ EP



A bag of solid EPs prior to release.



Perch are very easy to target on soft plastics, but finding them is the trick. As I mentioned earlier, structure is the key and is where you're going to find these fish. They are a lot more active during the cooler months because of their spawning patterns and from June through to August perch are off limits due to this fact. From September through to November is when I love to target EP's, as they go mental and XOS perch seem to be unavoidable and offer great fun on ultra light spinning gear.

These XOS perch have been reacting well to a range of soft plastics, with the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ having been my most effective soft plastic to date. The ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ isn't far behind though, having accounted for multiple oversized perch. Even yabbie-styled soft plastics, like the ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ are triggering bites from these fish. When feeding, perch will react to almost anything thrown near them, including vibes, blades, cranks, flies, they all work. In my local estuary system the perch are aggressive enough to slam a 4" soft plastic aimed at flathead! Their oversized bucket mouth means they have the ability to scoff down anything they desire.

At times estuary perch don't require any special technique to catch... in fact at times they will eat any lure worked in any way! But for those who really want consistent numbers of larger estuary perch there is a technique that they usually can't resist and it's fairly simple too.



Find the bait and structure and you are on the way to finding some EPs

A quick shot of a live well of EPs from a red hot session before release.



Firstly getting your cast spot on, as you want your soft plastic to be landing as close to the desired target as possible. Too far out and you won't have a chance, too close in and you'll be hooked up to some sort structure. Generally, try and aim to be within 5cm of the target, while positioning yourself as far away as you can, making those long casts a necessity.

As your lure hits the water as close as possible to the target, leave some slack line to sink the lure down to where the EP's are feeding. After a short pause start slowly cranking the reel, twitch the tip of your rod about a half dozen times followed by another pause. If a perch hasn't exploded onto your lure repeat the slow crank, twitching and pausing. This imitates an injured baitfish and if the fish are feeding on a school of bait, the injured fish stand out as an easy target. This is why soft plastics work a treat!

Estuary perch seem to be early morning and afternoon feeders, with this being these key times that you want to be out targeting them. From dusk till dawn you will find perch congregated around any light source, as small baitfish will also be attracted to the light. Find the bait find the perch, its simple.

Fishing soft plastics or hardbodies at night requires colours that stand out, or if you're fishing hardbodies something that makes some noise. This is why blades work a treat. The vibration of the lure, set off by the slightest movement of your rod tip, sends out signals through the water, attracting species such as bream, flathead, jewfish and estuary perch. Soft plastics don't 'need' to have bright colours, but it helps a lot and a highly active tail is a must if fishing those hours from dusk till dawn.

Estuary perch are available to any angler on foot, in a boat or kayak based. Land based perch fishing is awesome fun and can result in some quality fish, at times producing more fish than those fishing from a boat or kayak. Select the area you want to be fishing, locate any type of structure, select a place to cast from and you're set.

Targeting perch from a boat really requires an electric motor, as moving around with a large boat motor will often spook these fish. Having an electric motor is a massive advantage due to its stealth and the ability to scout around the different types of structure that are available. A kayak is also a great watercraft for getting into some perch. Again, the stealthy approach is a proven fish catching method and is why I love fishing from the kayak.

The great thing about bream and EPs is that they often eat the same lures! Matt with some quality EP bycatch.



Targeting these fish requires light tackle and light lines, but in saying that the perch in my local estuary system are happy to eat a lure tied onto up to 16lb leader at times! I personally use the same gear as I do to target bream; 2-6lb braided line with around a rod length of 3-6lb fluorocarbon leader. The rods and reels I tend to use consist of 1000-2500 size spinning reels, on 1-4kg rods around the 7' mark. Making long casts is an advantage and rods around that 7' mark make this easy.

I highly recommend the catch and release of estuary perch to sustain a healthy fishery. I would hate to see these fish become no more!

If you're serious about getting into fishing for estuary perch grab some small grub-styled plastics or blades, locate some good looking structure and start hammering it. Once you catch your first, I guarantee it won't be your last!



Bream tackle is all that's required and the author prefers to photo and release.

NT Adventure

By Ben Deneen



When the opportunity for a slight career change arose, the ultimatum was made. “We’ll put you on, but you have to fly in and out of Gove.” After years of reading magazine articles about this isolated town in the far north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory, my reply went something like this: “That won’t be a problem!”

In the days leading up to flying out, my attention probably should have been on what tools to pack, instead they were spent searching through all my messed up boxes of reels, leader and lures trying to find some appropriate gear that would catch me fish up there... not to mention what would fit into my suitcase!

I ended up with a 6-8kg 3-piece spin stick, built by the old man a couple of years back, a Shimano Stradic CI4 4000 loaded with 10kg XDS Fireline, a spool of my favourite 15kg ANDE fluorocarbon leader and a lure box with a couple of everything in it!

After the long trip north, the humidity of the NT buildup just about knocked me over as I stepped off the plane. Not great for working, but great for fishing! After arranging all the necessary land permits, to keep me out of trouble, I was set. My fishing was limited to an hour or so after work and all day Sunday, so I set about scanning the local area on Google Earth for likely looking spots to start. Beaches, headlands and rocky points are everywhere you look on the Gove

The views can be spectacular and so can the fishing!



I drummed up a couple of fishing buddies in the form of my workmate, Pete and cousin, Josh, and we began fishing the closest rocky points we could find, mainly the eastern side of East Woody Island and points around the back of the alumina refinery that we called home during the day. Being a bit of a topwater junky, I naturally began hurling poppers towards the horizon with limited luck. A few small GTs, queenies, mackerel and barracuda showed their natural aggression crunching poppers and slugs before we decided to try our luck a bit deeper.

Fishing ZMan 5" StreakZ in Bubble Gum and Space Guppy colours, along with 3" MinnowZ in Opening Night, rigged on 3/8oz 5/0 TT Lures jigheads, we figured we should have brought 80lb instead! A few small coral trout, cod, stripeys (Spanish flag) and a few shredded leaders was all we had to show as we headed home with tales of the ones that got away!



Soon a heads up from a resident co-worker had us exploring a different area of the peninsula with the focus more on beaches and sandy flats, and less on rocky points. Although we were doubtful, these changes surprisingly brought some larger fish our way and lead to the discovery of our new favourite spot that we creatively named 'Queenie Beach!' Over the following weeks the beach produced well for us with plenty of small GTs and a few queenies that really stretched the back out, with the biggest reaching 1.27m on the lie detector! We usually started with poppers, for the excitement factor, before moving to soft plastics, mainly 5" ZMan StreakZ, to tempt the fish that were less energetic and slightly more shy. This proved a great technique and on a couple of occasions turned an average session into a great session. Species that queued up to nail these plastics included a variety of trevallies, queenies, giant herring, tarpon, barracuda and long tom to name a few.

Sunday gave us a bit more freedom, so with a few spots earmarked on Google Earth, the only 4x4 available and a crew of hungover workmates, we were regularly heading bush with no reason to be back early! The location we eventually managed to find was just what we had hoped for, a long narrow rocky point jutting out into the mouth of a large tidal inlet. The theory looking at the satellite image was that the point would interrupt the current on a run out tide and create a large eddy that would hold the type fish we were after.



Ben with a stonker queenfish from the beach.

The first session was one of the best, landing four trevally between 5 and 20kg, and hooking one that ended the session by eating a popper at my feet and swimming off towards Queensland with all my Fireline in tow... leaving me with just a few wraps of backing on an otherwise empty spool! Further exploration around this area uncovered a nice big reefy looking flat with no more than six feet of water over it at low tide.



Future sessions over this flat produced some of the best sight fishing I have ever encountered. Big cod, mangrove jack and a couple of coral trout I estimate would have been up around the 80cm mark that loved the look of the bright coloured ZMan 5" StreakZ, but once again we had very little to show for numerous hook ups. These fish are incredibly fast and strong, and know every little razor sharp hidey hole on the flat, something that certainly didn't work in our favour! The only fish we managed to land were a few of the usual suspects that cruised through the area, mainly queenies, trevally and smallish coral trout and cod.





**Itchy casting
finger anyone?**

In the first few months flying in and out of Gove, I have only just begun to lift the lid on the fishing options in this magic part of the world. Fishing is a very popular pastime for anybody who is lucky enough to live in the area and the brag boards of a few workmates indicate that I have plenty to look forward to. I must say a quick thanks to Gary Howard (Australian Rod Manufacturers) and the staff at Tackleworld Nhulunbuy, for pointing me in the right direction initially and TT Lures Pro Angler Ryan Dixon for helping me get set up with jigheads and plastics! Fingers crossed I'll be lucky enough to land a few more good ones before our contract finishes and I'm forced to come home for good!

Zmanning the Central Coast

By Calum Lee & Jack Wills

The Central Coast region is located on the coast, just north of Sydney and south of the hunter region. The central coast has a population of over 300,000 people and produces magnificent fishing. It also offers a good variety of fishing environments, including estuaries, rivers, lakes, dams, streams and around 60km's of Tasman Sea coast. When fishing with TT & ZMan Lures, the central coast can produce some quality fish.

Wyong River:

Wyong River is a peaceful river that is connected to Tuggerah Lakes. It holds brackish water and a variety of structures, including pontoons, wharves, mud flats, bridge pylons, drop-offs, steep banks and weed beds. Fishing the snags with a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ rigged on a TT Lures jighead can produce nice estuary perch, quality bream and the odd flathead.

Jack spent a day fishing up close to the snags pulling in a nice bag of bream and some quality EP's all on the trusty ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Violet Sparkle. The 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Bloodworm rigged on a 1/4oz TT jighead also produced a few nice flatties fishing drop-offs.

A 2-5kg spin combo will cover most of the fishing on the river, with a boat or kayak being better to access the river, due to trees and long stretches of roadway. A lure retriever is highly recommended because you tend to snag up at times and at about \$6.95, this fishing tool will save you much more than that. Small poppers or surface lures with a good twitch will entice a bream to hit the surface, while a 1/12oz TT Lures Ghostblade will pull bream and EP's fishing down around structure.



Jack with an Estuary Perch from the Wyong River on a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Violet Sparkle rigged on a TT 1/12oz 1/0 jighead

The Entrance:

The Entrance is a populated suburb located around the eastern part of Tuggerah Lakes. The Entrance Bridge has 34 pylons and if you throw a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ or a 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, you would have a good chance of pulling in a big bream.



Throwing them on a small to mid-size TT jighead, straight down the pylons that feed bream via all the crustaceans on them, can be extremely effective. Let it hit the bottom and with a few little flicks of the rod tip it portrays a wounded baitfish. At times bream find it virtually impossible not to hit this little plastic.

Reel in the slack and let it sit back on the bottom, waiting and allowing the buoyancy of the tail to cause it to flutter around. If a sudden twitch or tap appears in the line, don't be afraid to pull back hard as a bream could be on the end of it and the hook will be set. After 5-10 seconds flick it up again and continue this flick and pause retrieve.

Calum with one of Pelican Island's big night time bream



For bream fishing we both like to run a light 2-4kg graphite rod with a 1000-2500 size reel. We fit them with light braid or straight through light flurocarbon line. A light leader is a must because the bream have eyes like a cat and can be spooked by heavy line. Depending on the conditions 8lb is the heaviest we go up to, while dropping all the way down to 2lb if the bite is tough.

The Entrance Channel sand flats also produce flathead, whiting and good bream. Pelican Island is located west of the bridge and can produce some brilliant fishing at times. ZMan 3" MinnowZ have caught a lot of flathead for us, along with the occasional big bream around the weed banks and sand flats off the island. The Coastal fishing TV crew has also caught some nice bags of bream on the weed banks surrounding the entrance on ZMan Lures.

Pelican island at its best, producing this nice dusky flathead that Jack caught on a ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Bad Shad



Ourimbah Creek:

Ourimbah Creek is a very exciting creek that holds the famous Australian bass! Around every corner there is a new snag and the bass there will take surface lures in the shallows, including surface plastics, cicada lures and poppers, while deep and shallow diving lures and snagless soft plastics are preferred in the deeper water and around the snags.

Spinnerbaits and soft plastics are deadly when targeting bass in medium to deeper water. Some of our go-to lures include the ZMan 3" MinnowZ, 4" StreakZ and 2.5" GrubZ, along with the TT Lures Vortex Spinnerbaits.

If you are using plastics like the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ on the surface, rig them on a TT Hidden Weight System (HWS) jighead. I recommend that you cast them as close as you can to the structure that you are fishing and slow roll them with the rod tip up in the air so that the tail of the plastic twirls away on the top... that is until a bass sees it and smashes it.



If you want to fish on or near the bottom, cast a weighted plastic in or around a snag. Let it have contact with the bottom and give it a few hops off the bottom, before pausing it again. Plastics like the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ are effective because they will flutter and twitch, like a wounded bait fish.

Adding a bit of magic like a TT Jig Spinner in the correct size will help the bass spot the lure. The Jig Spinner is a wire frame with a spinning blade that attaches to the jighead to create flash and additional vibration that can attract fish to the lure and trigger strikes. When hopping or slow rolling the lure, the blade will spin and send a flash that can be seen miles away.

If landbased fishing creeks like Ourimbah, I would advise that you take a backpack, drink bottle, maybe some food, a camera for those magical fish, a phone just in case something happens and a load of ZMan and TT lures.

Gwandalan:

Gwandalan is found on the southern part of Lake Macquarie. It is really not touched by anglers that much, but is a paradise for water skiers and wake boarders as it is protected from the wind from most directions.

Two boat ramps allow you to access the water within 500m of each other, making it easy to cover both ends. Gwandalan is a favourite location to throw around the ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Opening Night, rigged on a TT Lures 1/4oz jighead. The Coastal Fishing TV team have had a streak with this lure presentation.

Structure in the area consists mainly of mud and sand flats, with weed beds dropping into a nice depth of water. The main target species is the dusky flathead but we have caught many bream, tailor, Australian salmon, whiting and we're certain that Jack hooked up to a mulloway on a ZMan 4" SwimmerZ that was lost just below the boat, with us both catching a glimpse of silver flash.



One of Gwandalan's many 61cm flathead. Jack landed this one on a ZMan 4" SwimmerZ in Red Shad rigged on a TT Lures 1/4oz jighead



Calum landed this nice flatty on a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Motor Oil

A spin combo is a must if you are flicking lures around. We use a 10lb leader, tied with a double uni knot to the braid when we target dusky flathead.

So next time you're planning a trip with some mates or the family, check out the Central Coast. Make sure that you pack some ZMan and TT Lures, as we're certain that you will catch a fish or two.

All our adventures on the central coast can be seen on our Youtube Channel - Coastal Fishing TV:

<http://www.youtube.com/CoastalFishingTV>



WIN!

Just by being a subscriber to our free online fishing mag, you are already in the draw to win our monthly prize! Prizes include clothing from TT & ZMan, like the Tournament shirts worn by Pro Anglers Kris Hickson & Daniel Brown, as well as TT & ZMan lures.



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