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ZMan Solo Barra

Targeting Cool Weather Barra

AFTA New Gear Guide



Angler: William Smedley

Species: Snapper

Lure: ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ - Nuked Pilchard Glow

Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 3/4oz 7/0

Photographer: Benny Godfrey



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T G E E Z e Z

Zman 2" GrubZ

When the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ became available in Australia, it exploded in popularity – winning bream and bass tournaments, quickly accounting for 60+ species from bream and flathead, to trout and trevally.

Now, after numerous requests from anglers, Tackle Tactics has worked closely with ZMan US to design a smaller, more finesse version of the GrubZ, the 2" GrubZ. This smaller curl tail will be a deadly presentation when the bite is tough, the fish finicky and the bait tiny. As well as taking up residence in the bream tournament angler's box, this little curl tail will also be deadly on trout, redfin, bass, yellowbelly, saratoga and a myriad of other species that feed on small insects, baitfish and crustaceans.

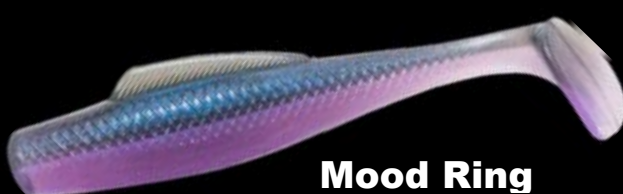
Initially available in 10 colours, including Motor Oil, Bloodworm and Watermelon Red, the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ is excellent value with 10 GrubZ per pack.



Zman 3" MinnowZ - New Colours

The ZMan 3" MinnowZ is a versatile baitfish profile with a lively paddle tail that has made it one of ZMan's most popular plastics. Part of its success is that it appeals to so many species, from flathead to bass and trevally to metre plus barramundi.

There have been two new additions to the 3" MinnowZ range, Mood Ring and Pinfish. Mood Ring has a dark violet back and translucent, pearlescent purple belly with micro glitter. Freshwater species will be all over this colour, but early predictions are that it will fish well in the salt also. Pinfish is a super-realistic baitfish imitation that features a pumpkin back and translucent, pearlescent belly, both of which contain black fleck and blue, green and gold glitter. This could very well be your new favourite MinnowZ colour!



Mood Ring



Pinfish

ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ

The new ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ slots in nicely between the 5" version and the ZMan 8" StreakZ XL, to offer offshore anglers a comprehensive selection of jerk baits for targeting everything from snapper and other reefies, to kingfish, tuna and mackerel.

The jerk bait profile has long proven effective, but ZMan is not just another soft plastic jerk bait, it has all of the benefits of ElaZtech, including 10X Tough construction, super-soft and flexible realistic feel and buoyant tail-up action. It is also scented with 100% natural scent derived from real baitfish and designed to attract fish and trigger strikes.

Initially available in 10 colours, including glow colours – Nuked Chicken Glow, Nuked Pilchard Glow and Coconut Ice Glow, which will also now be available in the 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ.



ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ - Bloodworm

ZMan's realistic 3" Scented ShrimpZ is now available in the ever reliable Bloodworm colour, along with the 2" and 2.5" GrubZ, 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ and 3" MinnowZ. By combining a proven colour and lure design, the Z ShrimpZ will produce results in both the fresh and salt. The addition of 100% natural scent, derived from real bait, to attract fish and trigger strikes, along with the 10X Tough ElaZtech construction, makes this durable, realistic, scented prawn imitation a go-to option for anglers.

This versatile plastic can be rigged standard on a jighead, fished on the surface – due to its built-in buoyancy, cut-down to create a finesse presentation and is also ideal for rigging weedless when fishing structure.



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Jew on the Chew

By Ryan Dixon



Ryan with a jewie on the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ

Since the 2011 Queensland floods, jewfish (mulloway) numbers in South East Queensland have soared, with most creeks and river systems holding good numbers of jewfish at different times of the year. Fishing for jew is rapidly rising in popularity, with most lure enthusiasts eager to catch one over the magic metre mark.

Jewfish are a schooling species that can be caught on a wide variety of lures, from surface lures to big deep diving crankbaits, lipless crankbaits, soft plastics and even on fly. However, I find that the best way to target them is to cast a well presented soft plastic.

A late afternoon jewie on
a Red Shad SwimmerZ.



When choosing the right soft plastic to use I try to use one that will best imitate the baitfish that I think the jew are feeding on. In a river and creek situation when the prawns are running, I will use a ZMan ShrimpZ in either a 3" or 4" size. Again when in a river situation, when I think they are feeding on mullet or tailor I use a 4" ZMan SwimmerZ if the bait is small and will upgrade to a 6" SwimmerZ if the bait they are feeding on is bigger. The ZMan Grass KickerZ and MinnowZ are also a very effective paddle tail style lure that will entice hungry Jewfish. When there are plenty of garfish or pike around I will choose either a 5" Jerk ShadZ or a 3.75" StreakZ and I will alternate between the two until I get a bite.

Other soft plastics that I have found effective are the 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, 5" GrubZ and even the 2.5" GrubZ. When choosing a jighead to rig my soft plastic on, I look for a hook that is sharp yet very strong, as a jewfish has the potential to crush a weak hook with its powerful jaw. The HeadlockZ HD range of jigheads are perfect as they are built especially for ZMan soft plastics and are built on a brutal Mustad chemically sharpened hook.



I've found the best retrieve for jew involves choosing a heavy jighead and giving the soft plastic one big hop off the bottom, making sure it comes back into contact with the bottom between hops. However, if in the mood jew will pounce on a quickly retrieved plastic and will also eat off the surface.

Trying to locate jewfish is not often easy, but can be made

easier with a good quality depth sounder. Drop offs, deep holes and shallow bays out of the current often hold plenty of baitfish and are perfect hunting grounds for jew. Generally anywhere that holds baitfish sees the potential for jew to not be too far away. For land based anglers, spots that hold plenty of bait fish or deep holes are a good start, with most creek bends having a decent sized hole on the outside bank. After heavy rain, when a river or creek is in flood, is also an extremely good time to target jew, with dirty water lines where the saltwater meets the fresh being a hotspot to target cast a lure.

A Pink Glow 4" StreakZ
Curly TailZ was the
undoing of this fish.



A late afternoon jewie -
low light periods are
peak bite times for jew.



Jewfish feed better during hours of low light, with the first hour or two after sunrise and before sunset being the best times. When trying to locate surface feeding jewfish, marinas, bridges, moored boats, jetties or anywhere that has plenty of lights at night time is a good place to start. This is due to the lights often attracting baitfish.

Although the winter months of the year are the best time of the year to target jew, they can be caught year round and can often be targeted at the same time as when chasing flathead. The size of most jewfish in rivers and creeks ranges between 50 and 90cm, however fish over a metre in length are not uncommon. Hopefully this article provided you with some useful information on chasing jew, whether you have chased them before or are eager to give it a go!

THE SOUTHERNER'S SOOTY MISSION

By Paul Chew

Once in a while you find yourself having an itch that you just can't scratch and I found myself in this predicament late last year. What itch was it you may ask and of course for me there is only one answer, the tenacious sooty grunter. While here in the Wide Bay we are blessed with a diverse range of fishing options, chasing these dark spirited natives is probably my favourite piscatorial pastime. Anyway, somehow the stars aligned and I managed a week off work to head north. I planned on spending a couple of nights camped on the picturesque banks of Lake Kinchant, before heading up to Eungella Dam to partake in the World Sooty Championships. I am not normally a competition type angler, however this competition is a fairly laid back affair, with plenty of laughs and a big bonfire both nights.

So taking us back to the start of the trip, we had good friends Talina and Suzie stay here for a couple of nights chasing their maiden bass. Then we made the long, arduous trek up the roadwork ridden Bruce Highway to Lake Kinchant. On the second day I took Jode to a little creek not far from the dam. Choosing to throw ZMan 2.5" GrubZ rigged on a #2 TT Jig Spinners, we walked the creek, taking in nature at its best, including pristine rainforest and cold clear running water.

Paul with a sooty football



Attaching a Jig Spinner to your soft plastic adds flash and vibration.



After losing a couple of better fish in the creek proper, I decided to move to a side creek that was running a lot slower and it was here that I cast my Copper Penny coloured offering into a deeper pool. It was hit savagely on the drop! After a short tussle my first sooty of the trip slid onto the sand. While only a little pup, you couldn't wipe the smile off my face. This was what I'd travelled ten hours to experience and I guess that's what makes it special... the whole sooty experience.

Normally with hardbodies I use a twitch and pause type retrieve, similar to bass style fishing, but I found on this particular afternoon the fish were responding to an ultra slow wind, where you could just feel the blades of the Jig Spinner ticking over through the 6lb braid. As the sun was sinking into the horizon I cast my offering along a big tree that had fallen in during the floods earlier in the year. It was crunched as soon as it landed. The little rod buckled and I felt the 10lb leader rubbing on the timber, so I held steady pressure and out he came. While only a little tacker, I was stoked at finding a few to get the trip off to a great start.



The next morning we packed up camp, headed in and picked Andy up from the train. It was then that we headed up the hill to the home of some of the fattest, best conditioned sooty grunter around. The fish up there certainly are on good pasture and trying to extract them from the thick timber can result in some spectacular bust offs at times. So, for those that don't know, the sooty comp is run over three sessions of around four hours each, give or take. I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank Jeff Eales and the rest of the MAFSA crew for an awesome, well run comp, where the emphasis is certainly on having a good time and enjoying yourself.

The first fishing session was a write off for us, having motor troubles and me spending half the session checking for water in the fuel, among other things. Back at camp we grabbed a burger and beer from the catering area and checked out the fish being weighed in. There were some crackers weighed in, which once again fuelled our enthusiasm for the morning session. Our basic plan for the morning was to try find an area away from most of the boats and work lures through the tops of the sunken trees.

Morning found us racing up the dam after getting the nod from the starter, into a brisk 15-20 knot Sou-Wester, so we veered into the lee of one of the islands to try to make fishing bearable. Because the sun hadn't risen I chose a bigger profile TT Lures 1/2oz Striker spinnerbait in Purple/Mauve Scale, while Andy went for a TT 3/8oz Vortex in Red Nightmare. With the wind making fishing hard, we picked a likely looking drift lane and started peppering the trees, in around 15 metres of water, with our chosen lures.



Part of the reason for choosing spinnerbaits was that fishing anything else was near impossible with the big bow in the line from the wind. After only half a dozen casts I cast into the middle of a big broken off limb of a long ago sunken tree, clicked the little Lews baitcaster into gear and started the big blades on the TT spinning ever so slowly. After only a few cranks the Egrell bent into a horrible curve and the drag protested while giving a little line. Once clear of the timber I eased the pressure a little and a minute later my first sooty of the comp slid into the net. High fives all around and he went into the live well.

We started fishing again, trying to pick a clear path through the trees, while avoiding a couple of other boats. I cast out again, just as a bullet of wind came down the range and hit the boat. While trying to stop the boat from crashing into a tree, I felt the braid give a tick, so instinctively I struck... nothing, so started my retrieve again. Almost immediately the Striker worked its magic again, much to the annoyance of 'straight rod' Andy, and we had our second fish in the well. The super slow retrieve was the standout of the session. We fished pretty hard, missing a few more half hits and enjoyed some good natured banter, until the wind just became too much and we headed in to the weigh master and the coffee brewing at camp.



The final session was a frustrating one, with some massive gusts of wind leaving the Minn Kota powerless to stop the poly crashing into trees, then it would drop out to be really good fishing conditions for a while. I really should know by now not to mock Andy, as I really got my butt handed to me in that final session. His Red Nightmare TT Vortex spinnerbait really came into its own. His technique of casting to the far side of the sunken trees, counting to about 5 and then slow rolling the lure through the trees attracted quite a few hits and resulted in a couple of nice sootys taking up residence in the well. The fish had definitely gone deeper after the fishing pressure of the last couple of days and fishing deeper and slower worked ok for us. Once again we picked our way through the trees and back to weigh in the fish and pull the boat out.

All in all it was a fantastic weekend, with the array of TT and Zman lures certainly making it successful for us. We learnt a few things and next year we will probably fish deeper sooner and maybe add a stinger hook to the spinnerbaits. Other than that I don't think we will change our approach too much. So this finds me sitting here recounting the trip and you wouldn't believe... I think I feel that itch is starting again. Till next time...

Tight lines..Chewy.



Straight rod Andy soon turned the tables with some solid sooties.

with Gregg Flett



Tackle Tactics Pro Angler Gregg Flett takes us on board for a couple of rounds of the ABT Bass and talks tackle and technique.

Round 1 - Lake Glenbawn – February 2013

I made a conscious decision a few weeks before the tournament to target bass holding in 40-60ft of water, in the lower section of the dam. I had three or four key areas marked out to rotate between so as to hopefully catch my fish without doing too much damage on any one spot. Starting session one, I headed to a hump I had identified at the end of the main basin that rose up out of 100ft to 42ft and which was punctuated with small submerged shrubs on top. Upon arrival the HDS sounder marked a good show of active fish and I had instant success on my first drop. After regaining myself and getting into the groove I continued to hook up, landing around 6 fish in the first hour.

I had planned to leave the area and be at another spot marked out at the dam wall, for what I believed to be a peak bite time at 8.30am. Having caught around 15 fish, but still not happy with the size, I stayed longer than planned and didn't arrive at the second spot at the dam wall until 10.15am. Within 30 minutes of fishing the new area I had upgraded both of my fish, before heading to the weigh in. My 2.22kg bag placed me in 10th spot heading into the second session.

With the earlier success I had decided to head straight back to the dam wall where I had caught the two fish I weighed in the first session. The fish were still there, although they didn't seem to be too active. I made a few adjustments, stuck at it and had my two fish within the first hour once again. Continuing to work the same spot over, in an effort to get maximum weight for my two fish, I knew I had to make up some ground on the leaders.

Switching to the other side of the buoy line for the last hour, I caught another 5-6 fish, including an upgrade and lost another at the net after a lengthy fight... this one would have easily been the largest fish of the day for me. Weighing another consistent bag of 2.24kg saw me move up the leader board into 5th place. Was the lost fish going to cost me?

Heading out on Sunday for the last session, I was confident of catching my bag limit and headed back to the last spot I had fished on the Saturday afternoon, the buoy line next to the dam wall. It wasn't hand over fist, but once again I had a reasonable bag limit in the first hour and continued to catch and slowly upgrade throughout the session. The time had come to weigh in and once again I had caught 12-15 fish for the session to round out a good tournament.

My third and final bag weighed another consistent 2.18kg, giving me a total of 6/6 fish and 6.64kg. This moved me further up the leader board into 3rd overall and I was pleased with the result considering I hadn't caught a big fish all weekend.

Gregg admires one of Australia's most popular sportfish.





Bass can be a tough opponent, especially in tournament conditions.

Tackle: 7ft 1-4kg Basstix custom Duffrod, Okuma V-System 20A - spooled with 4lb Sufix 823 and 3lb rockfish leader.

Lures: 2.5" ZMan GrubZ in Watermelon Red and Pumpkinseed colours on custom painted to suit 1/4 and 1/6oz TT Lures Tournament Series jigheads with size 1 fine gauge hooks.

Technique: Sounding active fish in 40-60ft of water. Using a vertical presentation. Free falling the lure to the bottom, through and too the sounded fish and a slow constant retrieve back. The fish would often give several tiny taps, until finally committing to eating the lure properly. Not striking until the rod is fully loaded is something that takes patience and practice.

Round 2, Lake St Clair. April.

I had put the effort in to pre-fish three times leading up to the practice ban of this event. What I had discovered was that I could catch numbers of fish on #2 TT Lures Jig Spinners rigged with ZMan Watermelon Red GrubZ, but it was the 1/4oz ZMan Mini ChatterBaits that produced the better average size and every large fish that I had caught.

The plan was to fish a milk run of spots, as they were available, with the ChatterBait and resort to the plastic with Jig Spinner attached if necessary. Session one and my non-boater and I had one fish each from the first spot before moving to the second. In the next fifteen minutes I bagged out and upgraded three times. We then left the location to continue the milk run.

Would Gregg find a second fish in the final session and stay in the top 5?



With fifteen minutes to go in the session I had two 39cm fish, before managing to upgrade one with a 41cm. We headed in and weighed 2.27kg, putting me in 2nd place, 200 grams off the leader. After catching 8-10 fish in the first session without hammering any one spot too hard, I was confident of getting my two in the afternoon.

Heading out in session two I went through my same milk run of spots with similar success. I did pull the hooks out of what I thought may have been an exceptional fish, early in the session when I only had one and must say couldn't get that out of my mind for the rest of the session. Still I caught about the same amount of fish and weighed in another decent bag of 1.95kg, which kept me in 2nd overnight and well within striking distance of the leader.

Sunday dawned clear and still but I was sure I would get my opportunities to fill the bag. After my first spot... no bites. After my second and then third spot... still no bites. The sun was high in the sky by now and it wasn't until my fifth spot that I caught my first fish. Only about five cast later and I had another bite that didn't connect. I still had an hour to go and was confident I could finish it out, but unfortunately time had beaten me and I returned to the weigh-in with just the one fish.

As the weigh-in progressed it was clear that it had been a tougher day for everyone and I was fortunate enough to hold out fourth spot overall, despite only having 5/6. In hindsight I should have adapted better and changed up, but was so confident my bites would come that I stuck with it and it turned out that a single 30cm would have given me the win. I learnt a big lesson for the future at this round.

Tackle: 7' 3-5kg Bastix custom Duffrod, Okuma V-System 20A spooled with 10lb Sufix 823 and 10lb Rockfish leader.

Lures: 1/4oz ZMan Mini ChatterBait, retrofitted with a TT Lures V12 Gold Olive Vortex spinnerbait skirt and a ZMan 2.5" Watermelon Red Grubz as a trailer.

Technique: Cast tight to the edge and slow roll out, following the bottom contour and working the pocket between the edge and the inside of the weed bed. Most bites came in the first five winds of the retrieve.

These two results had me at 195 points out of 200 and NSW AOY and leading AOY going into the third round. A big credit to the TT and ZMan products I used in the two tournaments, proving their worth well and truly.

Thanks to the TT Team.
Gregg Flett



Gregg with a couple of quality Australian bass.

Gearing up for FlattieZ

By Jack Welsh

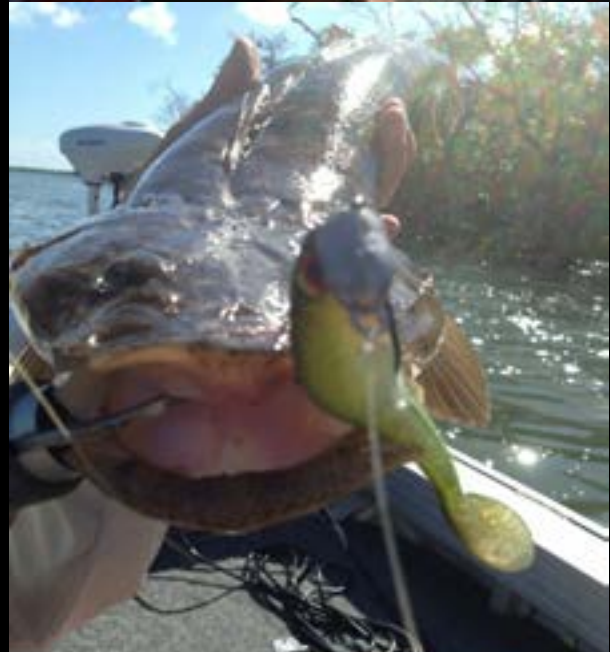


The author with a nice flatty from the estuary on a ZMan soft plastic.

The dusky flathead is regarded as one of the easiest fish to target and catch in the estuaries down the east coast of Australia. The reason for this is that, generally, if you put a well presented soft plastic in front of its face, the flathead is more than likely going to hit it or hook up!

It isn't as easy as hitting the water and expecting to catch this fish though, you have to prepare and gear up. This includes appropriate rods, reels, line, soft plastics and jigheads to suit. When I decide to target flathead, I usually opt for a 2000 to 2500 size reel, matched to a 7' 2-4kg rod, preferably graphite. This setup is ideal when targeting these fish because of the finesse factor it brings when matched up with light 6 to 10lb braid and an 8-12lb fluorocarbon leader.

This brings me to lure selection. Like I said earlier, if you put a well presented soft plastic in a flathead's face, it will probably hit it. I have found the ZMan range of soft plastics to reign supreme when I am chasing flathead because they are 10X tougher, resulting in more fish being caught on just a single plastic. I have caught flathead on the GrubZ, StreakZ Curly TailZ and MinnowZ and they all have their place.



A 2.5" GrubZ munching flatty.



The 2.5" GrubZ are a good option when fishing shallower water, like sand flats. You don't need heavy jigheads on a sand flat, so this makes the GrubZ a perfect choice. The StreakZ Curly TailZ and MinnowZ are perfect for fishing a little bit deeper because they are well suited to heavier jigheads. When not fishing the flats these two plastics are always a go-to, with a couple of rod and reel setups rigged and ready. The actions that all three tails give out are ideal for flathead, attracting them to bite and the ElaZtech construction means that they are able to stretch, so they feel very natural and will entice the fish to hold on longer, giving you more time to set the hook. You then need something to rig your ZMan plastics on and this is where the TT Lures jigheads come into it.

The TT HeadlockZ HD range has been specifically designed to suit the ZMan soft plastics, locking them on so that they don't slide down the jighead. The weights that this range comes in are ideal for flathead fishing with the three ZMan models that I referred to previously. The 1/8oz is perfect for the 2.5" GrubZ, when fishing the shallows, plus it comes in a 1/0 sized hook, which fits the plastic well. When fishing with the StreakZ Curly TailZ and the MinnowZ, I look at the depth I am fishing and match the plastic with jigheads from 1/6oz through to 1/2oz and the desirable hook size for these two models is a 3/0.

Now that we have looked at the gear used to target a flathead, let's have a look where to locate this fish and where to use the three different styles of soft plastics. Flathead can be caught all throughout the estuary, from the mouth right up into the backwaters, in depths from half a foot deep to deep holes over ten metres deep. The 2.5" GrubZ will always be tied on my rod in shallow water, under 2m, because it matches the food source on sand flats perfectly. It represents worms well and it could even be mistaken for a saltwater yabby (nipper).

When fishing a drain or runoff coming off a sand flat or creek, I will tie on a StreakZ Curly TailZ or MinnowZ in an attempt to match the hatch. The aim is to replicate a small baitfish that is getting caught in the tide and being washed into deeper water. The flathead will sit just on the drop off waiting for this to happen and that's when your plastic is, more likely than not, going to be eaten. A lot of big flathead are taken when fishing a drain or runoff.



Another good spot to target flathead is on the corners of a creek, where over time the current has created a deep section. Flathead will sit on the corner because it will often create an eddy where the water comes around a corner and it almost looks as if it has turned into a little whirlpool. If you can find a good eddy like this, then the flatties won't be too far away. The bait will often get caught and disorientated in the eddy, struggling to get back out and making for an easy meal. This is where you replicate the baitfish with your ZMan plastic.

I hope that what we have covered above can assist you in gearing up for flathead and result in you landing some monsters! So get out there and bring it on!



Another victim of the ZMan 4\"/>
StreakZ Curly TailZ in Opening Night.

NT Adventures

By Shaun Taylor

My last adventure in the Northern Territory provided the chance to show a mate the area, and hopefully some good fishing! After my guiding commitments were finished my good mate Hutch was flying in for a week's camping by boat, along the remote Arnhemland coast. After ten days of guiding in the area I was super keen to get out there and catch a few myself.

Despite some unfavourable weather in the previous couple of days, fortune favoured us, as the first morning Hutch and I took off on a calm sea for the 70 km run to our first destination. I planned to show Hutch as much of the area as possible, so a two day trip up to the Goomadeer River and Junction Bay was first on the list. This area has sustained some awesome cyclone damage in the past and amazes you when you first see it. The fishing options are also varied, with flats and shallow coastal creeks, as well as rock bars, snag fishing and of course hundreds of run in creeks and junctions.



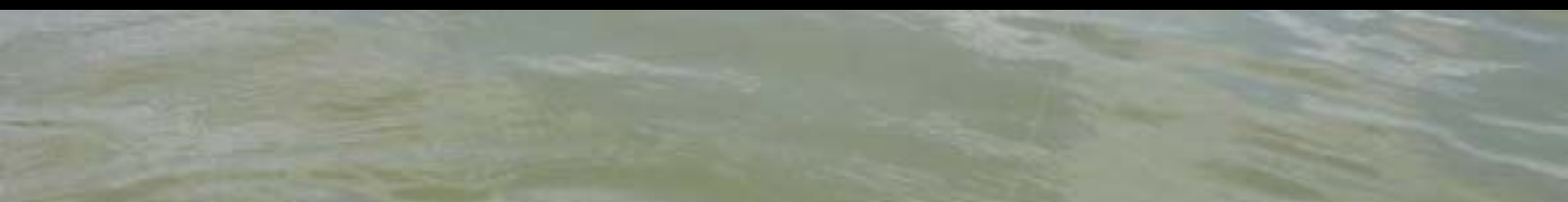
Shaun with a quality toga on a ZMan.

A solid tarpon on the
ZMan 3" MinnowZ



I headed straight to an area that had been productive on big fish in the past, but after working it for a while for only a couple of trevally, I decided to push up the river and fish some small drains and creeks that were running out into the main river. We rigged with 3" MinnowZ on ChinlockZ hooks, rigged weedless to allow us to get in amongst the snags and stick piles without constantly snagging up. This proved a good move as there were plenty of barra hanging around, as well as some nice size tarpon and a few jacks and small fingermark.

After the action slowed we headed back to a side creek, just inside the mouth, where jelly prawns were getting smashed along the banks. We quickly positioned ourselves amongst the action on the opposite bank to a small double drain and all looked good. It was an incredible scene as large threadies pushed themselves out of the water and up the mud banks in their pursuit of the jelly prawns! Catching them however proved difficult and believe me we tried everything in our arsenal of tackle. The Barra were still liking our offerings, but the threadies were totally zoned in on the tiny prawns.



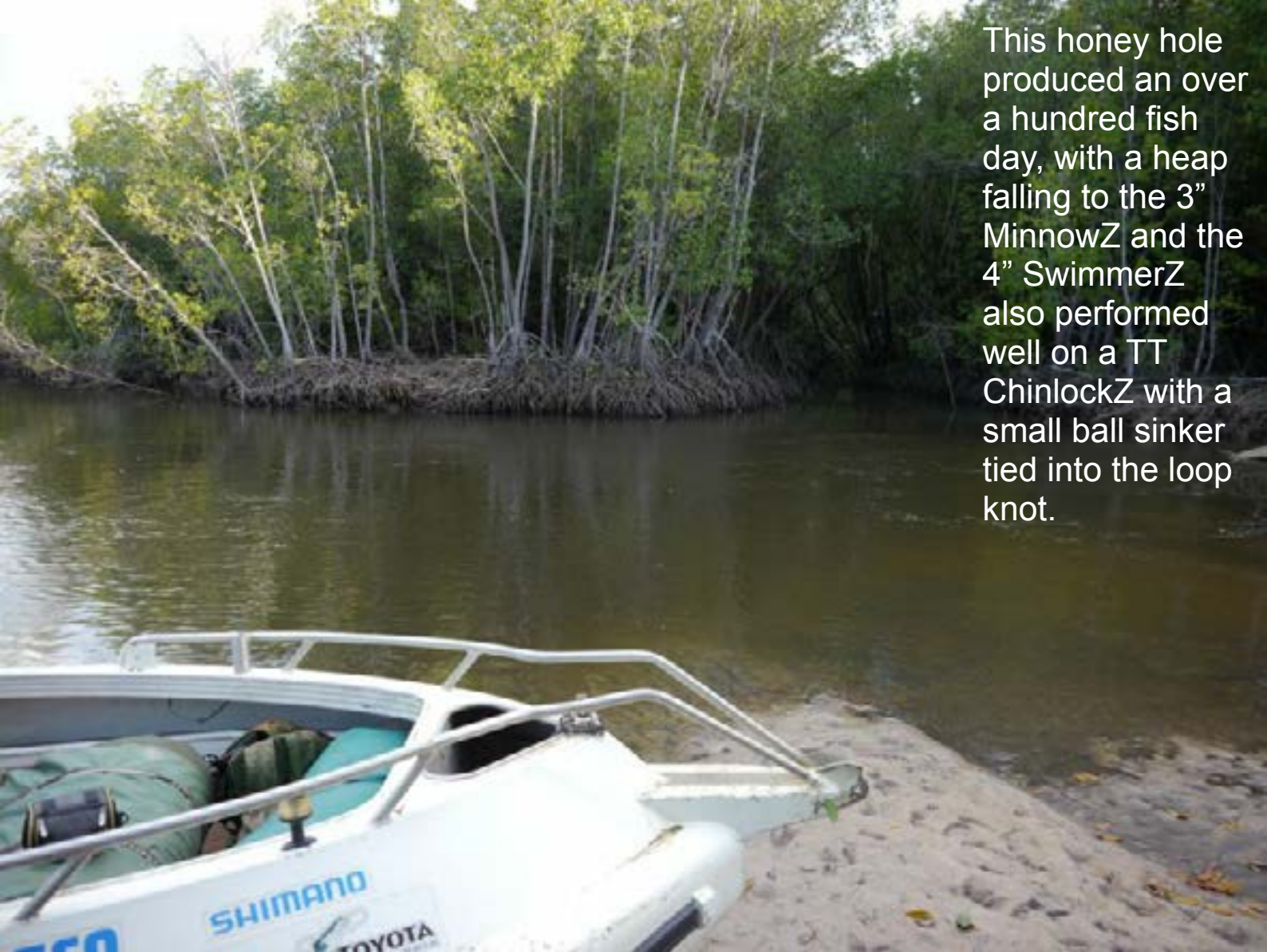
It had been a good introduction to the area for Hutch and as dusk was approaching we headed out to a small beach just inside a headland where we cooked t-bones on the fire and planned the next day's fishing.

The wind increased overnight, and with a weather change imminent we thought it wise to head back a bit closer to base, as a 70km ocean run in a barra boat in rough seas is not much fun... I've found this out the hard way!

Safely back at camp we enjoyed some good food and drink, and again planned our next move. I had been saving the best for last and my favourite coastal creek was the destination for our next overnighter. The wind was still up, but at least we were running with it and once inside the creek we would be well protected. We made an early start and hugging the coastline we ran the 40kms into the magic little coastal creek.



There's not too many places to cool off in Arnhemland. Here the boys take a welcome dip, while still keeping a close eye on the surroundings.



This honey hole produced an over a hundred fish day, with a heap falling to the 3" MinnowZ and the 4" SwimmerZ also performed well on a TT ChinlockZ with a small ball sinker tied into the loop knot.

I have written about this spot before, as it has turned on many awesome sessions for me in the past, as well as being a very picturesque area, with many crocs, amazing bird life and several beaches up in the creek that make good spots to cook a feed. It also has a section of large trees that hang out well over the water, providing welcome shade in the middle of a harsh Arnhemland day. We played around the front of the creek, catching some nice barra on shallow divers, before moving up the creek to try a few of my old favourites.

It was surprisingly quiet at some of my best spots and I must admit I was getting a bit worried as we ventured right up to the last junction in the creek before we would have to start pushing through trees.

I changed to a Rootbeer Gold 3" MinnowZ, while Hutch went for a Pearl 4" SwimmerZ. I pointed him into the large mangrove root bank that separated the creek arms and was relieved when his first cast was smashed on the drop by a hungry barra! My plastic suffered the same fate and from then on the day was a constant blur of double hook ups and jumping barra! We tried a variety of techniques and as one would go quiet, a change back to a 3" MinnowZ would trigger the bite again.

It was just as the tide had turned to run out, Hutch had hurriedly re-tied after a bust off and had forgot to add a sinker to his loop knot. The 4" SwimmerZ was now weightless. He fired it in under the mangroves and as we watched it seductively swim back out from the bank, just under the surface, it was boofed right before our eyes!

This of course was all I needed to change to a surface lure and while Hutchy kept smacking them on his Pearl SwimmerZ, I tried a small walk the dog hardbody. Mixed in with the barra were a few jacks, fingermark and some of the biggest crazy blue salmon I have ever seen. I have caught them up to 90 cm and some of these fish were well over a metre!

Anyone who has tangled with these psycho-salmon before will know how hard they can go and I really wanted to nail one of these horses. I could only manage a smaller model, as the big fish were charging our smaller hooked fish, but didn't want to take a lure. Oh well, we would have to be content with double hook ups on barra on the surface to keep us interested!

I don't want to sound soft, but I was bugged! We had kept a tally, calling each fish out as we released it and we ended on 114 barra for the day, a handful of jacks, fingermark, cod, tarpon, blue salmon, queenfish, trevally and even a flathead, which Hutch found very amusing. Over half these fish were caught on our 3 inch and 4 inch ZMan plastics rigged on TT HeadlockZ and ChinlockZ heads. The rest were caught mostly on poppers, fizzerz, and walk the dogs. I would have liked to have some FrogZ with me, as I'm sure they would have done the job.



A barra on the ever-reliable
ZMan 4" SwimmerZ in Pearl.



We ran the shallow creek back out to a small beach inside the mouth and cooked a barra and a jack in the coals for dinner. It was the nicest barra I have eaten, as I don't usually rate them much as a table fish. It had been an amazing day and I was stoked for my mate to see in person the fishing I had been telling him about for years.

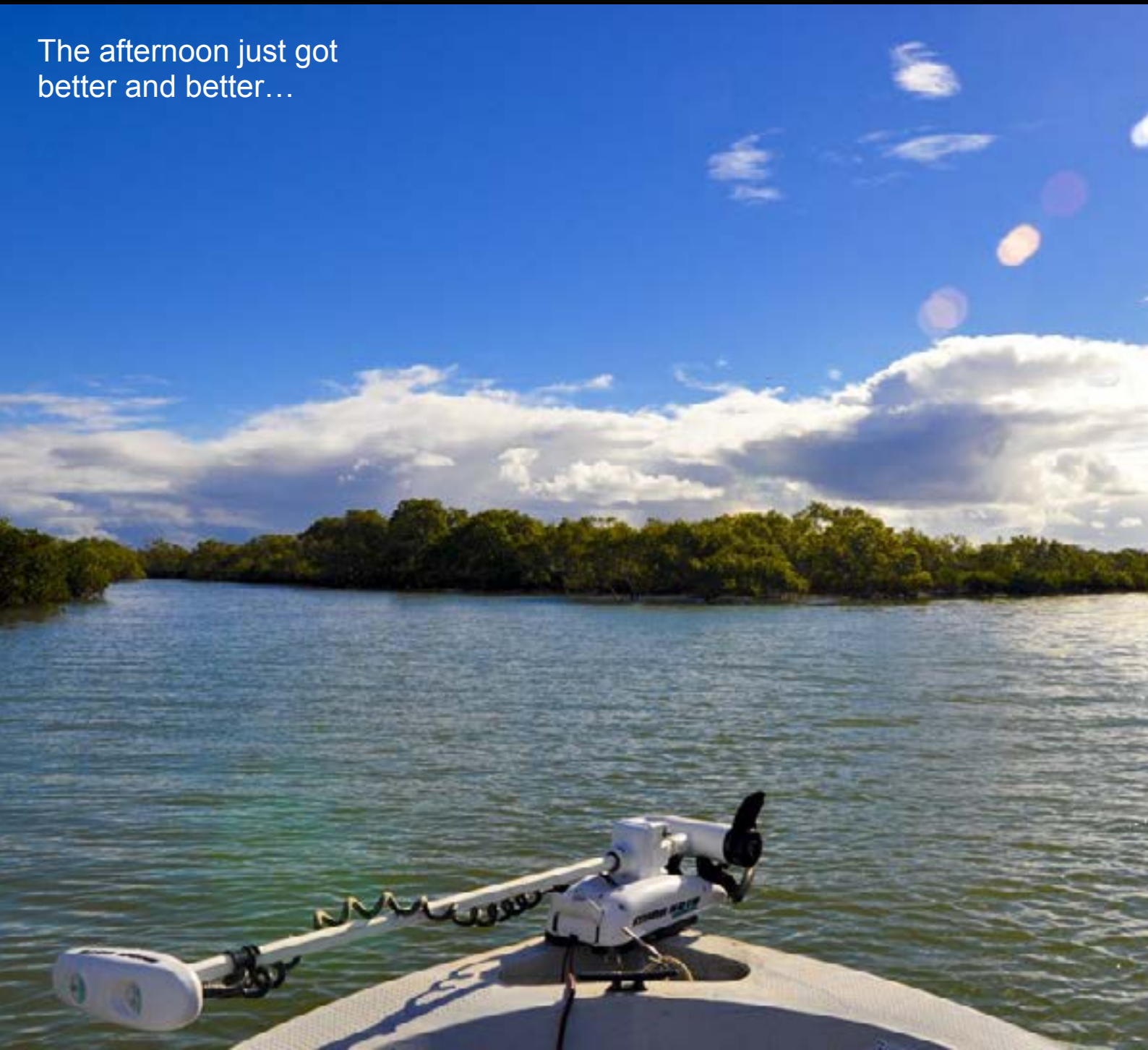
Once again my favourite ZMan 3" MinnowZ had performed everywhere we fished; not only in the mad sessions when the fish were on the chew, but also when the going got tough and bites were hard to come by... it was the trusty MinnowZ that did the job for us!

ZMan Solo Barra **By Paul Chew**

With the stresses of my job and a few family health dramas in the back of my mind I needed to get out of the house and chase a finny foe. With no real set plan, this is how the afternoon unfolded...

I messaged my fishing mate Pete and received no answer, so I decided to go for a quick solo session. I threw a couple beers in the esky and a couple slices of cold meat lover's pizza, a few rods and off I went. I left the ramp in the Mary River in light drizzle, with a little bit of Sou' East, but the further the poly pushed through the heads, the better the afternoon got, with the clouds clearing and wind dropping off as the tide just started to ebb.

The afternoon just got better and better...



The newer GrubZ colours proved effective.



The afternoon produced a mixed bag of species.

I headed up a little creek I hadn't fished much and needing to try out some of the new ZMan 2.5" GrubZ colours, I thought I'd try the light gear straight off. I used both the new Gudgeon and Greasy Prawn colours to snare about 20 bream of various sizes, a flounder, some pike, small tailor and a flathead of around 70cm that fought like a soggy loaf of bread. All in all it was a productive little creek, nothing to write home about, but a really relaxing way to while away the afternoon, take in a bit of sun, sip on a cold Corona and let worries drift away.

With the sun heading towards the horizon I decided to have a stop at an old haunt and try a bit of deep water winter ZMan-ing. I snuck in behind a massive launch that was anchored up and rigged a little heavier as some big grunter live here. Fishing 10lb Fireline rigged with 15lb Schneider leader, I chose a 4" New Penny StreakZ Curly TailZ rigged on a traditional TT Tournament Series 3/8oz 4/0 jighead. The jighead selection was so the finer gauge hook might penetrate more easily in the bony mouths, especially in the deeper water that I was fishing.



A solid flattie on the
2.5" GrubZ.



The sounder was showing nearly 40ft, with some good shows, so I dropped the Minn Kota, spot locked and sent a cast as far as I could upstream. I took a glance at the sounder and out of the corner of my eye I saw a feisty little tailor cart wheeling through the air with my plastic firmly pinned in the corner of his mouth. After a short spirited struggle he ended up in the boat. This was repeated the next few casts, minus me looking at the sounder. It's these kinds of winter species that really bring the ZMan plastics into their own in my opinion. Other plastics will work, but toothy species like pike, tailor and little mackerel make putting on a new plastic a necessity, whereas the ZMan's elasticity works in its favour, being able to boat quite a lot of fish before needing to be replaced.

After the tailor, a couple of nice flatties around 60cm made it to the deck. Interestingly they are a pretty common catch in 30ft plus at this time of year here. With me glancing frequently at the sun, descending quickly to the horizon, I decided to give it one more drift before it would be too late to have a decent amount of light for navigating back up the river. With the prop of the Kota just ticking over to keep me nose first into the current, the sun's final golden glow reflecting hard off the water and bait flicking off the surface... it was just one of those moments that we all as fisherman live for.



The little orange offering sailed out, braid sending water droplets flying till it landed and broke the golden shimmer on the water, before beginning its descent into the turquoise depths. I glanced down at the Lowrance, saw a massive bait school under me in 35 ft of water and out of the corner of my eye saw the green Fireline give the slightest twitch. Instinctively I lifted the rod gently, but firmly, coming up tight on something.

A couple of slow headshakes and the sun's golden reflection was shattered by an acrobatic slab of chrome, with the head and shoulders of an awesome winter barramundi slashing about and the little ZMan hanging on grimly. My first coherent thought, once my brain caught up, was....OOOOOOOPS!!!!!!! This can't end well. However, I backed the drag off and saw the lure was pinned right in the corner of the mouth... at least I had something going for me.

With the bank only 50 metres or so away, I drove the boat out a little wider to take away any chance of the fish finding a sunken tree or similar. So, to cut a long story short, the fight went back and forth, winning a little, losing a lot and feeling some horrible bumps and grinds up the line. I was on edge the whole time!

The only real tactic I had was to keep my arms as soft as I could, cushioning the fish's headshakes, while trying to keep some tension on the line. Eventually both the fish and I tired, not helped by the fact that I had kicked over my last Corona and I did my best to knock the fish off at the last minute with the net. It was doing circles under the boat and I lifted my rod arm as high as I could, but try as I might the fish wouldn't roll back my way, tail slowly beating, keeping it out of arms reach on the surface.

After a heart-stopping fight Paul was rewarded with this slab of chrome.





The satisfaction
of the release.

I had to put the net down and take a couple winds on the reel, turn its head and at that moment I was sure the jighead would fall out, as to my despair it was now at pretty much right angles. It was just one of those moments when my luck held, she rolled and her head swam straight into the net. I am really at a loss as to explain how I felt at this moment... it was just magic. As soon as the tension came off the line, the little ZMan dropped out!

Not wanting to stuff around setting the tripod up, I opened up the throttle and shot out to the massive launch. Here I got the lads on board to take a couple quick snaps. They were awesome, with me getting a couple pics on the back of the boat and reviving the big girl off the duckboard, before getting back in my boat. With a flick of her tail she was gone, leaving me with THAT feeling... you know the one you get after letting one of those special fish go. The boys were stoked to see it go, though wishing it was on their table and I explained she would be breeding in a month or so, replenishing stocks in the straights for future generations.

I had a quick chat and they said this was just a quick stopover on their way to Hamilton Island. The only tough bit of the trip is that the big girl uses 400 litres/hour. I tried for a decky job, but no vacancies. Saying goodbye I opened the Suzuki WOT and headed off into the darkening western sky, loving that feeling of just getting... a little bit lucky.

Targeting Cool Weather Barramundi

By Luke Vella



As the winter months start to roll in, a lot of angler's put their barramundi gear away and start to target species like whiting, bream and flathead through the cooler months as these species come in to breed and are found in more plentiful numbers. Anglers stop targeting barra as they are renowned as a tropical fish that are normally caught in the warmer months, when the water temperate is higher, around the 28 degrees mark and above. Barra are commonly said not to bite in the cooler months, around June, July and August, however even though the water temperate drops in the cooler months, even as low as 17 degrees and lower, and the barra do become a lot more sluggish and harder to find, they are still able to be caught with the right lures, techniques and in the right location.

A great lure for winter barra is the ZMan 3" MinnowZ in a variety of colours, a few of my favourites being Opening night, Pearl, Houdini and New Penny. The rest of the 20+ colours in the MinnowZ range also go well on the fish, it just depends on the water clarity for different colours, with some colours working better in certain conditions.



If you are fishing in clear water, try the more natural colours, like Opening Night, Houdini or Redbone Glow. If the water is more of a muddy or dirty colour you should give the brighter or dark silhouette colours a run. This would include Pearl, Space Guppy or Gold Rush. Another great lure for winter barra is the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, with favourites being Pearl or Black Back Shad, along with the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in a variety of colours.



TT Lures 1/4oz Switchblades are another favourite and one that is less commonly regarded as a barra lure. Switchblades are a good search bait for winter barra, as the strong vibration that the blade gives off can entice a sluggish, shutdown barramundi to bite. Great colours in the TT 1/4oz Switchblade range are Golden Boy, Silver Minnow and Orange or Red Nightmare.



I rig the ZMan soft plastics with the TT Lures 1/4oz or 3/8oz, 3/0 or 5/0 HeadlockZ HD jigheads, which have a strong, sharp Mustad hook with a split in the lead grip, designed to help the ZMan soft plastic stay in place fish after fish. The ElaZtech is 10X stronger than standard soft plastics, which helps you catch more fish on the same lure.





If you're fishing in tight snags a 1/4oz or 3/8oz TT Lures 4/0 Snake Head jighead is a great choice. It makes your lure more snag resistant so that it can be fished where a conventional jighead can't.

Another key to enticing shutdown barra to bite is scent. Scent goes great on your soft plastics and even on your Switchblades. There a lot of different scents on the market, but the Pro-Cure bait scents are extremely effective and available in the many different flavours.



I like to throw these lure with my Shimano 2500 Sustain, matched with a 4-8lb Samaki Zing 6'10" rod and loaded with 15lb fluorescent green Sunline Super PE and a 30lb leader. This allows me to cast lures a long way.



When chasing winter barra, tide and location are a big thing. For starters, in winter it is a lot harder to get out of your warm bed in the early hours of the morning to be able to fish the good parts of the tide, especially when it is freezing cold outside. Just get up! The moment that you realise you are going fishing, the cold and tired feeling will be replaced by the itching feeling of wanting to get down to the creek and throw your ZMan soft plastics into some awesome looking structure. Think about what might eat your ZMan and that will get you moving!



There is nothing better than watching the sun come up when you're hooked up to a good fish. In winter I find that rocks or rocky headlands are the most productive areas to find schooling barra. So we will cruise up the creek to one of our favorite rock bars, ensuring we are there slow rolling our chosen ZMan through the rocks when the tide starts to come in.

Luke with a nice salty on a ZMan 4" SwimmerZ in Pearl.



Techniques for shutdown barra include a very gentle slow roll or a slow hop and reel technique off the bottom. I find it is best for winter barra when it is around mid-tide, as most of the rocks are covered and it creates a back eddy where you will normally find a few schooling barra. These fish are waiting for baitfish to swim by and also choosing to stay in the warm water. Barra like hanging around rock bars in the cooler months because the rocks are warmed up by the sun and then when the tide covers them the barra come in seeking the warm water.

As the tide started to create a small back eddy, I cast in my ZMan 3" Opening Night MinnowZ rigged up on a TT 1/4oz 3/0 jighead. I started to slowly, slow roll it back and within a few cranks of the reel a healthy 60cm saltwater barra inhaled the lure! As I started reeling it in, the barra put on a very acrobatic show. After landing this healthy fish, a few casts later I was on again to another healthy saltwater barra of around the same size.

This was just one of the many trips where we got onto some nice winter barra. I hope you have picked up something about targeting winter barra that you can use to go out and get into a few yourself.

Best New Lures



It Makes Sense...

Scents can be the difference between a quiet day and a hot bite, a tournament win or a donut, or just landing a couple versus going home fishless. You don't always need it, but when the bite is tough I would rather have it than not have it.

Start without scent, catch the active fish and then when it shuts down, apply some scent... or apply scent from the start to maximise your chances.

Pro-Cure Super Gel is the ultimate scent. Made from real ground bait, so fish eat it. Super sticky, so it sticks to all lure types. Powerful Amino Acids, to attract fish and trigger strikes, Bite stimulants, to trigger strikes and UV Enhancement so that your lure stands out like a beacon in the water to the fish..

Pro-Cure Super Gel comes in a large (2oz) bottle, with a flip top applicator for minimal mess and waste and easy application. It is available in 9 deadly fish catching flavours - Mullet, Shrimp, Squid, Bloody Tuna, Blue Crab, Inshore Saltwater, Garlic Plus, Crawfish and Nightcrawler. Pro-Cure - CATCH MORE BIG FISH!

HeadlockZ HD jigheads - New Sizes



The ultimate jighead is now available in new sizes! Unique locking grub keeper and a brutally strong hook, now available in a #2, #1, #7/0 & #8/0.

New sizes - 1/20oz #2 & 1, 1/16oz & 1/12oz #2, 1 & 1/0 and 1/8oz #2 & 1.

#7/0 - 3/8, 1/2, 3/4, 1, 1.5 & 2oz.
#8/0 - 1/2, 3/4, 1, 1.5, 2 & 3oz.

Check out the full range at ttlures.com.au