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Angler: Owen McPaul

Species: Australian Bass (NSW)

Lure: ZMan 3" MinnowZ - Pinfish

Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD

Scent: Pro-Cure Super Gel - Nightcrawler



[www.ttlures.com.au](http://www.ttlures.com.au)  
[info@ttlures.com.au](mailto:info@ttlures.com.au)



[www.z-man.com.au](http://www.z-man.com.au)  
[info@z-man.com.au](mailto:info@z-man.com.au)



# Estuary Perch Love GrubZ

**By Luke Smith**

Winter and early spring is a great time for anglers in the southwest of Victoria as all of our estuary species school up to spawn. For estuary perch this means that they are a lot easier to find than in the summer months. Fish move towards the mouths of river systems and congregate in deeper holes to do their thing. As a keen fisho, this is an opportunity too good to pass up and I recently hit the water with a few mates to experience these southern estuary sportfish.

EP's are a hard fighting fish that are similar in appearance to an Australian bass. They are known for being dirty fighters as they are usually caught tight to structure... and they know where every snag is! They respond well to a range of techniques from live baits to hard bodies to vibes. But on this occasion I decided to use soft plastics, the ever faithful ZMan GrubZ to be exact.

Luke with a solid GrubZ EP.







EP's are great fun on light spin gear.

Perch are an opportunistic feeder and when a lightly rigged grub is slowly wafting past their nose they just cannot resist. When using 2.5" GrubZ I use a 1/16oz #2 TT jighead and I have found that for most of my estuary applications this combination is best. It is for that reason I have a whole tray of various colours, rigged and ready to go. To work these lures I use a light 1-3kg rod and a 2000 sized spin reel filled with 2-4lb braid. Leader size is a personal choice as perch have an abrasive mouth and many fish are lost due to the leader being worn through. It is for this reason, when targeting big EP's, that many anglers will use up to 10lb leaders, however I choose to run a light 4lb leader to try and achieve more bites from this sometimes elusive fish.







When it comes to finding perch you need to cover a lot of ground as they can be very hard to find at times. In the winter months they can be found stacked up on the bottom, which is an exciting sight to see on the sounder and it's about this time that my casting arm starts twitching. The most productive technique I have found is to cast as tight to the bank or snag as possible and let the grub sink on a completely slack line. A keen eye is needed, as when any movement of the slack line is spotted you need to strike and hold on. Perch love taking the lure on the drop and 70% of my perch caught on plastics will be hooked before the lure has been worked. If the lure reaches the bottom without being engulfed, take up the slack line and begin a twitching retrieve. I hold my rod tip down and use a double twitch followed by a ten second pause. There is no greater feeling than when the line is slack and you feel that 'pluck' in the line.



A Bubble Gum GrubZ did the job on this nice EP.

Get that GrubZ in tight to structure and hang on!



When it comes to colour choice it is extremely hard to go past Motor Oil. This colour is freakishly good and is my go-to at the start of every fishing session, no matter what the target. Other colours I have had good success on include Gudgeon, Amber, Copper Penny and Greasy Prawn. At the end of the day though, I have caught fish on every colour in the range. My tip is to use what you have the most confidence in and for me that's Motor Oil, as when the lure hits the water it lights up with a green tinge and it seems the fish just love it!

I hope this info has helped shed some light on this iconic Aussie species and helps you to get out there and catch a few. Cheers.



NEW GEAR



## 3" Scented PogyZ

Angler requests have led to another addition to the ZMan range of soft plastics, the 3" Scented PogyZ. PogyZ feature a deep body profile that realistically imitates shad, herring, bony bream and other deep set baitfish. The segmented section near the rear of the PogyZ and teardrop shaped paddle tail create a tight life-like wiggle when retrieved and the 100% natural scent is designed to attract fish and trigger strikes. Like all ZMan ElaZtech plastics, the PogyZ is 10X Tough, so you catch more fish per lure and super-soft and flexible, for maximum action and a realistic feel that keeps fish biting.

The inclusion of a belly slot makes for effective weedless rigging and is also ideal for adding a squirt of Pro-Cure Super Gel scent. Requests for a pogy style plastic in the ZMan range have come from anglers fishing the northern estuaries, those chasing bass in impoundments with bony bream populations and anglers chasing flathead in the southern lakes, rivers and estuaries, so the 3" Scented PogyZ is sure to prove itself as a versatile presentation. Scented PogyZ come in a pack of 5 and there are 7 colours in the range, including New Penny, Electric Chicken, Gold Rush and a range of natural baitfish colours, such as the popular Bad Shad and Redbone Glow. Check out the ZMan 3" Scented PogyZ at your local tackle store.





# 4" DieZel MinnowZ

The ZMan 4" DieZel MinnowZ was born from the success of the ZMan 3" MinnowZ, a compact paddle tail plastic that has a knack of attracting the attention of everything from bass, flathead and jewies to mangrove jack and metre plus barra. After numerous requests from anglers for a larger version of the MinnowZ the decision was made to create a 4" paddle tail and the DieZel MinnowZ is the result. Like all ZMan ElaZtech plastics, the DieZel MinnowZ is 10X Tough, so you catch more fish per lure and super-soft and flexible, for maximum action and a realistic feel that keeps fish biting.

At 4 inches in length it will be an extremely versatile and popular plastic that maintains the lively, yet subtle tail action of the 3" MinnowZ, with a slightly longer, slimmer and deeper body profile that will appeal to larger predatory species and fish that are feeding on larger profile baitfish. The inclusion of a belly slot allows for effective weedless rigging and it is a great place to squirt a bit of Pro-Cure scent for added attraction. There are 10 colours in the range, including Pearl, Electric Chicken, Houdini and Opening Night, with five DieZel MinnowZ per pack.

The 4" DieZel MinnowZ has already proven effective on flathead, jewies, barra, mangrove jack, trevally, cod and more. Fish on!

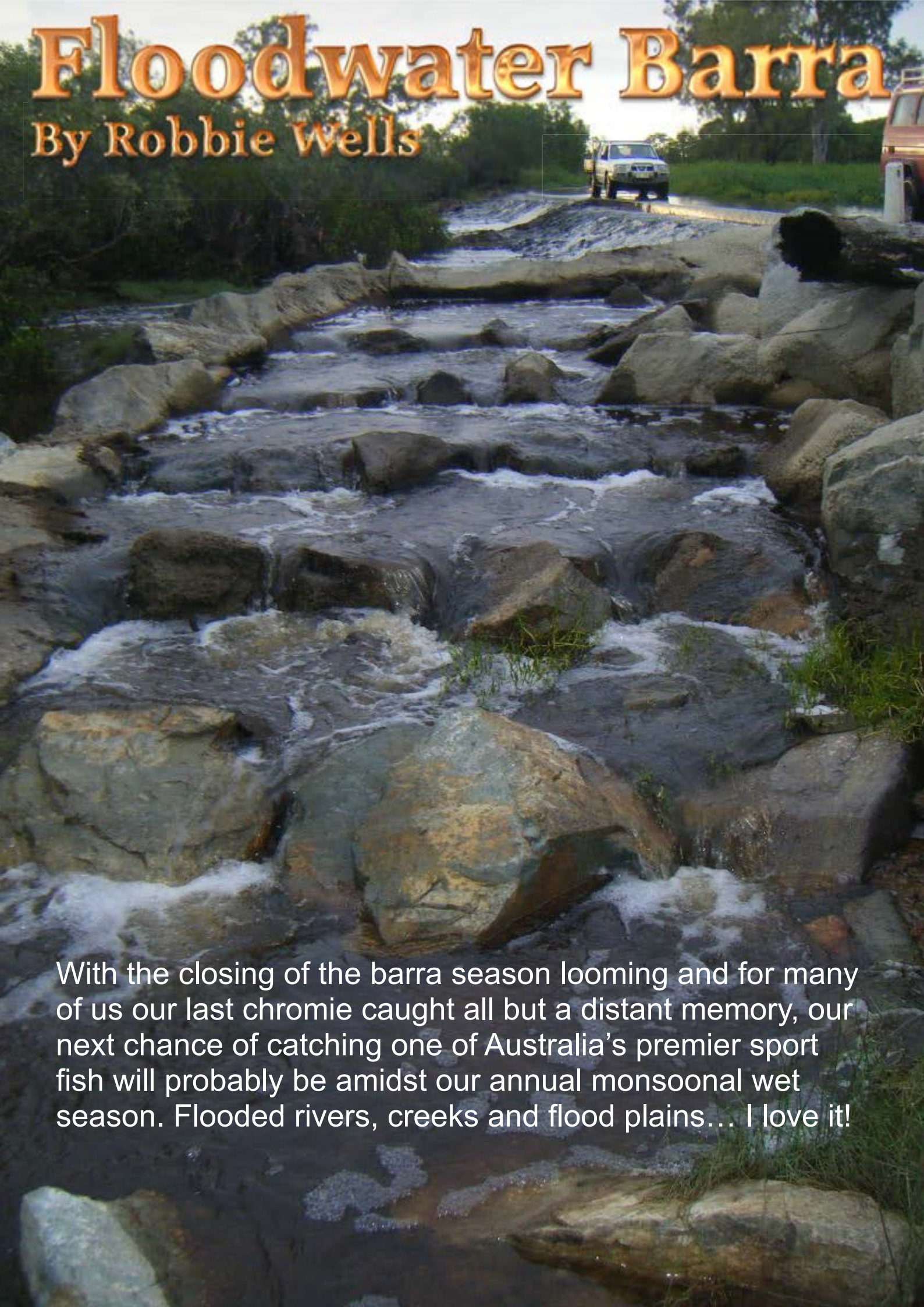


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# Floodwater Barra

By Robbie Wells

A scenic view of a rocky river with a car in the background. The river flows over large, grey rocks, creating white water rapids. In the background, a silver SUV is parked on a paved road that crosses the river. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with trees and grass. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a bright day.

With the closing of the barra season looming and for many of us our last chromie caught all but a distant memory, our next chance of catching one of Australia's premier sport fish will probably be amidst our annual monsoonal wet season. Flooded rivers, creeks and flood plains... I love it!



The one in 100 year, one in 50 year, one in 15 year and one in 7 year monumental flood events... all in the last 5 years, have all contributed to more than favorable, if not closer to perfect, breeding, recruitment and grow out conditions for our beloved barramundi. Every billabong, floodplain and salt marsh, every waterway fresh or salt has been flushed and at times all linking together into massive coastal inland seas. Places like the Proserpine and the Rockhampton and Broadsound Deltas benefit greatly. Most importantly the duration of such flood events have opened up ancient juvenile barra runs and recruitment areas, with back up rain and flooding for longer than normal periods allowing the barra open range, while replenishing these areas with new barramundi stock and food.

With that in mind I count down to the end of the barra season and look to the beginning of the new season with the anticipation of what could be. With Google Maps in hand, the off season gives me three months of virtual barra fishing, seeking out new backwater creeks, rivers, natural rock bars and manmade barriers like roads, irrigation channels and weirs that normally inhibit and minimize the potential for successful barramundi spawning, recruitment and grow out. With that bit of research, the land based angler has many outstanding options during the wet... no boat, no worries.







The last few years of our annual barra trip has been plagued by strong winds, torrential rain and flooding. Not ideal when you want to fish the flats and creek mouths. So adapting to Plan B – ‘Backwater and Flood Barra’ has delivered some of the most exciting fishing I’ve done. So much so that I look forward to the wet every year.

Barramundi are biologically quite special, as they have the ability to go from salt to fresh and fresh to salt (Euryhaline) and even though they can live their entire life in the freshwater they must go to the saltwater to spawn (Catadromous). Once they reach breeding size, a female can produce up to 100,000 eggs per kilogram, meaning a one metre barra of around 10kg has the potential of 1,000,000 eggs! This is staggering and shows the importance of releasing the breeders for our fishing future.

However, just like any barra fishing, knowing where the fish are during these high water periods is the key. It’s all about location, location, location. As mentioned, fishing the back country consists mainly manmade obstacles like old farmer’s weirs, irrigation drains, channels and bridges, along with the natural rock bars and flood plains. Barra are opportunistic feeders in these situations and so as they swim in with the tide. The saltwater pushes against the freshwater, depending on the tide size and location you are fishing and equalizes, creating a feeding free for all between the rainbow fish, gudgeons, etc. in the fresh side and the mullet, gar, etc. mixing in the salt... a barra smorgasbord!



During these tides and high water events I have observed two behavioral patterns of barra. Firstly, normally the smaller barra, up to around 60cm, push right up hard against the barrier until the tide is right or high enough for them to get up into the freshwater. These fish tend not to be hungry and seem focused on the job at hand. The second is the bigger fish who come in for the aforementioned feeding frenzy, moving in and out of the current, back eddies and pressure points, slurping up small schools of fish and boofing the bigger mullet and gar. As the tide recedes they then sit up hard against any divot, crevice in the bank or back eddy, waiting for the bait to wash back out with the tide. This is by far my favorite time of the tide, walking the bank pick, pocketing potential barra haunts before there is not enough water. In saying that, it's amazing how many fish will sit in the smallest and shallowest pools until the next tide cycle.





The technique is straight forward, using a slow to medium roll depending on how much flow there is where you're fishing. The TT 3/8oz 5/0 HeadlockZ HD / ZMan 4" SwimmerZ combo is deadly. You can go lighter on the jighead weight, but I find the floodwater is normally too fast to give any real feel of what your ZMan is doing and more importantly you have trouble getting the plastic into the strike zone. I use a high rod tip, which aids in less snagging as your plastic tends to skim over the rocks. It also creates more direct hook ups as the barra tend to hit hard in the current, meaning the high rod tip self-loads for an easy and positive hook set. Always swim your plastic with the current and into the strike zone. If it's a back eddy swirling around in a 45 degree angle try to keep it right in the zone for as long as possible.





My favourite colours for the backwaters are Hitch, Gizzard Shad and Pearl in the 4" SwimmerZ, but I always have a backup 3" MinnowZ rigged and have been messing around with the 5" Grass KickerZ with equal success. It's just a matter of getting out there... sure you get your average days, but the more you explore the area, in all tides and conditions, the more you will reap the benefits. 'The adventure is part of the journey' and Australia has miles of awesome country worth exploring, even without catching fish. Plus you can't catch them in your lounge room!

Barra are one of those fish, whereby the more you think you know about them... the less you actually do and there's always a curve ball.

How Good's Australia





# Striking Murray Cod

**By David Brace**

On a recent trip west of the Great Dividing Range, joined by some good mates and invited to camp on the river banks of the Dumaresq River on private property, we experience some incredibly cold conditions while chasing Murray cod and golden perch.

We set out from the warmer coastal regions of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland and headed inland nearing a small regional agricultural town known for its friendly atmosphere and hospitality. From here we continued westward to a property of livestock and broad acre farming, with the Dumaresq River cutting through its boundaries. It wasn't even winter, yet we experienced some freezing conditions with ice forming on our kayaks overnight and we awoke to some spectacular sunrises, albeit with a good layer of frost on the canvas of our swags. It just so happened to be the first cold snap of the season and it was certainly a shock to the system for those of us not being acclimatized to the freezing conditions. There is something special about this country and personally, after residing within the region a while ago, it bought back some very fond memories as it always does.





Setting up camp didn't take too long at all and our opened lure boxes were soon spread across the back of the ute. After some advice from the local characters joining us, discussions were had on what lures might work best for the conditions we were faced with. It seemed that TT Lures range of Striker and Tornado Spinnerbaits were the lures of preference and they didn't disappoint one bit over the entirety of our short trip. With darkness falling rapidly into our first evening under the stars, some of us opted to launch the kayaks and see if we could raise a fish or two. Some opted to remain comforted by the warmth of the campfire as the fantastic aromas of roast venison and vegie's, cooking on the coals in the rustic camp ovens, filled the cool air.

Shaun and I chose to head downstream and it wasn't long before he hooked up to a Murray cod willing to take his presentation, a Red & Black Scale Striker Spinnerbait, slowly rolled back through the intertwined maze of snags that lay beneath us mid-stream. This was Shaun's first ever Murray cod so a photo opportunity was never in doubt before releasing the fish back to its underwater lair. Not from the lack of trying, this was the largest cod caught over the weekend measuring at an approximate length of 68cm.





As the light was fading I decided to fish surface using ZMan's 4" Pop FrogZ, casting at the gnarly structure that lay along the edges of the river. An explosion of an erupting cod followed and I only managed a short glimpse of the fish as it struck the lure rather aggressively. With the cod now stripping line from the reels spool and my kayak being funnelled into the fallen tree effortlessly, it swam under its hidden hideaway, back to where it came from. I felt the 20lb braided line being rubbed vigorously on the structure below and then noticed the fish had stripped the gears on my overhead reel, which resulted in having no control over this vivacious Murray cod. The inevitable happened losing the fish, which was extremely disappointing, yet I was still very excited to feel that initial hit of this spirited fish. Soon after, calls from Shaun in the distant light alerted me that he had hooked up again and a healthy 32cm golden perch saw itself being measured before its release, finishing off a great afternoon session.

After a sumptuous meal around the campfire, maps of the area were pulled out and the discussion was quickly directed to how tomorrow might transpire, for our 15km kayaking adventure, fishing the river after being dropped upstream as we make our way back to camp. Likely holes to target and sections of the river were marked as points of interest as thoughts escalated of catching that thumper Murray cod that we all know they can grow to be.







We were distracted by some faint boofing in the distance, from active cod feeding on the surface and a few of us grabbed a rod each and decided to fish land based along the river. This resulted in another two cod being caught, using TT's Striker Spinnerbaits. We eventually all turned in for the night, after being hyped up from the day's events, pondering what the morning would bring. It was magic, staring at the glistening stars above from the warmth of our swags.

Waking before light, I peeled my bedding open only to feel frosty ice on top of the canvas which had formed overnight. I managed to find the courage to climb out of my warm haven and stoke the fire up before the remaining ambers died completely. As I did so, my thoughts were turned to the river and I found it too irresistible not to launch the kayak for a quick cast using TT Lures Black & Gold Metallic Tornado Spinnerbait.

Wiping the ice off the seat of my kayak was a tell-tale sign that the session was going to be short lived. Less than 100 metres downstream of camp is where my first cod of the trip took a liking to my lure of preference. I positioned the kayak behind a Wattle Tree, with its thin string like limbs cascading over the river, as steam lifted off the warm water meeting the cool, crisp air, all the while being graced by the sun just peering over the horizon turning night into day.



After a quick breakfast, kayaks were loaded onto the ute and the fishing gear was packed, along with some food needed for our long paddle. We headed along the road adjacent to the river, looking at its adjacent riparian zone and taking note of landmarks such as power lines and pump stations. These landmarks were priceless in making clear judgement while on the water to verify how far we had paddled along the river and how far we needed to paddle to get back to camp safely before night fall, while still fishing this section of river thoroughly.

We made our way through several sets of rapids; portage was minimal with just enough water over each set of rapids to prevent the kayakers from bottoming out. Every bit of timbered structure looked as good as the next and it soon became apparent that gauging how long to keep casting at each one was becoming increasingly frustrating. The theory I was working on in this situation was to spend less time on each snag to cover more area. Various lures were used from soft plastics to hard bodied lures and surface lures to deeper divers; however we it was TT Lures range of Striker Spinnerbaits that gave us the confidence to attract a few more of these iconic fish. It was a pretty tough morning, even though the river looked extremely inviting for any keen freshwater angler chasing these majestic fish. Shaun was rewarded for his persistence, bouncing his spinnerbait off the gravelly bottom, when a vibrant Golden Perch aggressively took his lure presentation well away from the snag. It had obviously followed the imitation bait mid-stream. Another cod followed soon after that couldn't resist this battled Red & Black Scale Striker Spinnertbait, measuring in about 60cm in length.





Approaching a huge fallen River Gum, we knew that there would be a large cod amongst the veiny branches of this fallen structure. Selecting the best angle to approach the snag from, I cast within a likely strike zone. On cue, as the lure hit the water, a life-sized cod smashed my Black & Gold Scale Striker Spinnerbait close to the surface. However I was unable to keep connected to this cod and lost the fish to its timbered haunt within seconds, noticing a chaffed leader about four inches above the lure upon inspection. Continuing downstream we all began to receive numerous timid strikes from fish not exactly wanting to aggressively hit our lures. Making a decision to attach stinger hooks to our spinnerbaits, these strikes turned into fish being caught. Steve changed tactics altogether, using a 3" soft plastic with TT Lures Jig Spinner attached. This proved to be a great lure change and resulted in his first fish of the trip, which was well deserved.

The winds began to blow stronger from the South-West at about 20 knots and we were worried about becoming even colder, with hyperthermia being very relevant. The tops of the river gums blew frantically sideways, causing dead branches to occasionally fall from great heights, creaking and swaying as flocks of Corella's and Gallah's were also becoming restless within the canopy of the tall trees above. We pulled up along a sandy beach for a late lunch, taking the opportunity to stretch the legs and gather our thoughts. We couldn't stop shivering and being unable to stop our hands from shaking made casting and tying knots extremely difficult. Short cardio exercises on the river bank were undertaken, prior to seating ourselves back into our wet kayaks, to keep warm and get the blood flowing again throughout the body.





We estimated we had approximately 3-5 kilometres left of our journey as we paddled with a bit more hast, knowing we'd be running out of daylight as the sun got lower and lower in the sky. It wasn't long before Shaun yet again struck a snag with an unwary cod eagerly craving to satisfy its appetite. Unbeknown to us all, this was going to be the last time we were going to see this menacing Striker Spinnerbait again, as it was not long after the release of this particular cod, that this fearsome lure fell victim to a much larger fish that struck with an abundance of force, leaving Shaun slightly bewildered as to what had just happened.

Shaun reverted to using the same coloured Black & Gold Scale Striker Spinnerbait that I had been using. I remained confident that my misfortunes would turn around soon enough and after using a variety of techniques, one of which was pausing the spinnerbait and allowing it to drop deeper within the strike zone, I soon felt a fearsome strike of a Murray cod that was definitely attracted to the lure, engulfing it on the drop.

Filled with a bit more confidence and with only a few pools left to fish before arriving back at camp, I was casting my spinnerbait at the edges of some rock formations. I retrieved the lure with a slow rolling action, striking at another fish that couldn't resist the flash and vibration of the lure's spinning willow blade. It which was landed after a short contest. The light of day faded quickly and we observed the colours of the sunset, casting its reflections on the calm water through the silhouette of the gum trees which made a fantastic backdrop. We finally made it back to camp and found refuge near the roaring camp fire, where a roast pork dinner was cooking in the camp ovens. Elated to be back in the comfort of some warm clothing and I dare say we were in our swags by 9pm in readiness for a morning session before making our journey home.





Upon approaching our kayaks, which were left 300 metres upstream the evening before due to the portage through the last section of the river upstream of camp, we noticed that a mob of cattle had meandered through and around them whilst they watered themselves during the night. Our second observation was less inviting, noticing that the kayaks were iced up quite considerably compared to the previous morning. It was freezing and as the sun peaked over the horizon the air temperature decreased what seemed to be another degree lower, as it does.

Paddling into the sun I soon lost sight of Shaun and Steve, as the glare became too overwhelming due to the sun's rays cutting through the lifting fog. It was a smaller pool of approximately 800 metres in length and we decided to work each snag at our own leisure. By changing lure colours and presentations during the session, across the range of TT Lures Spinnerbaits, I caught another two cod from some structure that I had mentally taken note of whilst eagerly paddling back to camp in the darkness the evening before. Shaun also caught another smaller cod on his last cast, which was fitting for our time spent on the Dumaresq River chasing these incredible regal fish.

All up 13 Murray cod were caught along with 3 golden perch. Plans are already being made to head out there again in the very near future for another exploratory mission chasing these incredible western river fish.

Cheers Dave Brace

Dave with a majestic cod on a TT Lures Tornado Spinnerbait.





# ZManning Out Wide

James with a solid tuna on the ZMan 5" StreakZ.



**By James Howarth**



G'day folks,

I recently spent a week on the Great Barrier Reef. I was lucky enough to get an offer from a school mate to stay on a very large power boat of his and I would have had to be crazy to let the offer float by.

Some very sleepless nights and a plane trip, followed by a barge and then a one hundred plus kilometre voyage in the 'fishing boat' later and we finally made it out to square reef where we were greeted by a much larger luxurious boat. This was our home for the next few days and I was very excited about it.

We quickly offloaded our gear and settled in. With some light left before the afternoon would be gone, we headed straight to some closer shallow reefs. Flicking plastics in 5-10m is great fun and vastly becoming my favourite form of fishing. Pulling countless reefies out with locked drags, as they try to bury you into the ominous coral bomboras, just gets the blood pumping and excitement running. The afternoon ended with numerous busts offs, but also ticked the box for a few fish on the 'bucket list', while leaving plenty of room to upgrade. That night I found it extremely hard to sleep as I had a taste for what the next few days were going to bring.

Reefies were also keen on the Bubble Gum StreakZ.





As the days went on we found the fishing options endless, including targeting deep reefs with big plastics and jigs, high speed retrieving 5" Bubble Gum StreakZ over the reef for various trevally species and mackerel, chasing flocks of birds above fizzing bait balls as they were slaughtered by all sorts of pelagicspecies (manly tuna), flicking the reef edge with plastics, chucking big poppers around the reef edge for MONSTER GT's and of course throwing whole fish frames for sharks. Although not a lot of shark fishing was done, we did spend a night targeting some big boys and got onto a very powerful fish that made a meal of the 20k Stella.

Most of our time was spent chasing reef fish in the shallows, casting at the enormous bomboras that popped right up to the surface in 10m of water. Target fish here were coral trout, red throat emperor, spangled emperor, tusk fish, stripey snapper and sea perch, just to name a few. Most colours and sizes worked well here, but there was a standout of course. 5" ZMan StreakZ in Electric Chicken and Bubble Gum saw us onto most fish, although with not a lot hitting the deck due to oversized sharks and large reef patches sticking up though the water. This was the stand out plastic for the trip. Following this, the new 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ and 4" DieZel MinnowZ were close contenders. Both of the aforementioned colours worked well in both the shallow and deep in both size's and models. The ElaZtech material of the ZMan makes it one of the best soft plastics going around. Being super-strong and stretchy makes it an ideal soft plastic, not only for the reef trips but a great all round plastics whether you are chasing mackerel or bream.





Coral trout on the ZMan.



Although having loads of fun fishing in the shallows, it was very hard to forget about the white water around us, with the big longtail tuna, mac tuna, yellowfin tuna, Spanish mackerel, spotty mackerel, school mackerel and the odd GT making a mess of the local baitfish.

All of the schools of longtail we came across were very finicky, which is normally the case. Especially the ones we find around my home waters of Moreton Bay. The key for hooking up to them was holding off for about 5-10 seconds, waiting to see which direction they were moving in and once this was discovered we would slowly motor to about 30m in front of them, cut the motor and prepare to cast. Not long after we would find them in front of us and then seconds later all around us. Using this method was best, throwing 5" Bubble Gum StreakZ, matched up to 1/2oz 5/0 HeadlockZ HD jigheads. The Bubble Gum StreakZ would have to be one of the ultimate, all-time pelagic plastics, recognised as the 'go-to' plastic for most anglers chasing these sorts of fish.

Overall this would be close to a trip of a lifetime and I was very grateful for the opportunity.

A mac tuna on a popper.





Massive bommies in 15 metres of water that popped right up to the surface and also the reef edge were favourites of ours for the whole trip. The choices were too great and with the opportunity to fish shallow water for reefies, chase big schools of tuna, look for other pelages, jig, chuck surface over shallow reef, troll, Pop for GT's, deep reef fishing for big reds and so on, making a choice was the hardest part.

All of the above was done and we found chasing tuna and fishing shallow reefs the pick. The best fishing by far of the 5 days was the last 2 days we spent around Hamilton Island, where we did most of our diving and water sports before we headed home. We were truly blessed by the weather, and witnessed Mother Nature's best.

The stand out lures of the trip were ZMan 3.75" and 5" StreakZ in Bubble Gum, Shiner and Electric Chicken. Gear of choice was the Nordic Stage Favourite 6-12lb and 10-20lb. These rods are awesome; I loved how light the rod was but still with the courage and bulls it had while ripping 50-60cm coral trout out and the power it had for turning tuna over.

I hope an opportunity like this comes your way and you to get to bend some rods!

Now that's a spangled emperor!





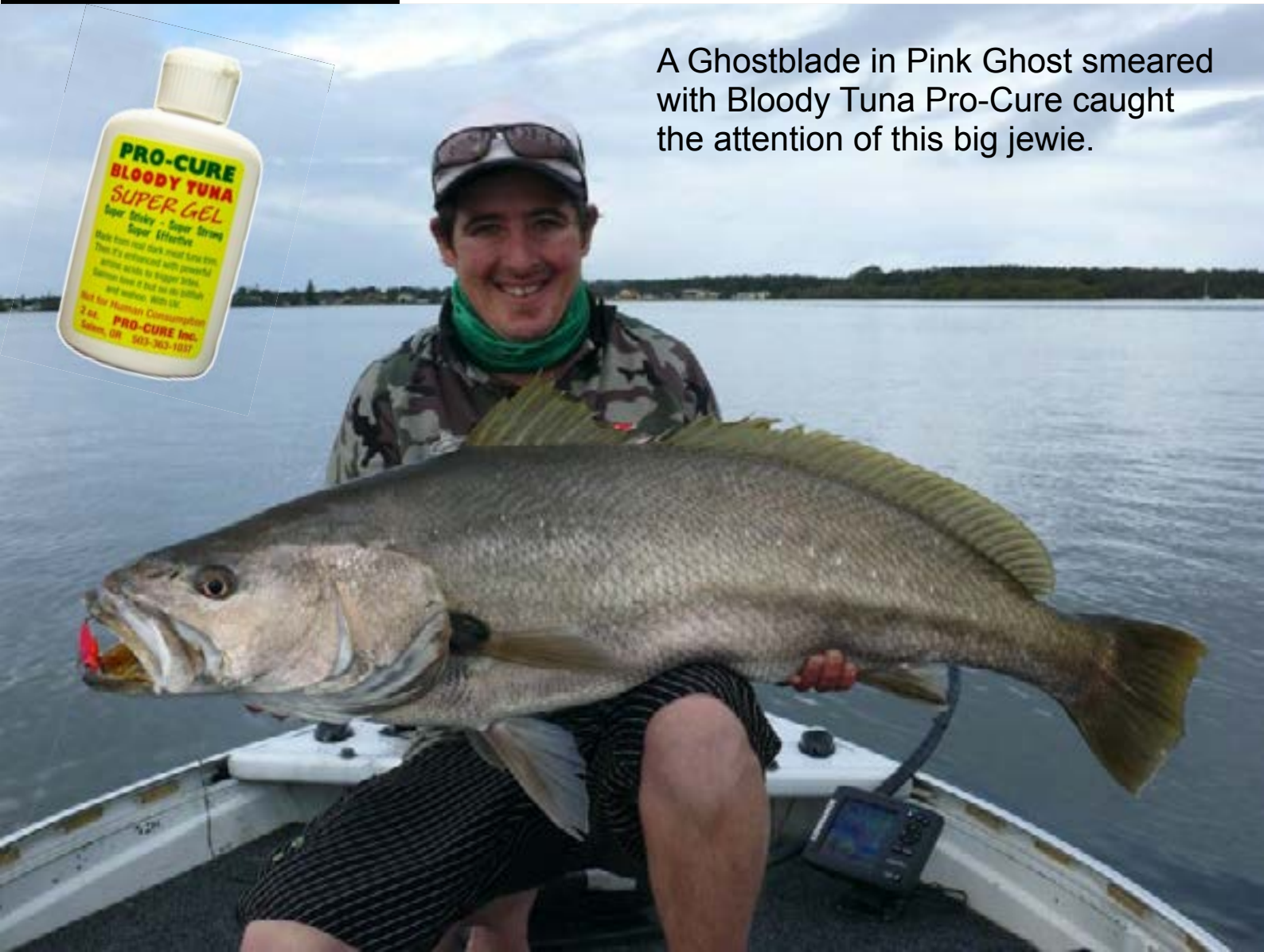
# Taste Testing

**By Owen McPaul**

When it comes to choosing scents you really want to trust that what you are using is really beneficial and doing everything it claims on the bottle or jar. We all want to feel that what we are using is attracting the fish rather than disbursing them. The right scents can make the difference between a tough day's fishing and a memorable one and be the difference between beating a mate socially or a field of anglers competitively. Finally, through the company Tackle Tactics, there is a product on the Australian market that we can all have faith in – Pro-Cure Super Gel.



A Ghostblade in Pink Ghost smeared with Bloody Tuna Pro-Cure caught the attention of this big jewie.





Pro-Cure has been successful all around the world and coming from a business that's been operating in the manufacturing of quality bait scents for over 25 years, you can trust that everything written on the bottle is true to its words. For those unfamiliar with Pro-Cure Super Gel, it is a scent that is made up of real ground baits that fish feed on, amino acids and stimulants that attract fish and encourage more aggressive and consistent bites. It is also made with a UV enhancement agent that helps not only lures but dead baits stand out in low level light and dirty water, giving the angler every chance of the chosen presentation being detected by a fish.



Garlic Plus on the bream.



An epic JP attracted by the Pro-Cure in Garlic Plus.





The design of the gel is so sticky that reapplying is required less often than most other scents out there, giving the everyday fisho greater bang for buck and the advantage of being confident that there is a good trace of scent at all times on their chosen presentation. Pro-Cure gels can be applied on absolutely everything from soft plastic lures to diving hard bodied lures, blades, spinnerbait skirts and Colorado's, surface lures, dead baits and the list goes on. Speaking for myself, I have already broken a few personal bests since using the product. I'm smearing it on everything and along with myself, a few others have already had podium placing competitive results in major tournaments.

Squid is one of the go-to flavours offshore.



Bloody Tuna in action.







A few months ago myself and a other members of the Tackle Tactics crew were fortunate enough to be the first to get our hands on some sample bottles of the 9 flavours of Pro-Cure Super Gel chosen for Australian conditions. These were sent for trials before the first shipment had made the docks of Australian shores for distribution. We had great success and with the team members being widely spread out over Australia, the species targeted were everything from the bread and butter species to tropical and deep water species. With flavours covering both fresh and salt water, there is definitely something in the range to benefit everyone. The great thing about the trials was that we were able to test it out on a lot of Australian species, before the Australian public got wind, giving us the opportunity to share what scents we thought worked well on particular species through social media and optimising the benefits for the public, in terms of choosing the right gel for the job when they were made available on your local tackle store shelf.



Shrimp is super-popular in the fresh and salt.



Crawfish claims another fat bass.



Another bonus was that we soon figured out that there was more than one stand out for most species, giving anglers more options during different times of the seasons, as we have different varieties of bait move in and out of our systems, with some more prominent than others in different systems or locations. The other great thing about Pro-Cure is that you no longer have to seek out scented baits that are not 100% to your liking, profile or design wise. There is now something to apply to all your favourite lures and I'm pretty confident in saying that any of the flavours will give you an edge.

So with the warmer weather on our doorstep and more of us spending extra hours on the water with family and friends. Whether it be taking that holiday of a lifetime or just getting out looking for that fish of your dreams as you do every weekend, call into your local tackle store and grab a bottle or two to make that next trip a memorable one. Fish with an edge, fish with confidence, fish with Pro-Cure.

Cheers, Owen



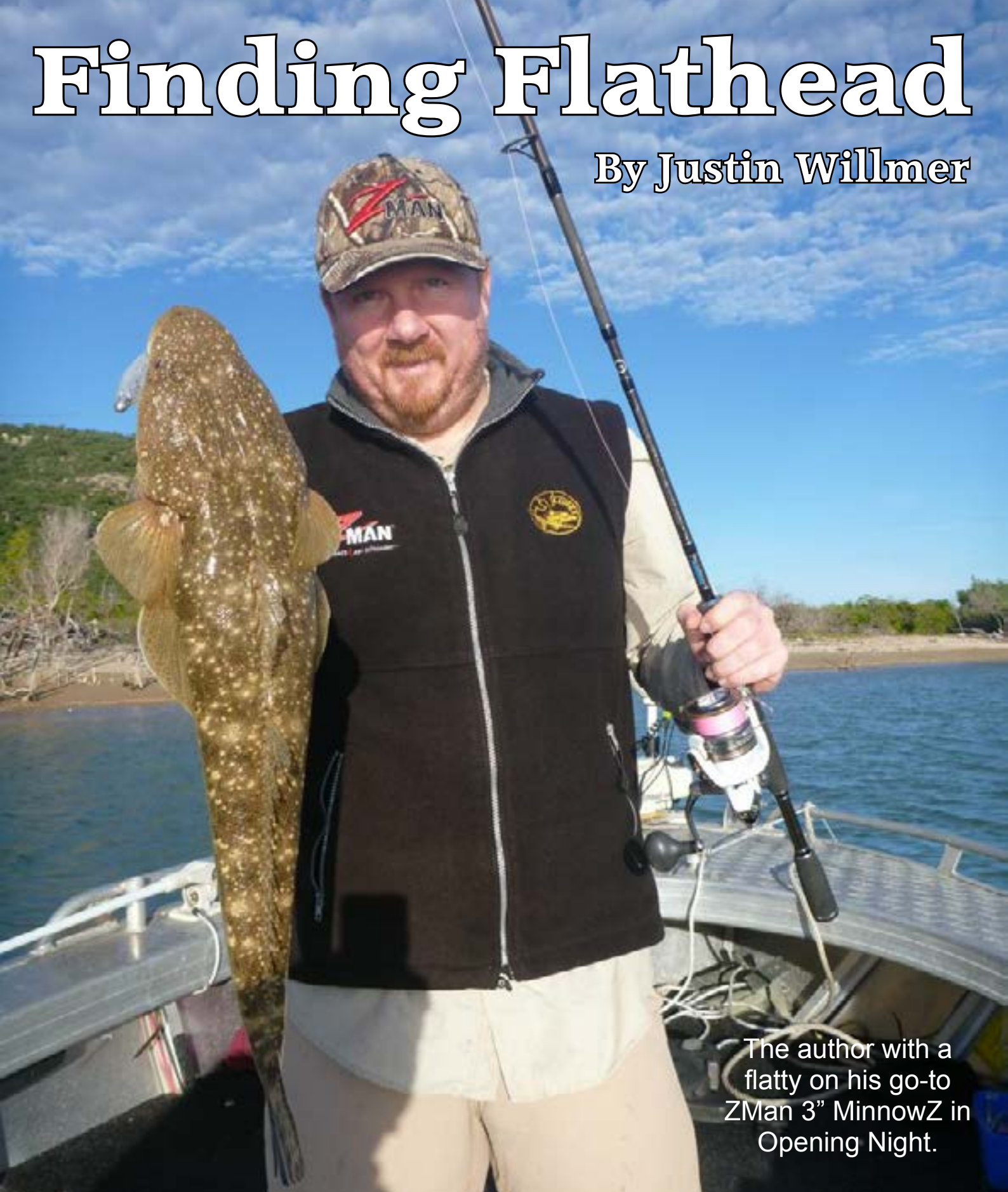
Owen with a stonker bass on a ZMan 3" MinnowZ with a squirt of Pro-Cure Super Gel in Nightcrawler.





# Finding Flathead

By Justin Willmer



The author with a flatty on his go-to ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Opening Night.

Plenty of people will say 'flathead are the easiest species to catch on lures' and 'flathead eat anything you throw at them' and it's true, they are often pretty co-operative... but let's look at how you can turn a 2 or 3 fish session into a 12 or 20 fish session. In this article I am going to focus on fishing the shallows, as that's where most of us will target flathead. There are also plenty of flathead in deep water... big ones, but that's another story.



Steven with a solid flattie from a weed edge.



## Locating Flathead

Flathead are common in most creeks, rivers and estuaries and like when targeting most fish, structure is key. Structure that attracts flathead includes drop offs, weed edges, mangroves, rock bars, sand banks and my favourite, drains. These are areas that hold bait, concentrate bait when the tide drains and allow flathead an ambush point from which to accelerate rapidly and smash unsuspecting prawns and baitfish.

## Tides

If you persist, you can catch flathead throughout the tide cycle. I find the most productive time to fish is the last few hours of the run out and first hour of the run in, as this is when the flathead are concentrated along the edge of drop offs, sand bars and in the mouths of drains, waiting for bait to be forced off the flats with the receding tide. As the tide floods the flats the fish tend to spread out and feed less aggressively, making them more difficult to locate and entice.

On the run out, focus your casts around changes in depth, any deeper pockets on the edge of the flats, the mouths of drains and any weed, sand points or other structure that is creating eddies. Also keep an eye out for bait in the water or flicking in the shallows and spend some more time casting in these areas.



Jude running Electric Chicken in dirty water.







Wind, wind, wind,  
1, 2, 3, fish on!



Up the jighead size to get the plastic on the bottom and let the kids have some fun!

If you arrive at your fishing location and the tide is higher, don't despair. Try fishing a slightly heavier jighead than if you were fishing slowly and roll your plastic just above the bottom, touching down occasionally. This allows you to cover plenty of ground and hopefully swim your lure past more fish and in turn trigger more strikes. When the tide is up I focus on flats with sand patches and broken weed beds, mangrove edges and drains that have been covered by the tide.

## Gearing Up

Light spin gear is the go. A 7', 2-4kg graphite rod and 2500 spin reel, loaded with 6-10lb braid and 8-12lb leader is ideal. This will allow you to cast lightly weighted lures a long way, while keeping the presentation natural and still give you enough stopping power to slow down a big flathead.

## Lures

Soft plastics are by far the most popular lure choice for targeting flathead and there's a couple of good reasons why – they are soft and feel realistic, they look realistic, there are a wide range of colours available and when you stop your retrieve, they sink, ensuring that they are down around the bottom where the flathead is waiting in ambush.

When fishing soft plastics, the saying is to fish as light as possible and I totally agree, but for flathead err on the side of heavier rather than light. The plastic needs to be on or near the bottom and it doesn't hurt to upsize the jighead a little and stir up some mud or sand. When taking beginners or kids out fishing for flathead I will upsize the jighead from 1/4oz to 3/8oz, or 3/8oz to 1/2oz and get them to say in their head 'wind, wind, wind, 1, 2, 3'. The three winds gets the lure moving and the three second pause allows the lure to sink back to the bottom. This is a good way to get started chasing flathead.



For this slow rolling retrieve, without imparting much action yourself, a paddle tail or curl tail plastic is the go, such as a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ, 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, 3" MinnowZ, 3" Scented PogyZ or 4" DieZel MinnowZ, as they have plenty of action built into the lure. Once you have caught a few and you want to slow things down and control the lure more yourself, with twitches and hops, you can add a selection of lures that have little built in action. This would include ZMan 3.75" StreakZ, 5" StreakZ and 3" Scented ShrimpZ.

Here's a few of my go-to plastics for flathead:

ZMan 2.5" GrubZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 1/4oz 1/0 jighead

ZMan 3.75" StreakZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 3/8oz 2/0 jighead

ZMan 3" MinnowZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 1/2oz 3/0 jighead

ZMan 3" Scented PogyZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 1/2oz 3/0 jighead

ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 1/2oz 3/0 jighead

ZMan 3" ShrimpZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/8oz – 3/8oz 3/0 jighead

ZMan 5" StreakZ – Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD – 1/8oz – 1/2oz 5/0 jighead

As you can see, if you set yourself up with a few 1/0, 2/0, 3/0 and 5/0 jigheads in a variety of weights, along with a selection of 2.5" – 5" plastics, you have everything you need to successfully target flathead in less than a metre to 3m of water. I primarily fish a 1/4oz jighead in the shallows and a 3/8oz along the drop offs, with a 1/2oz coming into play on deeper ledges and when the current is strong.

Bazza on the Chartreuse Glow in the dirty water.



The author applied the same techniques on a trip interstate to SA and the result, a dozen flathead on the ZMan 3.75" StreakZ.





## Colour

Colour is a subject that is often debated, but here's my thoughts after years of chasing flathead. Yes, colour makes a difference on any given day, in different water conditions and even at different times of the day and tide.

My belief is that natural colours are a great starting point when the water is shallow and clear, and the day bright. Go-to colours in these conditions include Opening Night, Pearl Blue Glimmer, Bad Shad, Baby Bass and Pearl. If the day is overcast or the water dirty, then it's time to go to a darker colour that offers a better silhouette. Go-to colours in these conditions include Gold Rush, Motor Oil, Mood Ring, Mud Minnow and Bloodworm.

What if none of these are firing? Then it's time to pull out the fluoro colours. Fluoro colours can produce when nothing else is firing and favourites include Electric Chicken, Glow Chartreuse, Space Guppy and Pink Glow.

Other colour patterns that seem to have formed in my fishing include -  
Natural colours fish better over sand.  
Darker silhouette colours fish better over weed.

Fluoro colours are deadly over muddy bottom.

When the tide is running in and the water is cleaner, fish natural colours and when the tide turns and the water gets dirtier, fish darker and fluoro colours.

Some anglers will have differing opinions based on their local area and experiences, but the key take out is – if it's not working, change it up!





## Scent

I have used scent off and on in the past and wasn't sure whether it made a massive difference or not. Pro-Cure has made up my mind though and I always ensure that I have Pro-Cure Super Gel with me. If the fish are biting I may not even apply it, but when the bite is tough it's straight on my plastic. The difference with Pro-Cure is that it combines the best of the laboratory and science side of things with bite stimulants, amino acids and UV enhancement, with good old fashioned mashed up dead things! It's hard to beat that natural bait and burley combined with the science of manmade attractants and bite stimulants.

My go-to flavours are Mullet and Bloody Tuna, but I speak to other anglers who have confidence in Shrimp, Inshore Saltwater or other flavours. When I add scent I find that I get more bites, the fish hit the lure more aggressively and if they miss they often have another go. I also find that the variety of by-catch increases and the lure will get rattled more often, even while sitting still on the bottom.

## Starter Pack

If I had to put a starter pack together for someone wanting to target flathead on soft plastics, it would consist of –

TT HeadlockZ HD jigheads – 1/4oz 3/0 and 3/8oz 3/0.

ZMan 3" MinnowZ – Opening Night, Gold Rush and Electric Chicken.

Pro-Cure Super Gel – Mullet.

I would confidently fish any location I hadn't fished before armed only with this pack. Then I would start adding a few more favourites ;).



Sheri with a nice flathead from a weedy channel edge.



## Anchoring

When targeting flathead the ability to hold position is crucial to increasing your catch numbers. If you have an electric motor, you can hold position easily, but if not an anchor will do the trick. Keep moving and casting until you catch a fish and then anchor. Flathead will often school, so if you catch one, there are probably more in the area. Cover the area with casts and then up the anchor and move again, until you find another fish. The anchor also allows you to effectively work a drop off, drain, mangrove edge or weed edge more effectively.

Where possible, I try to hold position and cast upstream, bouncing the lure back along the bottom with the current. By concentrating on areas where we locate fish, we have had some memorable sessions, including four anglers in kayaks landing 82 flathead in an afternoon, ranging from mid 30's to high 60s.

If you haven't given flathead on soft plastics a go, give it a crack, it's great fun, not expensive and if you cover some ground you will find some fish. You can also target flathead walking the bank, wading the flats or from out in a boat or kayak, so it's accessible to everyone. If you are already targeting flathead I hope there's a tip or two here that helps you hook into a few more.

Remember though that with increased angling skill comes great responsibility and as you start to catch more fish it's important to let a few go so that there are plenty of flathead out there breeding and producing more fish for us to catch.

See you on the water...  
Justin Willmer

DH! A whiting on a worm and a flatty on a ZMan MinnowZ

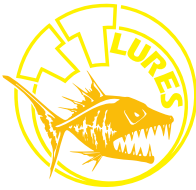


Opening  
Night  
MinnowZ

Aidan and Tianne with a DH on flathead using ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly tailZ.







# Rigging Guide

## ZMan Soft Plastics - Choosing a TT HeadlockZ HD Jighead

This rigging guide is designed to assist you when matching a ZMan soft plastic and TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jighead. The HeadlockZ HD grub keeper has been designed to lock on the 10X Tough, yet super-soft and realistic, ZMan ElaZtech soft plastic, cast after cast, fish after fish!

ZMan Plastic	HeadlockZ HD Jighead
2" GrubZ	2, 1
2.5" GrubZ	2, 1, 1/0
3" Scented PogyZ	2/0, 3/0
3" MinnowZ	2/0, 3/0
3" Scented ShrimpZ	2/0, 3/0
3" Scented CrabZ	3/0
3.75" StreakZ	2/0
4" StreakZ Curly TailZ	2/0, 3/0
4" Finesse ShadZ	1/0, 2/0
4" DieZel MinnowZ	3/0, 5/0
4" SwimmerZ	3/0, 5/0
4" Scented ShrimpZ	5/0, 6/0
4" CrawdadZ	3/0
4" Hard Leg FrogZ	5/0
4" Pop FrogZ	
5" GrubZ	5/0
5" Grass KickerZ	5/0, 6/0
5" StreakZ	5/0
5" Scented Jerk ShadZ	5/0
6" SwimmerZ	5/0, 6/0, 7/0, 8/0
6" Pop FrogZ	
7" Scented Jerk ShadZ	7/0, 8/0
8" StreakZ XL	7/0, 8/0
9" GrubZ	6/0, 7/0, 8/0

### ZMan Soft Plastics

- 10X Tough - better stands up to pickers and toothies, more fish per lure.
- Super-soft realistic feel - maximum action and fish keep biting!
- Buoyant - rig to fish topwater to deep.
- Buoyant - Tail up action attracts fish and triggers Strikes.

### TT HeadlockZ HD Jighead

- Built on a brutally strong, chemically sharpened Mustad black nickel hook.
- Unique grub keeper designed to lock on the ZMan and other brands of soft plastics.

### Caring for your ZMan

- Store ZMan in their original packets - they may react with other plastics.
- Avoid storing lures in extreme heat for maximum life.

### Tips for fishing soft plastics

- Vary Your Retrieve - from slow rolling to aggressive hops until you find what works.
- Match the Hatch - choose a plastic that represents what the fish are feeding on.
- Colour Change - natural / light colours for clear water, dark colours for dirty water and bright colours anytime.
- Slow Down - soft plastics feel real, so give the fish a chance to eat them!

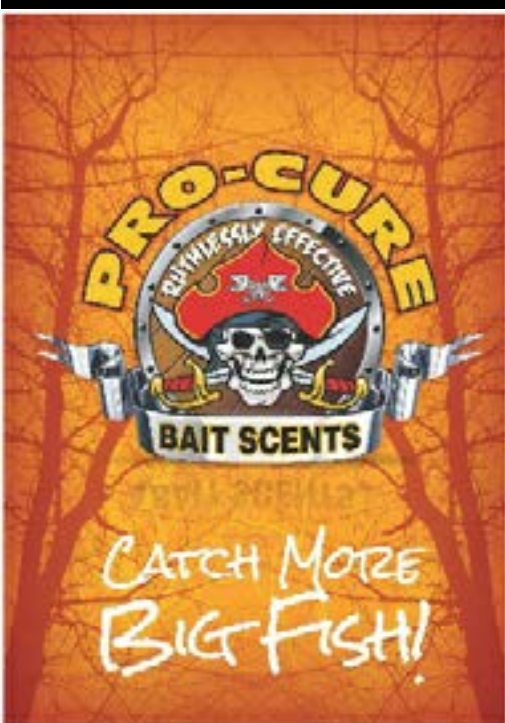




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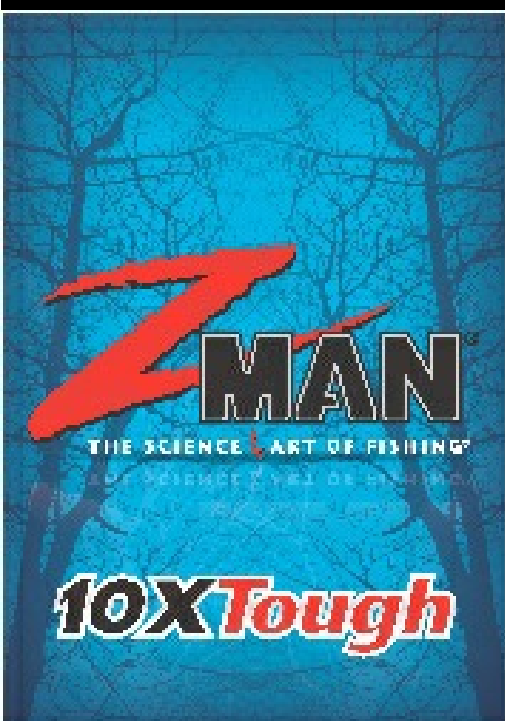
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**FISH ON!**