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Angler: Ryan Dixon
Species: Moreton Bay Yellowfin Bream
Lure: ZMan 2.5" GrubZ
Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD
Photo: Will Lee

Land Based Jacks

By Jay Noble



Jay with a quality LBJ.

As so many fishos do, I look forward to the warmer months and love chasing the species that become active with these higher water temperatures and longer days. I generally start to target mangrove jack from October and have found them to take a plastic right through until May in previous years. The area that I spend my time targeting these brutal fish is the Gold Coast in south east Queensland. We seem to have a good population of mangrove jack and it is not uncommon to find fish in the high 50's and early 60's... landing them is the hard part!

Over the past three years we have experienced some major flooding in the area and it has affected the fishing during this time. However, this year has seen a very dry start to the season, with high temperatures bringing the bite on strong and a little earlier this year.

Some of the reasons why the mighty mangrove jack is a target for so many people is that they are such an aggressive fish, so brutal when they hit and they will try to bust you off on anything they can, meaning you often lose more than you land. They are also a great fish to target because, when they are in the mood, they will take a large range of lures, with my favourite way of targeting them being on plastics.

Not everyone is lucky enough to own a boat, but if you're keen enough to explore some remote areas and fish them in the peak bite times, you can get right amongst these aggressive fish. I use Google Maps to search out and locate possible new locations to find fish.

Areas to look for when targeting jacks:

- Rock walls with good water depth, current flow and a good population of bait.
- Bridges that are away from boat traffic, also with good numbers of baitfish and once again a good flow of water.
- Rock bars that are close to the bank that have a good drop off.
- Marinas.
- Big stretches of pontoons and pylons.
- Retaining walls with a good rocky base and a nice drop off.

When scouting out these areas I like to get there at the bottom of the tide and have a really good look at the area and the structure I will be fishing (see it at its worst), so that I get a better understanding of any unseen obstructions that the jack will try their best to get around.



Tide times and conditions:

- I have found the best tide time to chase jacks is the run out tide, right through to the bottom of the tide, as the jacks seem to drop back into the deeper sections of the rivers and creeks and it can make it easier at times to locate where the fish may be holding.
- As with most fish early morning and late afternoon are great times to target them.

By-catch in these areas:

When chasing land based jacks you will cover a lot of areas. Some of the by-catch you may encounter when fishing across these areas includes flathead, estuary cod, Moses perch and school jew, all of which make the time spent searching worthwhile.





Gearing up - rod and reel selection:

When chasing land based jacks I tend to use a longer (7') spin rod, as they give you a long cast and can be helpful to steer the fish away from structure. The rod doesn't have to be the top of the range, just somewhere in the 6-10kg range, with a little bit of whip in the tip for those long casts and a strong bottom end to rip into the fish when you get that unmistakable hit! The spin reels I tend to use are between 3000 and 4000 size, with a fast hi-speed retrieve and a strong drag so you can lock it down tight and stop the powerful runs and get line back onto the reel and the fish away from the structure.

Line and leader set up:

Sunline Super PE in 20-30lb braid is a line that I have found to be great. I tend to fish a little heavier than most guys and good leaders that I have used are 30lb Sunline FC Rock leader or 40lb Black Magic Tough trace and they both have great abrasive resistant qualities.



Lures and jigheads:

Mangrove jack will take a range of lures and ZMan Lures 4" SwimmerZ, 4" DieZel MinnowZ and 3" MinnowZ are a great place to start and have proven to be jack favourites.

Popular colours in the range include:
4" SwimmerZ - Black Back Shad, Golden Shiner, Hitch and Pearl.
4" DieZel MinnowZ - New Penny, Pearl, Opening Night and Houdini.
3" MinnowZ - Pinfish, Houdini, New Penny and Opening Night, just to name a few.

Jighead selection depends on the areas you are fishing. TT Lures HeadlockZ HD and Head Hunter Extreme jigheads are a popular choice. Somewhere in the range of 1/4oz 3/0 - 3/8oz 3/0 for the 3" MinnowZ, or for the 4" SwimmerZ and DieZel MinnowZ the Head Hunter Extreme 3/8oz 3/0 - 1/2oz 3/0 and HeadLockZ 3/8oz 5/0 - 1/2oz 5/0 are the sizes most commonly used.





Tips for fishing these areas:

Pontoons

The cast must be as close to the pontoon as possible and a slow rolled plastic, along the entire edge and past the post, will often be a good place to start.

Rock walls

Cast up current and slowly work the lure back, as the fish will often be waiting for bait to come down with the current.

Bridges

Cast vertical if possible and roll the lure back along the pylons, keeping it in the zone as long as possible. Flick in between the posts and roll back.

Rock bars

Cast up current and slowly retrieve the lure back across the rock bar. A hopped retrieve will also work in these areas.

Mixing up the speeds and styles of the retrieve can sometimes trigger a bite if the fish aren't as active.





Scents:

The range of Pro-Cure Super Gel scents will increase your chances of getting a bite. The Mullet and Shrimp flavours have proven to be great producers for me.

Retrieve methods:

When working over areas, looking for mangrove jack with the ZMan paddle tails, I tend to use a slow rolling retrieve, making sure the lure holds in and around the structure for as long as possible to trigger a hit. After working the area with a few casts and no luck it's a good idea to change up your retrieve to a faster roll back, as this will sometimes trigger a reaction bite. A retrieve with small hops back across the bottom is also worth a try if the bite is tough.

Extra gear to think about:

- A backpack to keep all of your gear in the one place.
- A good strong landing net to secure your catch.
- Lip grippers.



Mangrove Jack are one of my favourite fish to target because they hit so hard and fight dirty. There's also the explosive bust offs that you often think more about than the ones you have landed, along with the memories they leave with you to share with others.

Even if you don't have a boat, it doesn't mean that you have to miss out on these exciting predators. Hopefully some of the techniques and tactics that have worked for me will help you get onto some of these cracker fish in the future.

Too good to catch once...
Jay Noble

Jay is all smiles after extracting another healthy jack from structure.



Getting the most out of your

SHRIMPZ

Over the years my passion for lure fishing has grown to the extent that I would buy different lures just because I wanted them in my tackle box and liked what they looked like. With every purchase my tackle collection grew and so did the amount of brand new lures sitting in my garage that will probably never be used! However there is one lure that gets me excited and when people ask me what my favourite lure is, every time it ends in the same answer and that is the 'ZMan Scented ShrimpZ'.

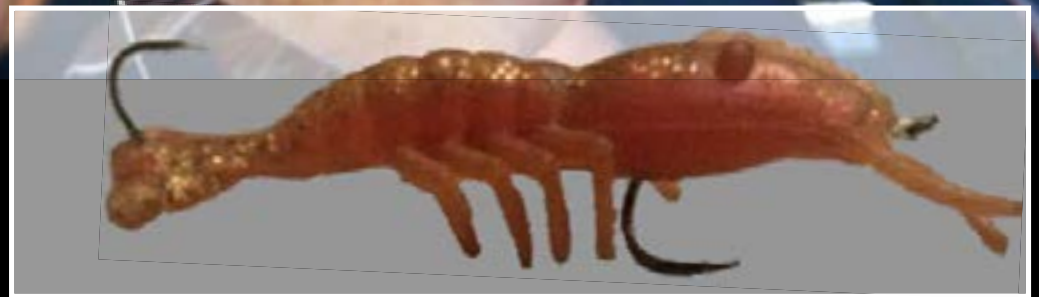
The ZMan ShrimpZ would have to be the most versatile lure that I've ever used as it can be fished in so many different ways. It can be cast on the surface for bass, fished finesse for bream, drifted into snags for mangrove jack and cod. It can be rigged from the head or from the tail and can be cut down into many different shapes and sizes to suit the type of fish you are targeting. In this article I will show you a few different ways to rig the ShrimpZ for surface fishing, casting at snags and cutting down your ShrimpZ into different shapes and sizes.

By Ryan Dixon



A selection of Ryan's ShrimpZ, rigged and ready!

Ryan with a mangrove jack that exploded on a surface ShrimpZ.



Surface ShrimpZ

Topwater fishing is by far my favourite style of fishing, as nothing beats the excitement of a fish exploding on a surface offering. ZMan plastics are perfect for fishing the surface as they are naturally buoyant and the ShrimpZ is no exception. Using the correct hook to rig your ShrimpZ on the surface can be the hardest part, as it is often hard for the fish to find the hook. My good mate Will Lee came up with a brilliant way of rigging ShrimpZ for the surface when they first came on the market and I find the following rig the most effective way to rig ShrimpZ as it has a very high hook up rate.

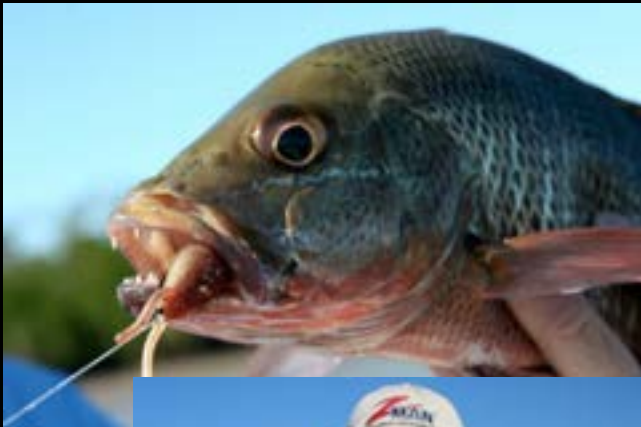
The rig for 3" or 4" ShrimpZ consists of two size 2 Owner Mosquito Hooks tied together with the appropriate size flourocarbon leader, with a length between the two hooks the same size as the ShrimpZ (3" or 4"). Firstly you feed the first hook through the head of the ShrimpZ so that the point of the hook comes out the belly cavity and faces downwards, with the eye of the hook poking just out of the front of the ShrimpZ between the front two feelers. You then feed the second hook through the same hole as the first hook, coming out the stomach cavity, but continuing the length of the ShrimpZ and feeding it into the tail, with the point of the hook coming out the end of the tail and facing upwards. Wind fast with a high rod tip, stop and pause or walk the dog with the ShrimpZ and you'll be amazed how successful your results will be.

Snagless ShrimpZ



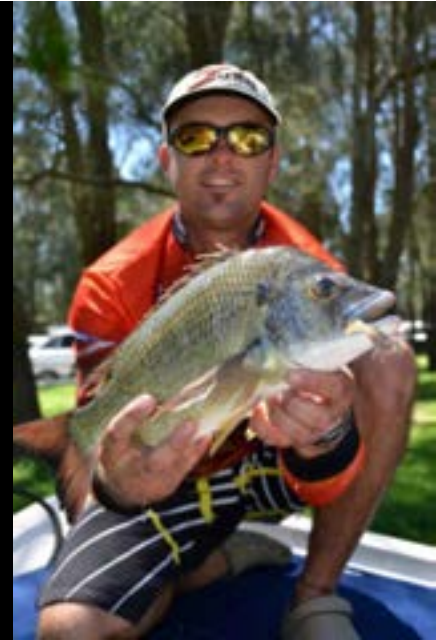
Fishing for mangrove jack with lures is becoming more and more popular nowadays and one of the best ways to target them is by slowly presenting a weedless ShrimpZ down into a fallen tree or snag. By rigging your ShrimpZ weedless, it means the point of the hook lies flat along the ShrimpZ back, allowing you to fish it into heavy cover or a snag, without getting hooked on the snag as you would with a normal jighead.

This means being able to fish your ShrimpZ right into where the fish are sitting, waiting to ambush prey, without having to worry about getting snagged. However once you've hooked a fish deep in its snag, good luck getting it into the net! TT lures have the perfect hooks in their range for this style of fishing with the SWS (Snagless Weight System) and the Snake Head. Both hooks are perfect and are built strong to stand up to the toughest of fighters.





Prawns, crabs, yabbies, shrimps... get creative!



Cut-Down ShrimpZ

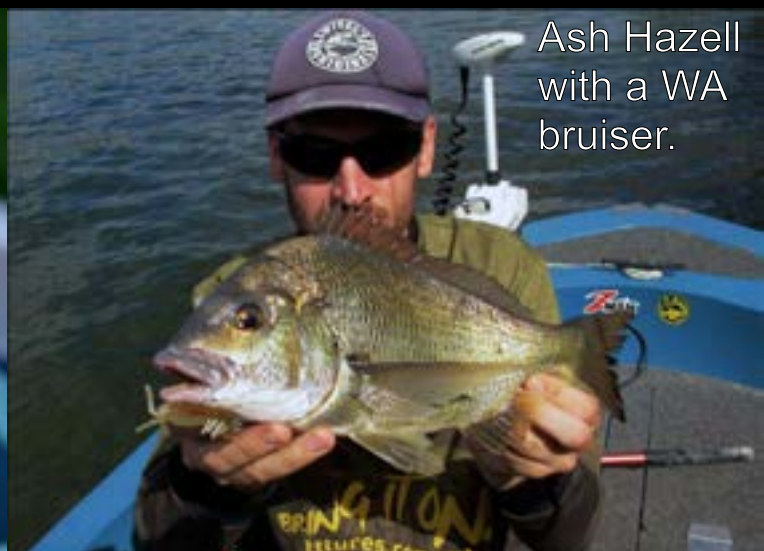
Chasing bream is the most common type of fishing I do and I find the best way to target them is with a cut-down ZMan ShrimpZ. There are no rules when cutting your ShrimpZ down and I find experimenting is the best way to find your favourite pattern. By simply cutting the head off the ShrimpZ you make the plastic shorter, giving it a chunky appearance. I find this is perfect for fishing around rocky reef as it is a good crab imitation.

Another option is cutting the ShrimpZ between the last two legs, giving you an extremely small tail style bait, which is perfect for bream. You can also use the off cut as it still has plenty of legs and the head of the ShrimpZ. By cutting all of the legs off the ShrimpZ you get a slender style bait that can be rigged either from the head or the tail and is an extremely effective bait for a range of species.

As I said, experimenting with your plastics is the best way to come up with new ideas or different imitations and the ZMan ShrimpZ is the perfect plastic as it is very versatile and can be fished for a wide range of species.



Dan Brown landed this cracker.



Ash Hazell with a WA bruiser.

Microbaits to get the BITE!

What a lot of angler's don't realise is how versatile little lures can be. On some days, when the fishing is slow, downsizing your lure can really make a difference. When you think of small lures, you often think of only using them for smaller species, like bream and flathead in the saltwater and species like sooty grunter, jungle perch and a whole range of smaller species that are found around Australia in the freshwater. Microbaits have caught me plenty of big fish though and it's important to remember that an elephant can't resist a peanut!

One of most versatile small lures and one that I have had great success on is the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in a variety of colours, along with the newer 2" GrubZ. I rig the 2.5" GrubZ on a TT Lures 1/8oz - 1/6oz 1/0 HeadlockZ HD jighead. Another way of rigging these soft plastics is with a small, size 2 or 4, Gamakatsu worm EWG hook with a light ball sinker tied on the front of it. I found this technique to be very effective when fishing in tight snag filled areas or around rock bars, as you can put your lure into areas that you wouldn't normally fish with a conventional jighead. This technique is really effective when the fish are shut down and are not biting, as you can leave your lure in the strike zone for long periods of time, allowing you to fish it a lot slower to entice a fish to strike.



By Luke Vella

When I use these small lures weedless, it gives me an advantage as I can let the ZMan GrubZ waft down naturally into the mangrove outcrops or rocky areas. The way I like to fish them is to cast hard up into the mangrove roots or alongside a rock and let the lure fall to the bottom. It is important to watch the slack line because a fish may strike the GrubZ while it is fluttering down. When the lure reaches the bottom I like to just give it a few small twitches, before working it out from the snag. Once out of the snag I do a slow hop retrieve and also impart a few twitches to the plastic. This technique is great for sluggish fish that aren't really wanting to chase bait.

The structure that I look for when using these microbait lures is tight snags or mangrove roots. These almost always hold a variety of fish that can't resist a small ZMan GrubZ. Another great place to fish these lures is on rocky outcrops, as they too normally hold a wide variety of different species. I find it best to fish these rock bars around the middle of the incoming tide or the middle of the outgoing tide, as the fish will be moving up into the rocks or moving out again. In these types of areas it is important to be ready for the strike as the fish have a big advantage being so close to their homes and could easily rub you off on a snag or rock, especially when using lighter leader.



When you think of small plastics, like the ZMan 2" and 2.5" GrubZ, you would never think of using them for species such as barramundi, threadfin salmon and mangrove jack. On recent trips I have seen clearly how using lighter leader and smaller lures can be a lot more effective than using heavy leader and bigger soft plastics like the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, which is also a great lure for these types of species.



As the hotter months start to roll in, fish like barramundi and mangrove jack start to be more 'on the chew', but at times they can still be very shy and picky in terms of what they eat. A fish, even in a picky mood, can't resist that one last little jellybean size bait, drifted down onto their nose or hopped into the strike zone. This jellybean could be something like a small prawn and if you have ever fished with a ZMan 2" or 2.5" GrubZ, you will know that they replicate a small prawn extremely well.

When using these microbaits leader also plays a big part in getting fish to bite. Leader for barra is commonly breaking strains from around 40lb up to 60lb in weight. When using weedless rigged soft plastics, 90% of the time you will get a good solid hook up in the corner of the jaw, enabling you to use lighter leader from 10lb-20lb on good fish without being chewed off. Using lighter leader will also increase your bite rate. It just goes to show fish, whether big or small, from barra to bream, they all can't resist that one last little bite.

Luke with a quality threadfin that couldn't resist a microbait, in this case a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ.



NEW GEAR



2" GrubZ - New Colours

This little microbait has already proven deadly on bream, bass, redbfin, trout, saratoga, flathead and more. Angler requests have lead to the release of 3 new colours, previously only available in the 2.5" GrubZ - Greasy Prawn, Hardy Head and Gudgeon.



Greasy Prawn has already proven a favourite, Hardy Head a go-to when the fish have their attention locked onto jelly prawns or microbait and Gudgeon is a murky green, with a subtle mix of red glitter and black fleck, that has been effective in both the fresh and salt.

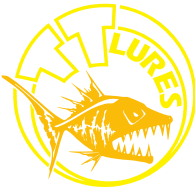
The addition of the TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads in a size 2 hook has made rigging these compact curly tails a breeze and allowed anglers to land big fish on these jellybean plastics. If the species you are chasing is zoned in on tiny bait, or the bite finicky, you'll be glad you packed the ZMan 2" GrubZ!

Bait Buttons - Big Game

Bait Buttons are now available in a larger size, called Bait Buttons Big Game. This larger model is suitable for hook sizes up to 10/0 and is ideal for securing a stinger on spinnerbaits, ensuring hook exposure on a jighead rigged plastic or when locking a plastic in place when weedless rigging on a TT Lures SWS or Snake Head jighead.

The Big Game dispenser pack includes a dispenser unit, for easy application of the Bait Button without any finger piercings, along with 25 Big Game Bait Buttons. Refill packs of 25 Big Game Bait Buttons are also available. This is one of those simple solutions that you will wish you had in your kit years ago. Secure your stinger hooks, present your plastics better and spend less time re-rigging and more time fishing!





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!

Breaming the Hopkins

By Luke Smith

The Hopkins river is one of the largest river systems in south west Victoria. It begins at the small township of Ararat and after winding through several towns it enters Bass Strait in the sea side town of Warrnambool. The Hoppies, as it is commonly known, has two tributaries, Salt Creek which drains from Lake Bolac and the Mount Emu Creek. The river is only accessible by boat for approximately 7km and this is where the majority of the fishing takes place. In this stretch there are four boat ramps, allowing for easy access at even the busiest of times.

The Hopkins River plays host to several different species including bream, estuary perch, brown trout, salmon, mullet and mulloway. Anywhere above the Allansford Bridge produces great brown trout, along with estuary perch. However the perch are only caught up to the Hopkins Falls, while the trout are stocked above. All other species can be caught below Allansford and toward to the mouth. Whilst there is a great variety of fish to catch, I am going to focus on the favourite for most local fishos, the black bream.



Bream fishing is enjoyed by people of all ages, from young children to the old guru's that have been enjoying this amazing river for many years. Whilst in the past fishing was predominately with bait, in recent times lure flicking has taken over, with soft plastics being the go-to lures. The Hoppies is reasonably shallow and most fishing is done in water from 0.3m to 3m, with the exception of winter when the fish will school in the ski run to spawn.



For chasing bream my go-to lure is the 2.5" ZMan GrubZ rigged on a TT 1/12 #2 jighead. After fishing many different GrubZ colours I am quite fond of the UV colours, with Motor Oil and Gudgeon being my favourites. The technique I use is really quite simple. The first step is to make as long a cast as possible. I find that if I can cast a metre further than the next bloke, I have a better chance of getting the bite from a wary fish. It's for this reason that I always run light braid, from 2lb to 4lb tops with long 4lb leaders. After making a cast I let the plastic sink on a slack line, always being watchful of the line just in case a fish hits it on the drop.





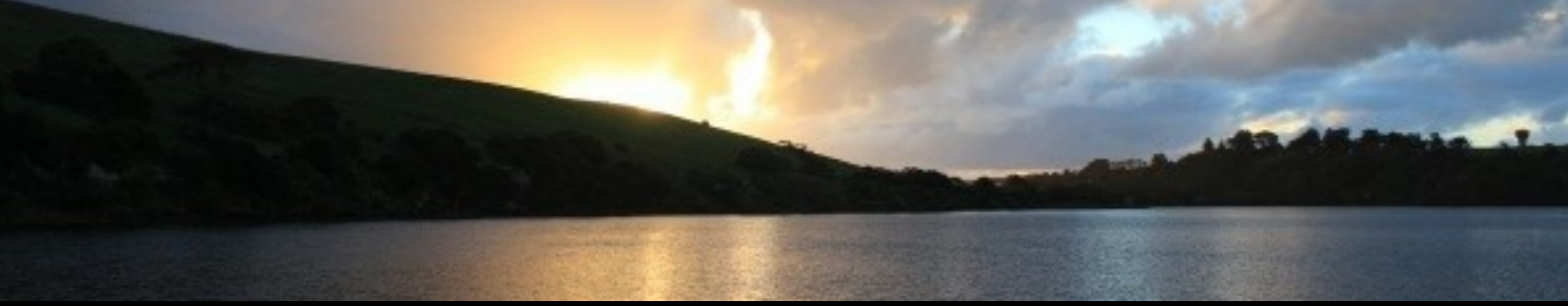
Once the lure has rested on the bottom for up to 20 seconds, I begin a twitching retrieve. This is usually two little twitches of the rod, whilst pointing the rod tip to the water and after moving the lure I slowly wind up the slack and allow the lure to sit for a few seconds before making my next movement of the lure. The bites usually come on the pause or as soon as the lure is moved again.

Another very effective retrieve is a dead slow roll along the bottom with the odd pause chucked in. black bream love slow moving lures with lots of pauses, as opposed to yellow fin that respond well to faster retrieves.



A great benefit of ZMan GrubZ is that when they are left to rest on the bottom the GrubZ will sit upright with the tail waving around. In my opinion this is why black bream just love GrubZ! A saying that has always stuck with me when bream fishing is 'if you think you are going slow, slow down some more'. This is an excellent thing to remember as when the fish are shy, a dead slow grub usually brings them undone.





The Hoppies is not full of visually appealing structure but after a bit of exploring you will find several reefs, mud flats, rock walls and some great weed beds to fish. These areas are scattered throughout the river, with the reefs being marked out for boating safety. Any of these areas will produce bream throughout the year but for consistent results on big bream a bit of effort is required. Some of the more popular areas to fish are the ski run, the flats behind Deakin University, the rock walls opposite Rowans Lane or the bank along Hen and Chickens Reef. Talking to the locals is always a great idea as most are usually up for a chat and are willing to share some info.

For accommodation check out Warrnambool Holiday Park. They are situated close to several ramps and they accommodate very well for families and those travelling with boats. Hope to see you on the Hoppies.



Two great sportfish in the one system - EP and black bream.

BLADING FLATHEAD

By Justin Willmer

Blades are a versatile lure option and quality blades can be jigged, cast or trolled. They cast like bullets, making them ideal for prospecting the flats and drop offs where you find flathead and when I head out in the yak I normally arm myself with a selection of TT Lures Ghostblades and Switchblades.

Ghostblades are polycarbonate, semi-transparent and are available in 1/12oz and 1/6oz, which are perfect for working the shallows. My go-to colours include Purple Glimmer Ghost, Gold Noggin Ghost and Pink Ghost.

Switchblades are a metal blade, that casts well even in strong winds and I normally carry 1/8oz for fishing the mangrove edges and shallows, 1/6oz for working the shallow drop offs, 1/4oz for slightly deeper water and a few 3/8oz, just in case I want to work the channel edges or sections of faster running water. Go-to colours include Purple Glimmer, Gold Noggin', Pink Bimbo, Orange O Ranga and Pink Hussar, but like with the Ghostblades all the colours will catch fish.

Orange O Ranga doing the job on this flatty.



Finding Flathead

The last couple of hours of the run out tide and first hour of the run in is my favourite time to target flathead as they concentrate along drop offs, in the mouths of drains and along the edges of sand and mud banks. Look for eddies formed by points and patches of weed, drains that funnel bait off the flats and even small depressions and changes in depth as they will all hold flathead.

When the tide is higher and the flats are flooded, look for sand and rubble patches amongst weed flats, flooded drains, timber snags, rock bars and even the mangrove edges as all of this structure will attract bait and in turn flathead.

Keep an eye and ear out for bait flicking or spooking in the shallows as this will often signal a predator in the area and I have caught many flathead by casting a blade past the spooked bait and working it back through the area.

If you are restricted to fishing from the bank for flathead the Switchblade is especially deadly, as it casts a long way and sinks quickly so that you can fish the entire way back to you, hopping and slow rolling the blade from the channel, up the drop off and back to your feet.



Wading the flats is a great way to find flathead.





Retrieves

One of the biggest mistakes people make when fishing blades is to work them too aggressively. Ripping them makes the rod tip vibrate and you can feel the blade vibrating aggressively, but experience shows that a more subtle retrieve will get more bites. Quality blades have plenty of action, so there is no need to use big rips to get them working. The exception to this rule is if you are fishing blades in weedier areas, where a rip off the rod can free the blade from the weed and a strike will often follow.

Slow Lift & Drop

A simple slow lift and drop will get the bite. Cast, allow the blade to settle on the bottom and then lift the rod tip in a long slow lift. You will feel the blade vibrating on the lift and then allow it to fall to the bottom as you lower the rod tip and wind up the slack line. By repeating this process the blade will swim up off the bottom and then 'die' and flutter back to the bottom. Hits will often come on the pause or just as you commence the next lift.



Make sure you carry some pliers, you don't want to stick your fingers in there!



Hopping

A hopping retrieve is a little more aggressive, using a few twitches of the rod tip while you slow wind, followed by a pause to allow the blade to touch down again. Some anglers prefer a couple of larger hops, while others prefer a handful of smaller hops before pausing.

Slow Rolling

Many anglers neglect the slow roll (slow wind) when using blades, but it is an extremely effective retrieve. The blade has plenty of action, so by slow winding it through the water it vibrates, alerting fish in the area to its presence, attracting fish and triggering strikes.

When slow rolling a blade you can make it run shallower by speeding up the retrieve or lifting the rod tip higher and conversely you can allow it to run deeper by slowing down or dropping your rod tip. This allows you to drive the blade over the top of structure, such as weed beds, rock bars and oysters, or drop the rod tip or slow down to allow it to fall into drains, sandy patches between the weed beds, or down the face of a drop off.



I commonly use this retrieve when pick pocketing weed flats, with bream, tailor, trevally and other species eating the blade as it runs across the top of the weed and then the flathead smashing the blade as I allow it to fall deeper into the sandy patches.

A slow roll can also be deadly when fishing mangrove edges for flathead on a higher tide. Cast into the edge of the mangroves and keep the rod tip up and wind a little quicker to get the blade out past the mangrove roots and spikes, then allow it to fall deeper or touch down once clear of this snaggy section and be prepared to get smashed by some of the larger flathead you will encounter. Again you will catch a myriad of species close in around the mangroves and then as the blade sinks deeper once clear of the structure the flathead will find it.

The blade doesn't have to be bumping the bottom either, as long as it is within a foot or two of the bottom, the flathead will rise and hit it.



Blades are also deadly in deeper water. Keith Stratford landed this 95cm beast on a 3/8oz TT Lures Switchblade.



Rigging

Switchblades and Ghostblades have multiple attachment points – the front hole is ideal for vertical jigging or fast retrieves, the rear hole is ideal for maximum vibration at extremely slow speeds, but I generally stick to the middle hole (on blades with 3 holes) and second hole from the front (on blades with 4 holes) and this has been most effective.

The trebles on Ghostblades and Switchblades are extremely sharp, often referred to as 'sticky', so they easily find their mark. I would recommend a rubber mesh landing net to avoid trebles tangling in the net and also a pair of pliers so that you can remove the blade without putting your hands too close to the trebles.

For those worried about snagging in rough terrain, you can change the trebles to singles, such as Decoy Lure Singles to make the blade more snag resistant. The hook up rate is still good on flathead, but you will reduce the number of bream hooked.

Next time you head out chasing flatties make sure you have a couple of Switchblades in your kit - you can cast them a mile, fish them effectively in a range of depths and over the top of structure, they appeal to a stack of different species and they are especially deadly when the tide is high and the flathead are spread out over the flats.

See you on the water...
Justin Willmer





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