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www.ttlures.com.au
info@ttlures.com.au



www.z-man.com.au
info@z-man.com.au



www.tackletactics.com.au
info@ttlures.com.au

Angler: Nabeel Issa

Species: Moreton Bay Jewfish

Lure: ZMan 3" MinnowZ - Mood Ring

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

Scent: Pro-Cure Super Gel Mullet / Bloody Tuna



Moreton Bay By Nabeel Issa

Jew & Snapper

We all have our favourite place to go fishing, whether it is because we always catch fish, because it's local and easy to get to or maybe you just enjoy the scenery and the serenity of the location. For me it's a combination of all of the above and as the title suggests, my favourite place to fish is Moreton Bay! I have always been intrigued by 'the Bay'. It's right on our doorstep here in Brisbane and provides some amazing angling opportunities, but it wasn't until recently that I experienced a taste of how awesome it can truly be.

The night before heading out to fish is often filled with excitement. Up late rigging the rods, making sure the boat is ready, everything is packed, batteries are charged and then trying to get a few hours of sleep before the early start. Then I lay there, wondering how the session will go and play out different scenarios of fish that I could catch... I hope I'm not the only one who does this!

Ok so to the fishing! Recently I have been having some good success with the snapper and jew in the bay. They have been schooling up in good numbers and it has made chasing them a lot of fun. A few months ago we were out fishing, catching a few here and there, but nothing to write home about. After a long bumpy ride looking for fish and struggling, we decided to head back closer to the ramp to do a few drifts on top of some reef, before calling it quits. Well when we arrived back, the water had glassed out, the wind died off and the sounder lit up like I have never seen before. First drop over the side saw a double hook-up on jew and snapper, which was the start of one of the best fishing sessions I have ever experienced! Over the next few hours we lost count of the number of snapper and jew we had caught, it just became a matter of finding the schools on the sounder, dropping our plastics down to them and hanging on!



ZMan 3" MinnowZ, TT HeadlockZ HD jigheads and a DH on snapper!

Fish on!



DH on jewies on the Mood Ring MinnowZ.



James with a nice snapper on the Baby Bass.



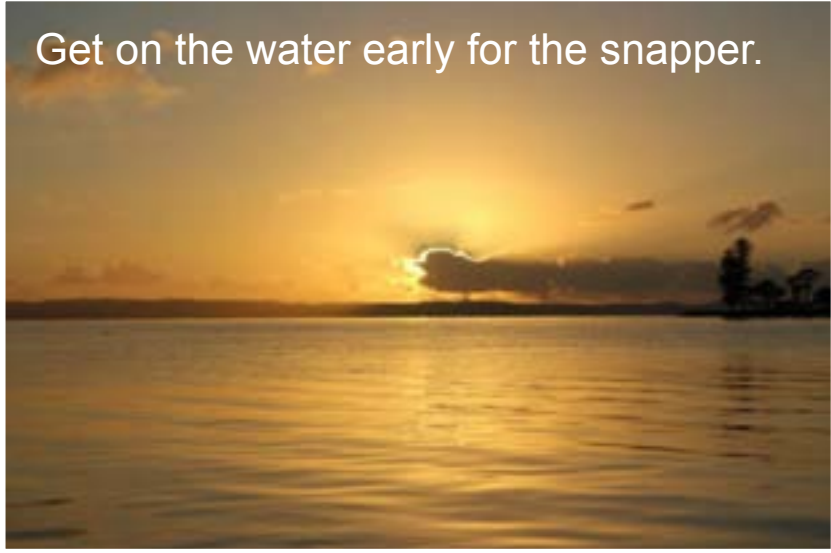
A school of jew sitting under the boat and off to the right hand side.

Fishing in 50-60 feet of water, our technique involved using 3/8 or 1/2oz TT HeadlockZ HD jigheads rigged with an assortment of ZMan plastics (we tried a heap of different ones). The standouts were the 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Baby Bass and Motor Oil, as well as the 3" MinnowZ in Mood Ring. Equally important was the addition of Pro-Cure scent. We found that when the fish went quiet, it was usually because we hadn't re-applied the scent. So it paid to keep the lure 'scented up'. We used the Mullet and Bloody Tuna Super Gel flavours.

We would sound the fish up and then line up the boat to drift over them accordingly. Then we dropped our plastics down and kept a constant, close watch as they dropped. If you managed to land the lure on top of the school, it was almost guaranteed a hook up and you would see the line take off. It really was easy fishing and we ended up having to leave the fish biting as the wind started to pick up and it got fairly rough. Not that we were complaining though, after what we just experienced!

So since that session I have been out many times and have still been having good (but not AS good) success targeting these snapper and jew. The jewfish have been a bit easier to find, while the snapper are a bit trickier and have a much shorter bite period. It's all been a learning process for me, but I have found my better sessions to be on or around the new moon and with a run out tide. If you can get these conditions with an early morning start it's even better as the snapper tend to bite better early on.

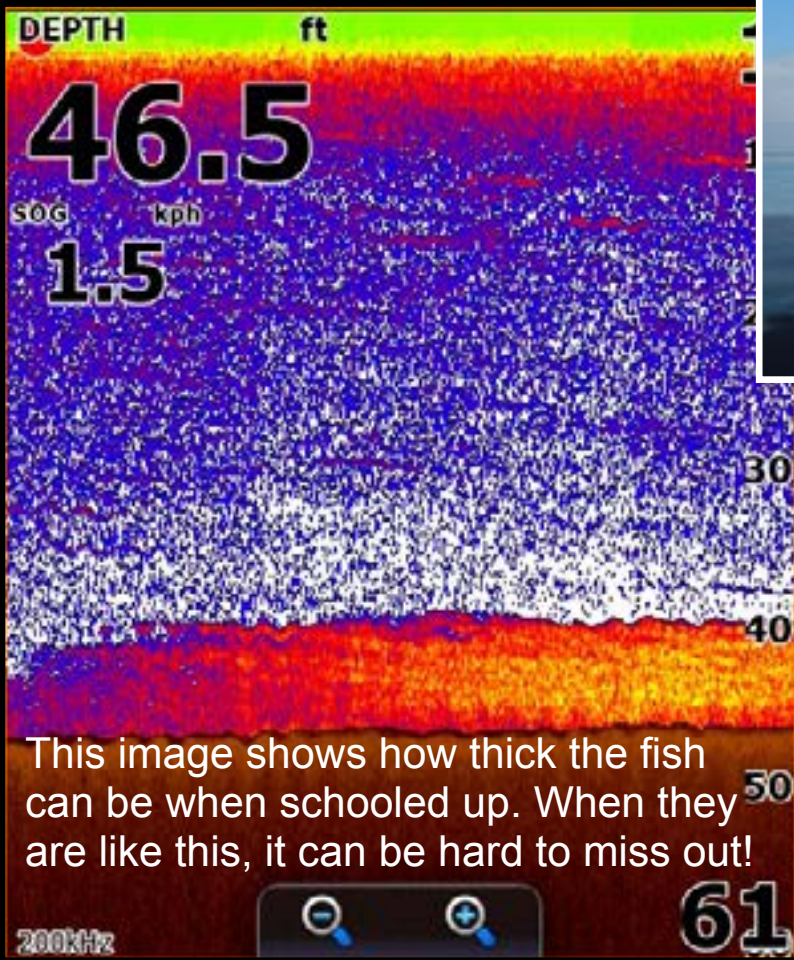
Get on the water early for the snapper.



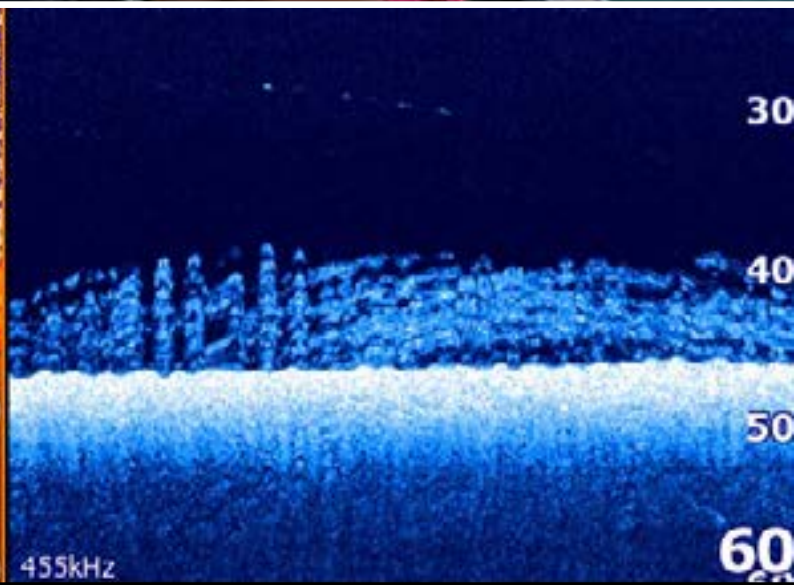
'The Bay' can produce quality snapper.



James with a jewie from a school located on the sounder.



This image shows how thick the fish can be when schooled up. When they are like this, it can be hard to miss out!




For this sort of fishing, having a good quality sounder is paramount. It helps locate the schools of fish and then lets you focus on getting them to bite. This is my favourite part, as you know they are there and it just becomes a matter of switching through your lures and changing your technique until you can coax one into biting... and when it all works out, it's a great feeling!

Chasing snapper and jew in Moreton Bay, for me, has been a real challenge and being able to catch them consistently has been hard work. Glimpses of success every now and then though keep me keen to stick at it. Learning to read your sounder and having confidence that your lures can get them to bite is a big part of catching these fish. So get out there, spend a bit of time searching, throw a few ZMans and you may be surprised with the results!

The time spent staring at the sounder is well worth it when this is the result.



Switchin' to Jiggin' for Golden Perch

A man wearing a white cowboy hat and a blue long-sleeved shirt is smiling and holding a large, silver fish (a yellowbelly) on a boat. The fish is held horizontally, and the man is holding its head with both hands, showing a colorful lure in its mouth. The background shows a body of water and a cloudy sky.

Dave with a quality
yellowbelly on the
Aussie Green & Gold.

By Dave Brace

How styles of fishing have changed over the generations when it comes to targeting Golden Perch. I can vividly remember as a young fella, fishing for these fish with a handline spooled with 20lb nylon monofilament line, a sliding #3 sinker, a rusty hook and the ever faithful garden worm as bait. Days long gone of bobbing tasty morsels for these species, amongst timbered areas of lakes and cascading tree lined rivers and creeks. Decades on and new technology, methods, techniques and a wide range of lures have been introduced to target these vibrant coloured freshwater fish.

When locating golden perch, whether it be amongst structure or on open flats, it is imperative to target these fish with the assistance of a good fish finder. This is as beneficial a tool as the rod and reel that you use to subdue these fish. The fish finder will aid you by showing how many fish are within an area and what depth they are holding or schooling at throughout the water column, as well as being able to monitor their movements at various times of the day.

Finding golden perch schooled up and holding on the bottom of an old creek bed, deep within a lake in about 5 to 8 metres of water, usually finds them harder to tempt. In this scenario methodically going through lures and varying techniques is usually the most productive way to lure these fish into taking your imitation bait.

This show on the sounder produced fish.



TT Switchblades are an ideal lure option for targeting schooled fish.



Using the TT Lures range of Switchblades, with their vibrational qualities, you can usually trigger a bite period. Using a jigging technique tends to congregate scattered fish closer to your lure's proximity, but more on that later. Being able to read your fish finder is also essential and being able to identify more active fish to target within a school is also advantageous. Commonly a sharper straighter arch, on an upward angle on the fish finder screen represents a fish swimming higher within the water; an active fish that has responded to your Switchblade's action. A well configured fish finder, with the sensitivity settings adjusted correctly, should show your lure on the sonar unit's screen jigging up and down within a school, especially when using this style of technique beneath the fish finder's transducer.

There are many methods and techniques used to chase these fish and I'll run through a few that will hopefully give you something to think about next time you're on the water.

In deeper water, when you know what depth the fish are schooling at, TT Switchblades are a great lure to attract even the most timid fish. The countdown method is paramount here, when it comes to effectively targeting these fish down deeper. If you are fishing in 5 metres of water and the fish are concentrated in a thermocline or just above it at about 2.5 metres deep, counting down your Switchblade to the right depth and placing it in their line of sight is crucial.

How is this achievable? Position your fishing vessel over these schooling fish, let your lure sink all the way to the bottom, whilst counting how many seconds it took to reach its destination from the time the lure first touched down on the surface. You'll know when the lure has hit the bottom because no more line will come off the reel's spool and excess line will float slightly on the surface of the water.

Now that you know how many seconds it took to reach the bottom and knowing that more active fish are holding halfway down in the water column, it's just a matter of counting your lure down halfway, engaging the bail arm of your reel and beginning to jig and twitch the rod tip using varying speeds and periodical pauses.

Counting your lure down to schooling fish should put you in the strike zone.



Systematically working through lures and techniques is an effective way of 'cracking a pattern'.



Once you have exhausted this jigging method, try retrieving your lure through the golden perch that are still schooled halfway down in the water column. This is achieved by casting the lure away from your vessel, as opposed to dropping the lure directly beneath you. Employing a retrieval pattern made up of small rod tip twitches and double twitches is an effective technique to entice a strike from these fish.

Now let's concentrate on how to target golden perch congregated in schools and hugging the bottom. As stated above these fish are sometimes harder to tempt, having probably already fed and now being in a digestive mode or potentially just sulking due to environmental changes within the ecology of the lake, creek or river system. More often than not, when a fish strikes a lure whilst in this mode it's usually out of reaction or an instinctive strike. Various jigging techniques can be utilised to arouse and entice these fish to strike, however finding the right technique combined with the colour choice of your lure can sometimes require a systematic approach. Once you have cracked the pattern though, these golden perch will often react to this technique and lure presentation on simultaneous offerings.

So now that we have covered methods for chasing golden perch that are schooling or holding on the bottom and mid-water, with very little surrounding structure, let's focus on targeting golden perch that you have discovered along a slightly undulating, sloping bottom with more structure. After positioning your vessel within casting distance of the bank, make a cast toward the bank and let your Switchblade sink to the bottom. Now, by raising the rod slightly, combined with a few twitches of the rod tip, the lure will quickly rise off the bottom like an injured baitfish and then flutter down on the pause. Repeat this technique, retrieving your lure back toward the boat, over the structure and letting the lure bounce off the bottom every time you pause, winding up the slack line as you retrieve the lure. Be patient as the lure sinks; you'll know when it has reached the floor of the lake or river when the bend in your line above the water suddenly goes slack. More often than not a golden perch will take the lure as it drops, following the lift and twitch with the rod tip.

We have covered various methods using the action of the rod, including jigging and casting techniques, however not in finer detail. Let's take a closer look at jigging techniques under the microscope firstly.

As stated above there are many techniques that could encourage these golden perch to strike your Switchblade. Vary your speed of jigging from fast erratic actions with very short pauses to very slow jigs, to a point where you are only feeling a very, very slight vibration from the lure, before lowering the rod tip again with lengthy pauses.

Yellowbelly are commonly located around structure, including timber and rocky outcrops.



A solid yellowbelly ready for release.



At times all that is required is to jig or twitch your rod tip up about 30cm, before a fish engulfs your lure! While on other occasions a much, much higher lift is required. Explore other varying techniques as it may be the slightest change to a technique that prompts a bite. One example is lifting the rod tip evenly, whilst hitting your rod butt repeatedly with sharp blows, causing the rod tip to twitch vigorously.

Golden perch also have a tendency to hit a Switchblade while it's dropping during the pauses, so by winding your lure slowly, a metre or so above these schooling fish and then pausing to let it drop suddenly you can trigger the fish to feed. What tends to happen is fish are drawn to the Switchblade by its distinctive vibrations as it swims upward and then as it drops they instinctively recognise that lure as food, as it exhibits similar actions to an ill or wounded baitfish as it flutters back down.



Now that we have covered jigging techniques in finer detail, these same techniques can also be utilised for casting and retrieval patterns when targeting golden perch with Switchblades. It is important to remember though, when retrieving your lure, as it comes closer to the vessel you are fishing from it will be drawn higher, often away from the fish, as the angle of the line becomes more acute. As a result it is also advisable to open the bail arm of your spinning reel several times during the retrieve, just for a few seconds, to allow the lure to sink again. This will keep the lure in the strike zone for longer as you slowly retrieve it back through the upper layers of the water column.

When fish are schooling tight on the bottom, using a heavier weighted Switchblade will also assist you in keeping the lure within the fish's proximity, allowing the lure to stay in contact with the fish for longer. A retrieval pattern that is less than exciting, but often effective, involves dragging the lure across unstructured bottom. This allows you to cover ground and is sometimes enough to cause a fish to react and strike, as long as that Switchblade is vibrating. Vary your retrieve speeds to ascertain what excites the fish. A burn and kill approach can also be an effective method. This technique involves allowing the Switchblade to reach its desired depth, followed by a series of brisk winds (burn), then by a pause (kill). Vary the speed and duration of the burn and duration of the pause until you find what works for that session.



A fish finder is almost essential, whether in a boat, canoe or kayak.

Find the school, crack a pattern and fish on!



When chasing golden perch with Switchblades I personally use 1/4oz, 3/8oz and 1/2oz blades for the varying techniques that I have mentioned previously. Switchblades have easy adjustable, multiple tow points that can be selected to suit your jigging and casting retrieval techniques to achieve the best vibrational qualities. There are four optional tow points to choose from and by simply moving the clip provided to one of these desired holes you can optimise the lure's ability to attract these fish. For a faster retrieve place the clip closer to the front of the lure, while for a slower retrieval pattern move to a tow point closer to the rear of the lure to create more vibration.

In the past I have stated that choosing a colour of a lure is not all that important, rather that the lure's action is of far greater significance. However, from experience, when targeting golden perch using these techniques, the colour of the lure has equal importance. When these fish are schooling, in depths of five metres or more, the sun's light penetrating to those depths is very minimal, along with factors such as floating sediment and silt, and the possibility of suspended algae increasing the less than perfect visibility. So, when taking all of that into consideration, it's highly likely that these fish are seeing the lure in shades of grey, as opposed to the colours we see the lure at above water level.

Rotating through a variety of Switchblade colours, whilst figuring out what offerings these fish are willing to take, can be beneficial. I have gone to extensive lengths to ascertain what colours work best for a wide range of species including golden perch and some of the colours that I have found work best for this application are; Aussie Green & Gold, Red Nightmare, Copper Head and Brown Mongrel.

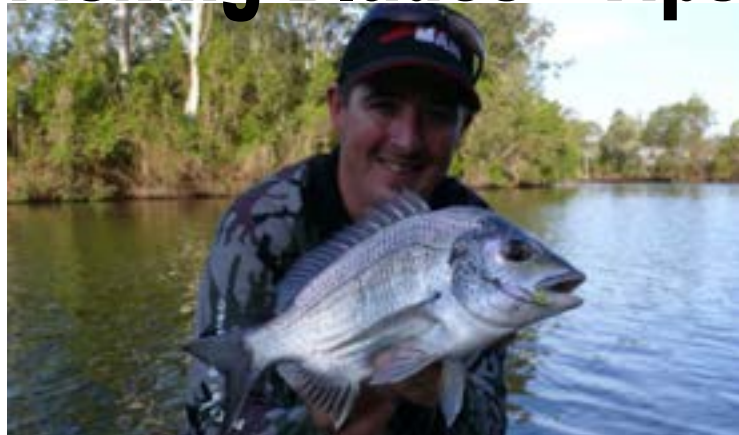
Although golden perch haven't got the stamina of other freshwater native fish in relation to their proportional size, such as Australian Bass, they're still a hard hitting fish, an opportunistic feeder and they are great fun to target using a light rod and reel outfit. I hope this information will assist you next time you are targeting this incredible freshwater species and that you give jigging Switchblades a go as it is an extremely effective way to catch these gold coloured Australian beauties!

Cheers Dave

When there's no obvious structure the fish finder becomes your eyes below the water's surface, helping you find fish like this nice yellowbelly.



Fishing Blades - Tips



Blades are an extremely versatile lure option and quality blades have a balance and vibration that appeals to a wide range of species, they are extremely durable to handle toothy critters and they can be jigged, cast or trolled.

TT Lures comprehensive range of Ghostblades (polycarbonate finesse blades), Switchblades (metal vibration blades) and Switchblade HD's (heavy duty blades) have long been regarded as one of Australia's most popular and effective blades, proving deadly on everything from bream, trout and bass, to flathead, coral trout and mackerel.

Match the Hatch

The first thing to consider is the size of the food that your target species will be eating and also the depth at which they will be feeding. You need the weight to get your blade down to where your target species is feeding, while still keeping the profile small enough to eat.

Ghostblades and 1/8oz Switchblades are ideal for fishing over structure and working the flats for bream, bass, trout, redbfin and flathead, while the 1/4oz and 3/8oz are ideal for targeting the edges of drop offs, bait balls, and suspended schools of species such as bass.

When moving to deeper water around bridges and rock walls, deeper holes in rivers and shallow reef, 1/2oz is a go-to and 1oz is also effective in these scenarios. If heading offshore into deeper water and faster currents, tie on the 1oz, 1.5oz or 2oz Switchblade HD.

Tow Points

You will find multiple tow points on TT blades and this adds to their versatility. The front tow point is for maximum action when vertical jigging, the rear tow point creates maximum vibration for slower retrieves and the middle tow points are ideal when fishing flats, banks and schooled fish, when a medium to fast retrieve is required.

Less is More

The biggest mistake anglers make when fishing blades is to work them too aggressively. It feels good through the rod tip, but the blade doesn't look natural in the water. Watch baitfish in the water and you will see them flick and move a little, but they don't waste energy swimming and darting around all day.

Watch your blade in the water as you impart small hops, twitches and lifts with the rod and you will see the same flash and small darting movements that the baitfish create. Leaving the blade rest on the bottom for a few seconds can also be effective as fish don't have hands, so the only way they can investigate the blade is with their mouth, often finding the points of the treble hooks.

The benefit of the blade is that when the pelagic speedsters turn up you can effectively cast it out and wind faster and with more aggressive movements to trigger a strike.

Rolling Blades

Anglers often get caught up in the hopping and twitching of blades, but they are also deadly on a slow wind, with plenty of action already built into the lure. Wind the blade over the top of structure, through schooled fish or just above the bottom and hang on!

Vertical Jigging

Drop the blade down close to structure, balls of bait, or schooled fish and use the rod tip to impart lifts of varying lengths and speeds until you find what the fish want.

Colour

A common opinion is natural / lighter colours in clear water and on bright days, darker colours and gold in dirty water and on darker days and throw a fluoro anytime, especially if they're not biting on the other colours.

Structure

Changing the trebles to lure or jigging singles can reduce snagging when fishing structure, but so can driving your lure carefully, starting with casts to the edge of the structure and slowly working closer. If the blade does snag it can often be retrieved by moving back over the lure in the opposite direction, or by pulling the line tight between your fingers and then allowing it to snap free, shunting the lure of the snag.

Scent

TT Blades have gill slots, engraved areas and a head design that is ideal for holding scent. Apply Pro-Cure Super Gel to blades to attract fish and trigger strikes.

Yakking the Local

By Jack Welsh

Early starts will see you making the most of a peak bite period.

Kayak fishing is something that has grown on me over the last year. The approach that a yak can give you when fishing is second to none, especially when hitting the skinny water for bass.

Recently, myself and a couple of mates have begun kayaking a local dam called Ewen Maddock. It is situated around five minutes drive from the Hinterland town of Mooloolah on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and only recreational craft that are powered by paddles are allowed onto the dam. Fishing Ewen has involved countless before sunrise starts, ensuring we are at the spots we plan to fish by the time the sun is making its way over the hills.

Jack amongst the reeds with a quality Ewen Maddock bass.




Upon arriving, we carefully unload the yaks off the roof racks of the cars and quickly run them down to the water and get set for the paddle ahead. With there being a couple of us, there are a few different approaches when it comes to lure selection. These include TT Lures Switchblades, in 1/4oz and 1/8oz sizes, TT spinnerbaits in various sizes, ZMan soft plastics matched to TT Jigheads and a variety of hardbody diving and topwater lures. Having a wide selection of lures really helps when the fish are shut down as you can be constantly change to another type of lure until you trigger a strike.

After a couple of hundred metres of paddling we arrived at our first spot; a point that comes off the dam, where the depth is around six to nine metres and consists of weed and timber in the lower third of the water column. Hopping blades and rolling spinnerbaits and Jig Spinner rigged plastics has produced results there in the past, with the fish not only coming on the retrieve but also on the drop, so it pays to always pay attention and stay in contact with your lure at all times.

Another spot that has been very kind to us in the past is where two points come out creating a bay. Inside the bay is quite a lot of weed coming off the bottom and fishing along the weed has resulted in some trophy sized bass, yellowbelly and the prehistoric looking saratoga.

The water level of the dam will be the ultimate decider when it comes to choosing a spot. Of late the dam has been at almost full capacity, giving us anglers the advantage of being able to fish many different areas on the dam. Wind can also be a factor on the dam, so use it to your advantage. Make long casts with the wind at your back to allow your lure to cover a greater distance and attempt to position your kayak so that the wind can help you with an effective drift, that way you can potentially cover a lot more ground.

Most dams consist of several types of structure, meaning plenty of places for the fish to hide. These include weed beds, reeds, lily pads, timber (whether this be standing or lay down), rocky cliffs and natural deep drop offs. Fishing any of these types of structure can result in fish, it's just a matter of finding where they are holding at a particular time and using the correct methods to target the fish.



This prehistoric looking toga couldn't resist the vibration of a TT Lures Switchblade.

Having a sounder, when fishing lakes and dams, can really pay dividends when it comes to bassing. The bass seem to like schooling up at certain locations and the way to find them is by sounding around until you can see a solid school reading on your head unit. In saying this, bass will more commonly school up in the cooler months, while in summer they will be a lot more spread out. Upon finding a school, an effective method of bringing bass to the yak is to hop small blades or small plastics, as even if they are not active or hungry this can result in a reaction strike, with the constant movement in their face agitating them.

There are two rod and reel setups that I have been using; a 2500 Shimano Stradic Ci4 reel matched with a 4-10lb G-Loomis GL2 with 8lb Sunline Super PE braided line, and a slightly heavier setup of a Shimano Curado 200e7 baitcaster, matched with a 2-10lb Acid Custom Rod with 15lb Super PE. Leaders used are fluorocarbon and they range from 8 pound through to 15 pound, depending on what structure is being fished. As mentioned above there is a wide variety of lures that you can use, it is just up to you in the end what is tied on the end of your line. It also pays, when expecting to be fishing long hours in the sun, to invest in a good UPF shirt, polarised sunglasses, a good hat and possibly a Buff to cover your face.

So get out in your yaks and have a go, just like my mates and I did, and you never know what you might hook!




Summertime Plastics off Fraser Island

With the warmer weather setting in and a good run on pelagic species off the Sunshine Coast, we had planned to do a two day trip up off the bottom end of Fraser Island. Heading out with a couple of keen bait fisherman, I managed to slip in my plastics gear and an assortment of ZMan plastics. The plan for the first day was to call into a bait ground mark that we have, not far out from the Wide Bay Bar and get some livies for the guys, before heading out a bit wider and see what we could find.

After crossing the wide bay bar we shortly arrived at our bait ground mark. A bit of sounding around and we soon found a good show of livies on the sounder. After anchoring the boat and a quick check of the sounder I could see that we were right on the mark. I could also see some bigger arches holding off the edge of the bait. Not being able to help myself, I rigged up a ZMan 8" StreakZ XL in the colour of Opening Night and matched this to a 3/4oz HeadlockZ HD jighead with a 6/0 hook.

By Andy Gunn



Fraser Island is a magical place that offers incredible scenery, sights and fishing for those fishing from the beach or a boat.

With my first few drops down not drawing too much attention, I retrieved the plastic and added some Procure Super Gel in Bloody Tuna. This time, instead of free spooling the plastic down to the bottom, I cast the plastic out and then let it free spool to the bottom. Once the plastic had hit the bottom I then skipped it back to the boat making sure to keep the plastic in contact with the bottom.

After a couple more retrieves and a few unknown bumps I was starting to wonder what was down there, maybe I needed to downsize the plastic. Again, I found myself sending out another cast and leaving the bail arm open to free spool the plastic to the bottom, however this time the plastic didn't make it to the bottom before the line started ripping off the spool.

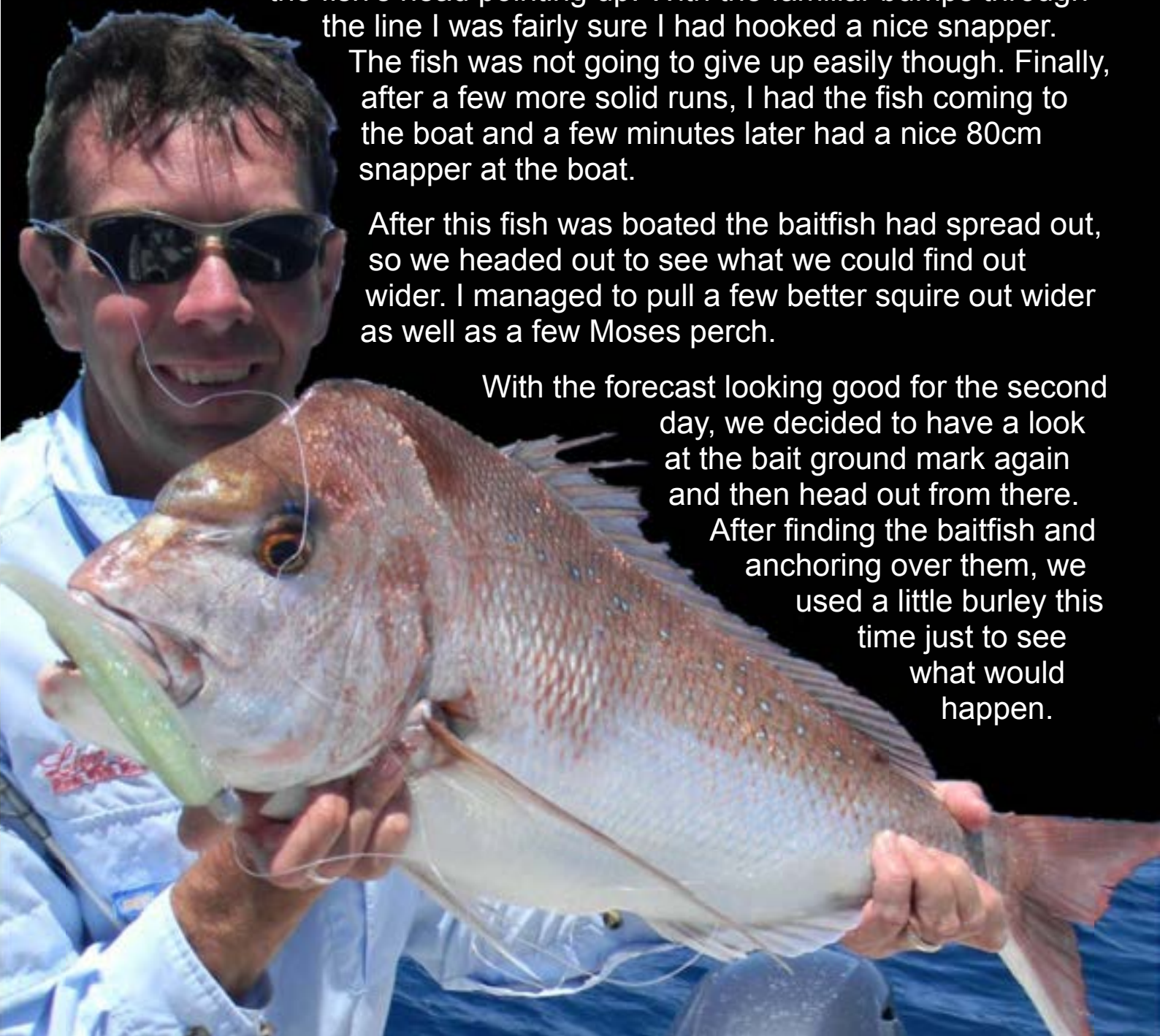
Flicking the bail arm over I set the hook on what felt like a solid fish and after an initial run, trying to get me back to the cover of the reef, I managed to get the fish's head pointing up. With the familiar bumps through the line I was fairly sure I had hooked a nice snapper.

The fish was not going to give up easily though. Finally, after a few more solid runs, I had the fish coming to the boat and a few minutes later had a nice 80cm snapper at the boat.

After this fish was boated the baitfish had spread out, so we headed out to see what we could find out wider. I managed to pull a few better squire out wider as well as a few Moses perch.

With the forecast looking good for the second day, we decided to have a look at the bait ground mark again and then head out from there.

After finding the baitfish and anchoring over them, we used a little burley this time just to see what would happen.



It was a quieter start than the previous day but we were happy to wait and see what eventuated. I made a long cast out the back of the boat, placed the rod into a rod holder and turned to get a drink. Hearing a screaming drag I turned to see the Terez doubled over, picked up the rod and set the hook. I was unsure of what had eaten my ZMan plastic.

The first run, after hooking the fish around mid-water, was a deep run and on a couple of occasions I was expecting the fish to bury me back in the reef. After a few more good runs, this time staying near the surface and doing the best it could to wrap me around the anchor rope, I had managed to work the fish to the boat. As soon as the fish spotted the boat it made a couple more runs, this time heading deep again. This is the time when a lot of fish are lost, but knowing my drag was set right all I could do was hang on and work the fish back toward the boat. Once the fish was on board the boat I could sit back and enjoy what I had just experienced.

While the other guys on the boat were making the call “get that plastic back down there he will have a mate as well”, I returned with the comment “nah boys, see if you can get one on your baits”. I then took the opportunity to pick up my can of Coke that had been rolling around on the floor of the boat while all the action had been happening. Sitting back and having a drink, I watched the other guys sending their baits down.



Andy with a couple of solid cobia that the ZMan plastics accounted for.



After a bit of a straightening up the plastic was ready to be sent back down again. This time I went up the front of the boat and just started to free spool the plastic down again. As we were fishing in a bit over 40m of water, I was expecting a bit of a break to get the plastic to the bottom. It didn't seem to take too long before again line was ripping off the spool, with exactly the same run as the previous fish. This time I had a bit more confidence in what I had hooked. Again after the fish had come to the surface it then continued the fight down deep and after what felt like 7 or 8 minutes I had another cobia to the boat, this one around the 10kg mark.

It was smiles all around and again I was happy with my decision to sneak the soft plastic fishing gear and a few ZMan plastics on board.

BURRUM RIVER ADVENTURE

BY JACK WELSH



Every year a couple families and mine head up to the beautiful town of Burrum Heads, which is situated about 25 minutes from the fishing Mecca of Hervey Bay in Queensland. The Burrum River is quite a large system, with three other rivers coming off it; the Gregory, Isis and Cherwell. I have been visiting this location for eight years now and love every bit of it.

The variety of fishing in the Burrum is mind blowing, with everything from whiting to barramundi... it has it all! For this reason it's always worth taking a few rod and reel combos out so that it's easy to chop and change to suit different fish species. On my latest holiday I had a bit of success targeting fish in the river on ZMan soft plastics rigged on TT jigheads in various sizes.

I started the trip by trying to land myself a big flatty and it didn't take long to achieve this after casting into a perfect little run off creek that was spilling out on the run out tide. I had a solid take, that at first I wouldn't have called for a flatty, but when it got close I realised it was quite a reasonable fish. After about five or so minutes fighting the big girl, she was netted and placed straight on my brag mat, where she measured in at 70cm (a new PB for me). The plastic was a ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Opening Night colour, matched to a TT 1/4oz HeadlockZ HD jighead. This was perfect for where I was fishing because the lure was able to make it to the bottom of the creek comfortably and I could stay in contact with it. After this big flathead a few smaller flathead were caught, as well as a bit of by-catch that included bream and trevally.

Now that I had a new PB flathead, the next day a plan was made for a mate and I to set out to target a couple of different species in some deeper water, on some nasty rock bars. After sounding a bit of bait we positioned the boat with the electric so that we were retrieving with the current, making the plastics appear a lot more natural. We had a few enquiries, with nothing too substantial until my mate had a solid take on his 3" MinnowZ in Smokey Shad. The fight was on and after a few nervous moments a nice little Jack came to the boat. We took a few pictures and sent him on his way.

Jack with a quality flathead on a ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Opening Night.



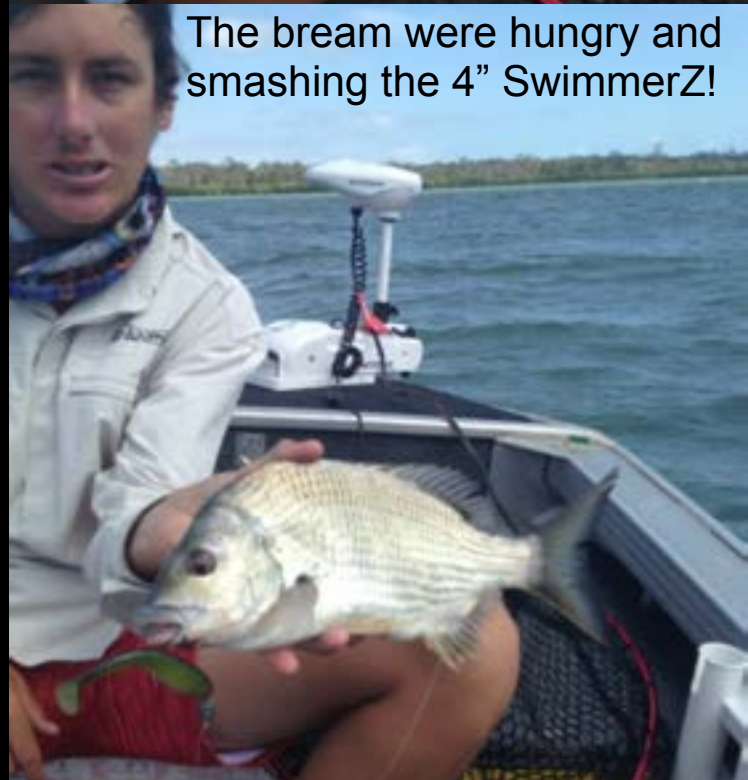
From there I noticed a lot of decent bream hanging in tight to the snags and cast my SwimmerZ in to see if they would react to it. I was blown away, they weren't just short striking but rather trying to engulf the plastic, to my absolute surprise. I ended up with about ten or so bream, all over 30cm. Any bream angler would be happy with that and I landed them on a 4" SwimmerZ, I was stoked! This made up for the jacks being a little a quiet.

The Burrum is also known for its freshwater component, with it being the overflow from Lake Lenthall. This means there are plenty of bass and barra to be caught. I had never caught a bass from the area before, so I thought it might be worth a try. The area we decided to target was absolutely amazing, with plenty of standing timber and lilies... you would swear you were at Borumba Dam!

The bass did not play hard to get either, with plenty hitting the deck of the boat. After fishing a kilometre or so of the river, I had a solid bump on my plastic that then took off. At first I called it for a monster bass, until the water erupted and a nice barramundi started trying to throw the hook. I was a little nervous once I knew it was a barra, but after a few tense minutes it was in the net. Knowing it was closed season we wanted to return the fish to the water ASAP and with minimal handling of the fish. We ended up landing about ten or so bass and the one barra. Not a bad session in my books!



Another species; a fun size jewie.



The bream were hungry and smashing the 4" SwimmerZ!



This area has everything from whiting to barra!

A handful of jack on a Zman 3" MinnowZ.



Tarpon are great fun and love a ZMan!



Yet another species; whiting.

I use three different combos when fishing this location. Firstly a couple of spin outfits with a 1000 and 2500 size spinning reel, loaded with 3 and 8lb braided line, usually with a leader from 6-20lb attached, depending on what I am chasing. These reels sit on 2-6lb and 4-10lb rods, which are perfect. When wanting to fish a little heavier I turn to my 200 size baitcast reel, loaded with 20lb braid and anywhere from 15-40lb leader. The rod that this reel sits on is a custom 2-10lb rod. It may sound light but boy does it have some go about it! The standout lures in this area were easily the ZMan plastics this year, with most styles, including GrubZ, MinnowZ, StreakZ Curly TailZ and SwimmerZ getting a run. They were all matched with TT jigheads to suit the size of the plastic, depth and tidal flow.

The Burrum is a fantastic river to fish and is well known among keen anglers as the place to go to catch a wide variety of fish species and it's only about a 2.5 hour drive from my home on the Sunny Coast... you can't beat it!

Check out that cover
in the background!



TOGA TIME!

BY SHAWN TAYLOR

When you look at any fish's attributes and what makes it attractive to anglers, it's not hard to see why the prehistoric looking saratoga is high up on the list of favourites for many sport fishos. Their acrobatics, after gliding out after a surface offering are one of sport fishing's great moments. Being a bony, inedible fish, also saves it from those looking for fillets (a good thing for those that love these fish).

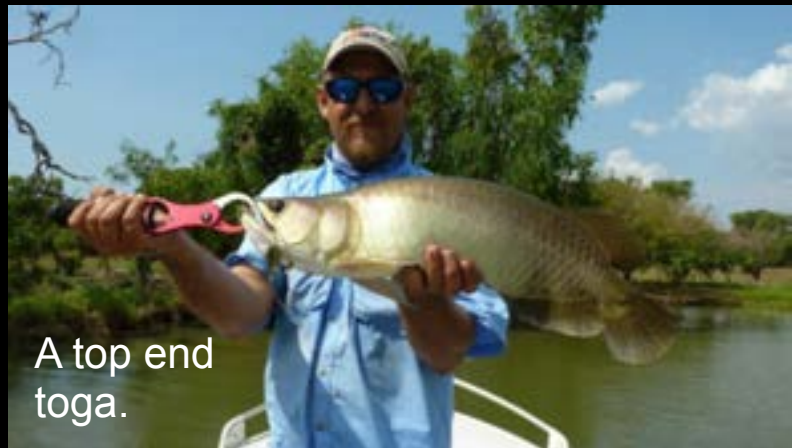
I have chased these awesome creatures from Hinze and Borumba dams in the south-east of Queensland, through the western rivers of central Queensland and to the rivers of Cape York and the billabongs of the top end... and I never get sick of both their awesome coloration and acrobatics, not to mention the environment you find them in.

I know I'm stating the obvious when I say that a fish that hits surface lures, allowing the angler to often see the fish before it strikes, is always going to be a favourite, but when a toga glides out of cover to investigate your lure and strikes it savagely, before taking to the air, it is something I could never get sick of. Sure they mightn't have the power of a barra or a jack, but they make up for it with their sheer beauty and aerial antics.

My introduction to toga was made on Hinze Dam in the Gold Coast Hinterland. After the bass bug bit hard in the early nineties, my brother and I found ourselves on this impoundment every weekend, paddling our trusty old canoe and throwing lures for bass, yellas and the all too infrequent toga.

An early morning or evening surface session with Tiny Torpedos and Jitterbugs was high on the agenda when conditions were right, and it was always a buzz punctuated by a yell of 'TOGA!' when one of these dinosaur looking creatures was encountered.

It was about this time that the fly fishing addiction hit me and of course togas were a prime target. Along with many hours at the tying desk, creating patterns to tempt the Wiley toga, trips further afield were undertaken, with visits to the picturesque Lake Borumba to hunt the toga in the early morning mist, while deer drank at the water's edge... truly magic stuff!



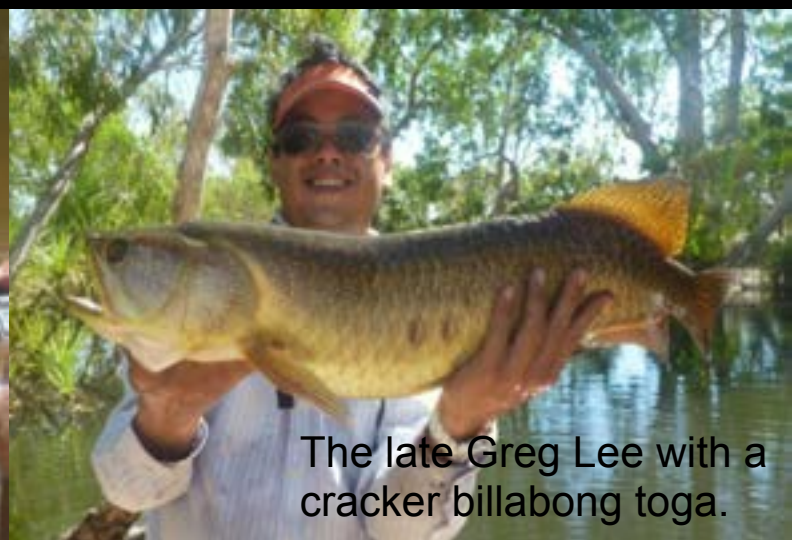
A top end toga.



ZMan Scented ShrimpZ.



Ready for release.



The late Greg Lee with a cracker billabong toga.

Saratoga Central

During my adventures guiding at the Arnhemland Barramundi Nature Lodge, I nearly always found myself flying in and out of Darwin without having the opportunity to sample some of the fishing closer to Darwin. This had to change and good mate and gun northern angler Roger Sinclair and I finally arranged a few extra day's to stopover. Roger is one of those anglers that I would rate right up there for his fishing nous, and yet a more humble bloke you will not find. (A lesson many in the game could take a few hints from!). Corroboree Billabong is one of Roger's regular haunts and the Darwin fishos will tell you there is no better bloke to be sharing a boat with. To say I was keen would be the understatement of the year and when we finally lobbied there it was like I had died and gone to heaven! If there is a better looking spot anywhere, I want to see it.

Roger soon had us weaving in and out of water lilled passages, in a maze of incredibly beautiful flora and fauna. Local knowledge is vital, and when Roger slipped off the plane and dropped the electric in at the mouth of a beautiful lily-lined bay, I knew I was in for something special.

Roger working a point at Corroboree.





'The Silver Fox' Roger Sinclair with a Corroboree Barra that beat the toga to his lure.

I'm glad to say that I brought something to the table as well that day, as I was packing some newly released ZMan MinnowZ in Redbone Glow, which Roger cast a raised eyebrow at. A bigger tackle rat than Roger you will not find, and when the MinnowZ dominated that day he was soon hunting them out, as they weren't available in Darwin at that time. Rigged weedless and pitched onto the oversized lily pads, then teased off the edge into pockets of clear water... the toga and barra absolutely loved em!

They remain my favourite plastic for this style of fishing in fresh water and I dare say that Roger still has one rigged on a rod whenever a toga session is happening. I look forward to visiting this wonderful spot again with Roger next time I'm in the territory.

Arnhemland Rivers

The awesome Barra Lodge needs no introduction to most anglers and I have been lucky to fish the remote Arnhemland area for quite a few years now. Time spent exploring the upper reaches of these magic rivers takes you to where the top end toga can be found. The landscape turns to palm lined, snag laden banks, with beautiful clear water. The river tightens up and the bankside foliage creates overhangs and shadows that have proven to be the preferential hang outs for old mate toga.

Small drains trickle water into the main river, creating colour changes, while also carrying toga tucker into the main river. It is an amazing area and you can sometimes be spoilt for choice as to where to cast, with so many good looking options available.

My lure preference here is again the ZMan 3" MinnowZ and although Redbone Glow is my favourite, I have caught some lovely toga up there on New Penny. A FrogZ is also a good option, especially for a trophy fish.

This toga from the upper reaches of the Liverpool River took a liking to a 3" MinnowZ in New Penny.





Big Dan with a billabong toga taken walking the edges of a remote billabong.

Billabong Wandering

Another gem in the Barra Lodge's crown is the remote billabongs that are accessible at certain times of year by four wheel drive or helicopter. I have many fond memories of putting clients onto bucket list fish and toga proved to be a frequent request of southern sport fishos visiting the lodge. The barra in the bongs are generally smaller, but there is always the chance of a trophy toga! Small surface lures, Zman FrogZ and small shallow running hard bodies all catch fish. It pays to chop and change, but again my 'go-to' lure is mostly a ZMan 3" MinnowZ.

Walking the edges of these billabongs and casting to likely looking haunts is a real joy, but of course clients need to be given the croc safety briefing first and as a guide you are constantly watching out for them and making sure an excited angler doesn't forget where they are... and what may very well may be watching them! Only recently there has been several local children taken by large salties, right up in these freshwater regions.

Dawson River Toga - Moura, Baralaba, Theodore

When I landed a position at the Dawson Coal Mine at Moura, I knew I would have to check out the mighty Dawson River that I had read several fishing articles about over the years. The presence of good numbers of saratoga was enough to prick my ears up and I soon sounded out some other miners that were keen fishos as well.

Now this is cowboy country and the first few times I fished with these blokes I copped a caning, as their float rigs baited with steak or a dead prawn attracted plenty of fish, while my lures drew a complete blank. It was only after a bit of lateral thinking that a 3" ZMan Scented ShrimpZ under a float, with a bit of Shrimp Pro-Cure finally got me in the game.



Dawson River

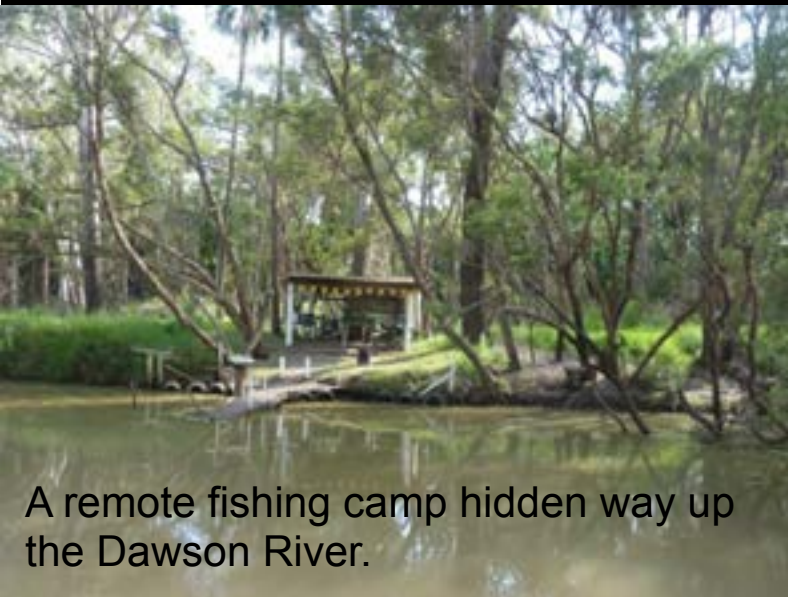


Dawson River



Cody Logan with a lovely Dawson River toga.

The discoloured water seemed to have the toga using smell rather than sight to hunt down a feed (Need some rib fillet Pro-Cure!). These blokes really took me under their wing, showing me some awesome out of the way spots, lined with mighty Dawson River palms. I couldn't get over how this spot in Central Queensland looks more like it belongs in the top end!



A remote fishing camp hidden way up the Dawson River.

I'm glad to say that Jimmy, Dan and shagger are now well and truly converted to TT Striker Spinnerbaits and ZMan ChatterBaits and Hard Leg FrogZ, after having some awesome toga sessions.

One thing worth noting; the toga fishing really depends on water quality out in the western rivers. When it warms up and the rivers are clear, it's prime. Sometimes you will see five or six toga rushing out to intercept your FrogZ and you find yourself sight casting, trying to pick a big fish... awesome stuff!



The magnificent Dawson River country.

Another thing that we have found is that the local toga have a preference for the green (Watermelon Chartruese) FrogZ. Campfire debate on this has thrown out a few theories, including that the white-bellied frogs may look like cane toads and the toga have learnt that they are no good. I'm not sure, but they definitely like the green frogs better?

One other thing worth noting is that the addition of a stinger hook to your spinnerbaits or FrogZ will dramatically increase your hook up rate. Toga are notorious for throwing the hooks and a sticky sharp stinger will help you convert more bites.

It's a real bonus for me to be able to visit these spots on our work changeover nights; camping on the riverbanks with good mates, having a few drinks and a barbie... and hopefully tangling with some big Dawson River toga.

Shagger tells me of fish recorded over the magic metre mark, which will keep me coming back time and time again after the mother of all toga!



A toga from Dawson River country.