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Angler: Dane Radosevic

Species: Hervey Bay Longtail Tuna

Lure: ZMan 5" StreakZ Baby Bass

Jighead: TT Lures 1oz 5/0 HeadlockZ HD

Getting the Drift

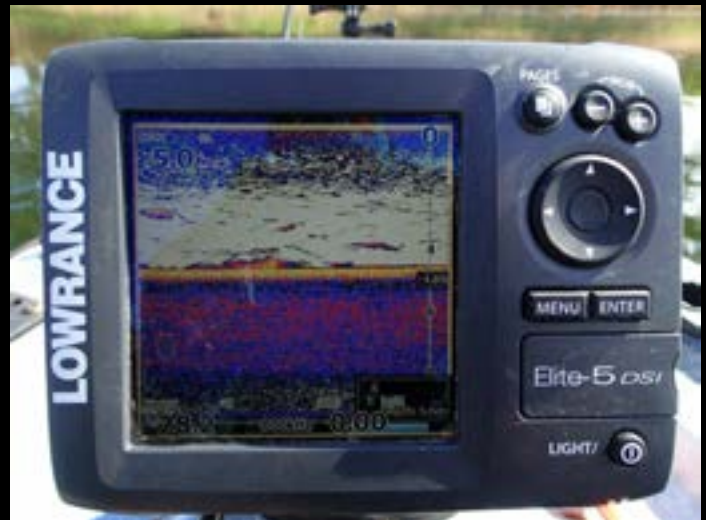


By Vinnie Versfeld

Drifting to me is probably one of the easiest, yet most effective methods of fishing bottom and mid water structure, using a variety of lures. It's a technique I kind of stumbled onto during a slow bite one day on a creek, when I stopped for smoko to regroup and get my head around the day and why my aquatic foes weren't playing the game.

As I was drifting down the creek, head in hand and chewing a muesli bar, I noticed a snag pop up on the sounder with a solitary fish hovering on the lee side of it out of the tidal current. I figured I'd throw something out behind the boat and see what happened. The first rod I picked up was rigged with a ZMan 3" MinnowZ on a 3/8oz jighead and as I drifted past I let it sink to the bottom, took up the slack and lifted the rod tip enough to get the tail of the plastic kicking into action. Two hop and drops later and the plastic only dropped half as far as it did on the previous drop. Half dazed by what was happening, I only realised a barra had sucked it in as I went to lift the rod again. FISH ON!

I admittedly considered it a fluke and figured smoko was over and the fish were back on the bite. I feverishly jumped on the leccy and proceeded to belt the water into a froth with all manner of plastic bait imitations with no success. After about an hour or so I went back to the drawing board and wondered if there was any merit in the drifting technique. I motored my way up to a rock bar I found on a previous trip, dropped the leccy to control my drift and dropped the same MinnowZ down to the bottom in about 3.2m of water. As the tide slowly drifted me along I was intently watching the sounder for life. Drifting and thinking about what I was doing it started to make sense. The fish were sulking, holding deeper out of the current and my bait was naturally presented by being fished at the same speed as a prawn or baitfish drifting down with the tide and boat noise was down to an absolute minimum. Whist computing all of this information I got slammed by a cracking jack! A pattern was forming...



When:

I've found this technique effective whenever the bite has been particularly slow. Seasonally it works year round and I've found it particularly effective on the likes of barra and such, that shut down a bit during the colder months.

Where:

Now this is the interesting part, everywhere! I've successfully used this technique while wading streams chasing sooties to 60m of water out wide jiggging the shoals. Anywhere you have a tidal run or current that can help you move the lure at the same speed as the flow is a winner.

Gear:

Gear is a bit similar to the old Holden or Ford debate. I feel match the situation and fish you are targeting. I personally prefer spinning gear and in a creek scenario a 2500 reel spooled with 12-15lb on a matching rod will see you in the game. I like slower action rods as I believe they assist with hook ups as they allow the fish to eat the lure a bit better.



Lure wise I use the entire ZMan range on matching TT jigheads; you want to fish the lightest possible jighead that's going to allow you're plastic to stay in the strike zone at the speed you are drifting. Blades are also a deadly lure choice, especially in colder water. Remember the golden rule – 'match the hatch!' If the fish are feeding on prawns or smaller bait fish, you're unlikely to get a bite on say a 6" plastic or vice versa. In saying that, downsizing is almost always a game changer on a shutdown bite.

If you experiment a bit it won't take too long to figure it out. When you do get a bite on a particular lure stick with it.



Vinnie with a nice jack on the drift.

Technique:

Once you come across some likely looking structure or suspending fish, work out your drift direction first. This might take a couple of passes but the little effort spent doing this outweighs the frustration caused by not getting the drift right and then missing possible fish. I position my boat/yak far enough upstream, from my selected area, to ensure that I have enough time to get my lure into the area and working before I get to the spot. Achieving this is as simple as pulling up, waiting for the boat/yak to start drifting naturally and dropping lures on the 'downstream' side of the vessel (you don't want your line drifting in under the vessel). Once your lure hits the bottom, take up the slack and drop the rod tip. Speed, etc. will be determined by the fish and what they are in the mood for on the day. I normally start with a drop, hop, hop, lift, drop, and then change it up from there.

The golden rule is to always have contact with the lure on the drop, as this is when 99.99% of strikes happen.

I hope this short introduction to drift fishing gives you another possible option for those 'slow' days we all get from time to time. I find it a very effective and exciting way to fish and it is also a fantastic way to get kids and beginners hooked on luring!

Fish on!

HeadlockZ HD Jigheads – New 4/0 sizes

Renowned for their brutally strong, Mustad chemically sharpened, black nickel hook and unique locking grub keeper, designed to lock all soft plastic brands, including the 10X Tough ZMan plastics in place, the TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads are now available in a 4/0 hook size. The 4/0 will be a perfect fit for many 3" – 5" soft plastics and the addition was again driven by angler requests.



The 4/0 HeadlockZ HD is available in 1/8, 1/6, 1/4, 3/8 and 1/2oz, to cover everything from estuary to shallow reef and pelagic species. There are 5 jigheads per pack.



TT Lures Vortex Spinnerbaits – 1/8oz

The TT Lures Vortex is a small-framed spinnerbait that is extremely popular with anglers chasing Australian bass, golden perch, saratoga and sooty grunter. Previously available in 1/4, 3/8, 1/2 and 3/4oz, Tackle Tactics have now added a 1/8oz model to the range after requests from anglers and an influx of bass into the creeks and rivers from years of flooding. The 1/8oz Vortex is ideal for prospecting the smallwater, fishing the edge bite and working weed beds, along with searching fallen timber due to its snag resistance.

Vortex Spinnerbaits are constructed from quality components, including Mustad Ultrapoint chemically sharpened hook, ball bearing swivel, silicone skirt and 24K plated blade. They come fitted with a stinger hook, locked in place with Bait Buttons, to minimise short striking. Available in 12 colours, including favourites Red Nightmare, White Bony, Purple Glimmer, Gold Olive Scale and Baby Bass.



TUNA TIME!



**By Dane
Radosevic**

I approached with fixated eyes on the white water being stirred up by dive bombing birds and erratically feeding tuna, breaking the surface in a frenzied attack on the helpless baitfish. The adrenaline started to rush in anticipation as I reached for my rod to put in the cast, clicked the bail arm over and started to crank my lure back in the direction of the boat. I felt a solid thump as my lure was intercepted and then began travelling at high speed in the opposite direction. Welcome to tuna fishing!

Targeting longtail tuna can be one of the most exciting and adrenaline pumping forms of fishing an angler will experience and has the ability to make many of the best in this sport go weak at the knees. The visual aspect, when approaching nervous baitfish flickering on the surface and birds circling and dive bombing from above, just as the tuna explode from underneath demolishing the tightly packed bait ball, is certainly a spectacular site. This species of tuna is a highly renowned sportfish, attracting anglers from far and wide in the hope of encountering one of these prized specimens.

On days when the tuna are thick, it can be as simple as looking for flocks of diving birds and savagely feeding tuna, slowly motoring within casting distance of the school and making a cast... nine times out of ten hooking up.

However on other days, when the tuna are around in smaller numbers and being rather flighty, experience and knowledge, which comes with time spent on the water, can play a large part in success or failure. This is where watching the birds and their flight patterns carefully and knowing what they are going to do next will pay off... as they are your eyes in the sky.



Using a stealthier approach may also be needed to get a shot away at the target. Tuna will generally feed into the wind, so when sighting a school get up wind of them and cut the motor. Letting the fish come to you, with no unusual noises from a motor running, will generally get you a shot in these tough conditions.

Around this time of year is when we see large schools of average-sized longtail tuna make Hervey Bay their home and their feeding grounds, as the acres of bait move into Platypus Bay. The action really heats up, with double figure sessions not uncommon and it is literally a fish a cast for as long as your body can withstand the punishment of these speedsters.

Dane with a quality tuna on an Opening Night coloured ZMan 5" StreakZ.



The ZMan 5" StreakZ has proven itself as a tuna taker, matching the hatch well.



Platypus Bay is the area that covers from Coongul Point to Rooney's Point, on the northern end of the western side of Fraser Island. When heading up the island into Platypus Bay in search of longtails you will generally start to see small schools of tuna around the three triangles, also known as Arch Cliffs. As you continue to make your way further up the island toward the Wathumba Creek area, in a spot known as the 'Pocket' by some of the local fisho's, the tuna schools are usually bigger and much more prolific.

Tuna, being a pelagic species, are constantly on the move following the baitfish, hence some trips you might find them in the same areas and on others you might have to go searching for them. It pays to have the versatility to be able to move around a lot if need be.





Baby Bass is one of Dane's favourite colours in the ZMan 5" StreakZ and an excellent baitfish imitation.

My most recent trip up the island was one of the most exciting sessions I have had on the tuna this year, landing well over 25 longtails alone, on both plastics and fly. There were literally acres of them feeding on tightly balled up baitfish and the tuna were far from flighty, going ballistic right beside the boat as the baitfish tried to find cover in the shadow of the hull. The deep blue coloured water of the ocean sparkling with the amount of loose scales floating around was truly an amazing site.

When gearing up to target tuna a good quality spin combo is an advantage, as it makes your job a lot easier and also allows you to put more hurt on the fish to try and land them before the sharks hone in. A reel in the 4000-5000 size range, spooled with 20-30lb braid and matched to a 7 foot 6-10kg rod is an ideal combo and will get you out of trouble in most cases.

My personal favourite lures and colours of choice, that have proven most successful for me, are the ZMan 5" StreakZ in Bubble Gum and Baby Bass and the ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ in Pearl, matched to a TT Lures HeadlockZ HD 1/2 to 3/4oz jighead with a 5/0 hook. The Baby Bass colour is very quickly becoming my go-to colour, with its realistic baitfish



pattern a perfect offering for matching the baitfish in our area. For the fly enthusiasts I would suggest tying on a pink silicone or white clouser as these two flies have been killing it, matching the hatch perfectly.

Until next time, Fish Hard.

Dane Radosevic

When the fish are on it can be a frenzy of activity!



MIXING THINGS **JO**

By Angus James




When out fishing we are always exposed to ever-changing environments and conditions. Over time each individual angler develops their own unique set of tackle tactics to suit the situation they are up against and when we 'crack the code' it's the greatest feeling of achievement. Being able to decide what lure to tie on, in order to trigger that strike, makes all the difference when getting the results we are after. Land based or by boat, we need to have all of the options in our arsenal, as it's very important to have all bases covered. The TT Lures and ZMan range of products not only has the answers for every situation they hit a home run!

It's no secret that my favourite style of fishing is trekking deep into the rainforests, targeting the elusive jungle perch. It's a magical way to go fishing. It can also be very physically demanding. Most JP adventures will have me wading through rapids, climbing over rocky terrain and walking all day, so I need to be agile and light on my feet. Without carrying a whole tackle shop on my shoulders, it's important that I take in the right balance of presentations to apply to any given situation.



Jungle perch are at the top of Angus's list of target species.



The ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ comes to life in the crystal clear water.

On a recent trip into the jungle I was using my favourite sub-surface approach, the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ rigged on 1/16oz TT lures HeadlockZ HD jighead. This is a great combination because it's a perfect weight to cast long distances on finesse gear and the buoyancy of the ZMan ElaZtech makes this presentation really come to life in the crystal clear water. I like to let them sit on the drop for a few seconds, allowing the natural tail movement to attract the attention of the JPs. If it doesn't get crunched then a steady slow roll with a few rod tip twitches will normally do the damage. Jungle Perch find this approach hard to resist!

A few hours into the session and I had walked around 3km upstream, landing good numbers of JPs. Then the environment suddenly changed, the rain forest had opened up and started doing what it does best. Before long the heavy rain had turned the peaceful stream into a fast flowing river. My favourite sneaky surface approach had been shut down. Being early in the session and wanting to venture deeper into the jungle I needed to adapt to the situation so I could keep catching fish.

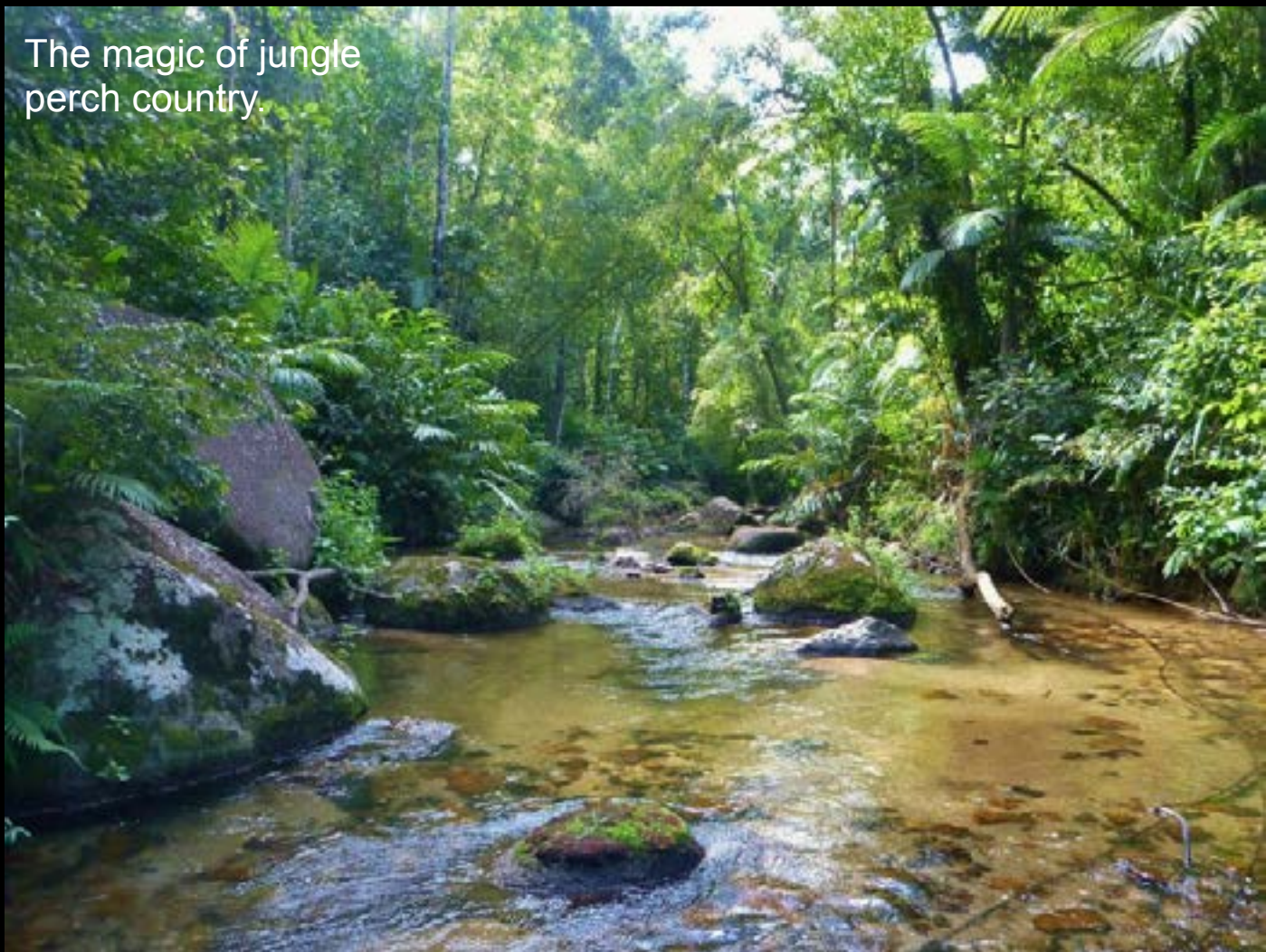
I sat down, opened up my tackle tray and decided to tie on a TT Lures 1/8oz Switchblade in Purple Minnow, selecting this option because I noticed there were small berries in the water that looked almost identical to this colour. The rain was most certainly heavy enough to make the berries naturally fall into the water. I also needed to cast into the heavy rain and have direct contact with my lure. The TT Lures Switchblades cast like bullets and their tight vibration lets you feel them working for you. My first cast was smashed by the biggest jungle perch of the day! Next cast, another solid fish! I had cracked the code! From then on my catch rate went right back up. The technique was a simple high speed, almost pelagic style retrieve, mimicking the berries falling into the river and getting washed downstream!

Every angler has their go-to lures, and sometimes it's a hard decision to have to make when those favourite lures are not getting the attention we would like. Mixing things up is sometimes one of the best things you can do. Being versatile and figuring out what the fish want and how they want it will get you landing more fish during your time on the water.



Mixing things up can sometimes get you back on the bite when your favourites aren't firing.

The magic of jungle perch country.



Another experience of mine, where observing the surroundings had come into play, was during a sooty grunter impoundment competition. The bite was very tough and everyone's tactics had shut down. We soon found out that in order to get fish on the boat it had come down to a simple session of 'matching the hatch'... but in this case everyone was mimicking bird poo! That's right, the technique was as simple as flicking either a Pearl or Glow ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ under a tree holding birds and it was fish on! In some cases before the lure had even hit the water... we had cracked the code!

Lure fishing is all about trying different things and taking notice of what's going on around you is what it's all about. Sometimes thinking outside the box is the best way to approach the situation and get those fish on the end of our line.

Cheers everyone BRING IT ON!
Angus James

Australian Bass on ZMan Chatterbaits

By Aidan Robertson

Australian Bass are one of Australia's outstanding freshwater sportfish; they are a beautiful freshwater fish found in the high upper reaches of creeks and streams. They are available in impoundments and also live in remote, picturesque locations of fresh to brackish water, where they are a popular species to chase out of a kayak. Bass are an aggressive fish when they want to be and provide a great fight for the angler, it is there hard hit and incredible pulling power that keeps anglers coming back for more.

Where:

Bass are an aggressive fish that can be found in impoundments and also live in the uppermost reaches of creeks and streams consisting of brackish to freshwater. They can be found in the deepest holes to the shallowest of rocky flowing creeks. They are generally found living in the undercut banks or around submerged structure such as trees and logs, often on the deeper side of the creek / stream and usually hiding in the shade. In saying that, they are occasionally caught in the open sunny part of the creek.

Early morning or late afternoon is generally a favourable time for targeting Australian bass. They prefer to live under cover so casting your lure as close to the bank, or structure, as possible helps to increase your chances of catching one.

Chatterbaits:

Chatterbaits are an effective lure when targeting Australian Bass as they can be worked a number of different ways, from shallow to deep, depending on how long you let them sink. They provide great vibration through the water and enough colour and flash to spark an aggressive bass to bite. Whether the water is clear or dirty, the ZMan Chatterbaits are a stand out lure for Australian Bass. The

Chatterbait Mini 1/4oz is a perfect lure for the smaller bass found in shallow flowing rocky pools and for the big wild or impoundment bass the **ZMan Chatterbait Original 3/8oz** is a must have lure in your tackle box!



Check out the ZMan Chatterbait in action by clicking on the link below -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bo8AXFbPjjQ&f>



Aidan with a solid bass on a ZMan Chatterbait rigged with a ZMan 3" MinnowZ as a trailer.

Technique:

When chasing Australian Bass ensure that you are quiet when fishing so the fish are not spooked. Sneaking up on them in a kayak is the perfect way to provide stealth. When looking for places to cast your lure, look for overhanging trees, grassy plants overhanging the water, deep dark undercut banks, logs running into the water and fish activity. When casting at the bank ensure that you are landing the lure as close to the structure as possible, even bouncing your lure off it every now and then can be an effective way to entice an angry bass to bite. There are many retrieves that are effective with the Chatterbaits; one stand out has been casting out, allowing it to sink for a second or two and then commencing a steady slow retrieve. The bass can attack the lure on the drop or any time after you start winding. Depending on how heavy the structure is that you are fishing, leader from 4lb-15lb is suitable for bass fishing with Chatterbaits.

Pro Tips:

Make sure the Chatterbait is landing as close to the structure as possible, there is only a couple of centimetres difference between being in the strike zone and being out of it.

Retrieve with a slow wind; retrieving with a slow wind keeps the lure in the strike zone longer. Another tip is to retrieve it slow all the way to the kayak, boat or bank as many fish have been caught just before lifting the Chatterbait out of the water.

When retrieving a snagged Chatterbait paddle over the back of it and it will generally pop off. If not give the lure some light flicks; never lock up on a snag and try to bust it off as it will only dig the hook deeper into the structure... if nothing else works a lure retriever is an essential item when bass fishing.



LURING BREAm

By Josh Dunn

Some anglers still mistake bream as an annoying little, bait taking fish, but there is a lot more than meets the eye when it comes to bream. Bream fishing has grown incredibly over the past 10 years, with huge competitions and big prizes up for grabs, along with the 'catch and release' element and the stealth and hunt that goes with this species. Hopefully this article helps to change what some think of just the 'old common bream' and also help you catch a few!

Where to fish

The main thing you must know is that almost every bit of structure will hold bream at some point. Structure provides protection and food. If there is baitfish and solid structure, you are maximising your chances of landing a fish. Solid structure includes jetties, pylons, bridges, rock walls, retaining walls and sunken structure (pipelines, trees, etc.). So where there's structure there is often fish!

Fish will also hold on the sand, near the edges of canal systems and you will pull good fish from there at times. If you land a good cast, right where the water meets the sand and start slowly winding surface plastics (ZMan 2" GrubZ and 3" Scented ShrimpZ), then you are a good chance of some action.

ZMan 2" and 2.5" GrubZ
have become a go-to lure
for anglers chasing bream.



Techniques and thinking outside the box

There's heaps of different techniques and styles of bream fishing though and there are a few that stand out and produce fish for me.

TT 1/8oz Switchblades and 1/12oz Ghostblades are ones not to go past. Most brown colours work for me, including 'Golden Ghost' and 'Brown Spook' in the Ghostblades. If the fish aren't very active, I fish these lighter weights and present the lure slower and for longer in the strike zone. I fish blades almost the same as plastics, though slower.

Firstly, I'll cast to structure, let the lure bottom or where the fish are sitting in column, give the lure a few light hops, pause and then repeat. This is the same as lightly weighted plastics.

Thinking outside of the box and learning new techniques that you even have thought of before, can change everything your

sink to either the water hops, pause way that I fish

creating or wouldn't change and increase chances of landing more fish.



Blades are deadly on bream, but also draw strikes from a wide range of other species.



One technique that I had never tried before, until the fish were quiet, was cutting down a ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ. I simply chopped off the head and used the tail, rigged on a light TT Lures 1/40oz – 1/12oz Hidden Weight System (HWS) jighead. On pretty much the first cast I pulled out a quality bream, while fishing the surface with this technique.



Things you could try may include the cut-down ShrimpZ, 3" Scented CrabZ, 4" CrawdadZ and the list goes on in the ZMan range. Another technique that my mate Cameron Cronin has also had success with, is fishing a ZMan 3.75" StreakZ in Watermelon Red or Shiner, rigged on a reasonably light TT Lures Hidden Weight System jighead. These are fished slowly where the fish are sitting, with a few flicks added.



If I see a stonker bream, I'll quickly switch to my favourite lure and technique. This is as simple as the ZMan 2" GrubZ in Motor Oil or Copper Penny, rigged with a TT Lures 1/40oz size 1 Hidden Weight System (HWS) jighead. Firstly I will skip a cast 1-2 metres ahead of the fish, without scaring it. As soon as it hits the water the ElaZtech material will be buoyant and float the tail. I then raise my rod tip and slowly wind the lure across the surface. The GrubZ tail will flicker as it moves across the top of the water.



When the bream sights the lure, it's a good opportunity to pause and let the lure sink to around 5-10cm below the surface. This point and when the lure is swimming on the surface is generally when the bream will react and smack it! Then all you need to do is hook it and hold on!

I love getting the fish fired up by allowing the lure to sink and then quickly moving or flicking it away and I have found I get a better hook up rate when I do this as the fish engulf the plastic!

Over the past few years of bream fishing I have found that you will get the odd bream out in the open, though mostly they are around structure. My PB bream on plastics is currently 40.5cm and it was caught after hopping the plastic off the bottom. The plastic was a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Violet Sparkle, rigged on a TT Lures 1/8oz jighead, while early morning fishing. I matched the bait, as the Violet Sparkle colour is almost a natural bait-like colour. One thing I can't go past when the fishing is tough is some Pro-Cure Super Gel scent and although I do use this even when the fish are active, it makes a big difference when the bite is tough. I believe this gives me the maximum chance of hooking that big one!

Adding scent makes a difference, especially when the bite is tough.



The gear

The gear I use isn't the most expensive rod and reel on the shelf and although a bit of money is involved it won't break the budget. I've got a few rods, but overall my favourite is a Samaki Zing 4-8lb or Shimano Raider 1-4kg, matched with a Daiwa Freams 2500 size spinning reel. The leader class I fish ranges from 6-12lb, depending on the location I'm fishing. In the canals, most anglers will drop down to 3lb leader, which isn't a bad idea when the fish are wary and timid. You can still land some very decent fish on 3lb, from quality barracuda (which are an acrobatic fish) to 40cm+ bream, and I even know of people landing solid Jacks on 3lb.

Ever since I've fished different techniques using gear from the Tackle Tactics range, started thinking outside of the box and fishing new locations, it has improved my fishing dramatically, with some excellent results and I've had heaps of fun! So I hope you have picked up a thing or two that could be helpful in your everyday bream fishing! FISH ON!



Boat hulls and marinas often hold good numbers of quality bream.

By Robbie Wells



Frogtztooni

Warning: After Reading this article you may suffer from CFD - Compulsive Frog Disorder, with your first explosive frog surface encounter having you frothing for more. You will reach the stage where you always take an extra setup with you, rigged with either a 2.5" or 4" ZMan Hard Leg FrogZ at the ready... probably for your first cast. Hmmm... 2.5" Hard Leg FrogZ you ask, they don't make those, but more on that later.

FrogZ in the sweet water... there wouldn't be too many Australian natives in the fresh that wouldn't or don't eat succulent frog morsels in their natural habitat. The sheer commotion alone, with all that leg action, is enough to entice the primitive urges in any of our predatory surface feeders and most if not all of our freshwater sportfish. So, how many times have you been fishing the fresh and seen an actual frog swimming? Probably not often really, so I always treat them as a real delicacy and in the right environmental conditions and time of day I expect fish to go crazy over them.

One of my favorite types of freshwater fishing is just that, fast burning ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ. You've probably seen them used extensively on barra in the impoundments, rigged weedless over the lily pads. I don't really fish impoundments, so I've been using them in the skinny water chasing anything from bass, sooties, cod, toga, tarpon, JPs and of course barra. They can't resist going for a sensory overload reaction bite!



The buoyancy of the ZMan FrogZ makes them even deadlier.

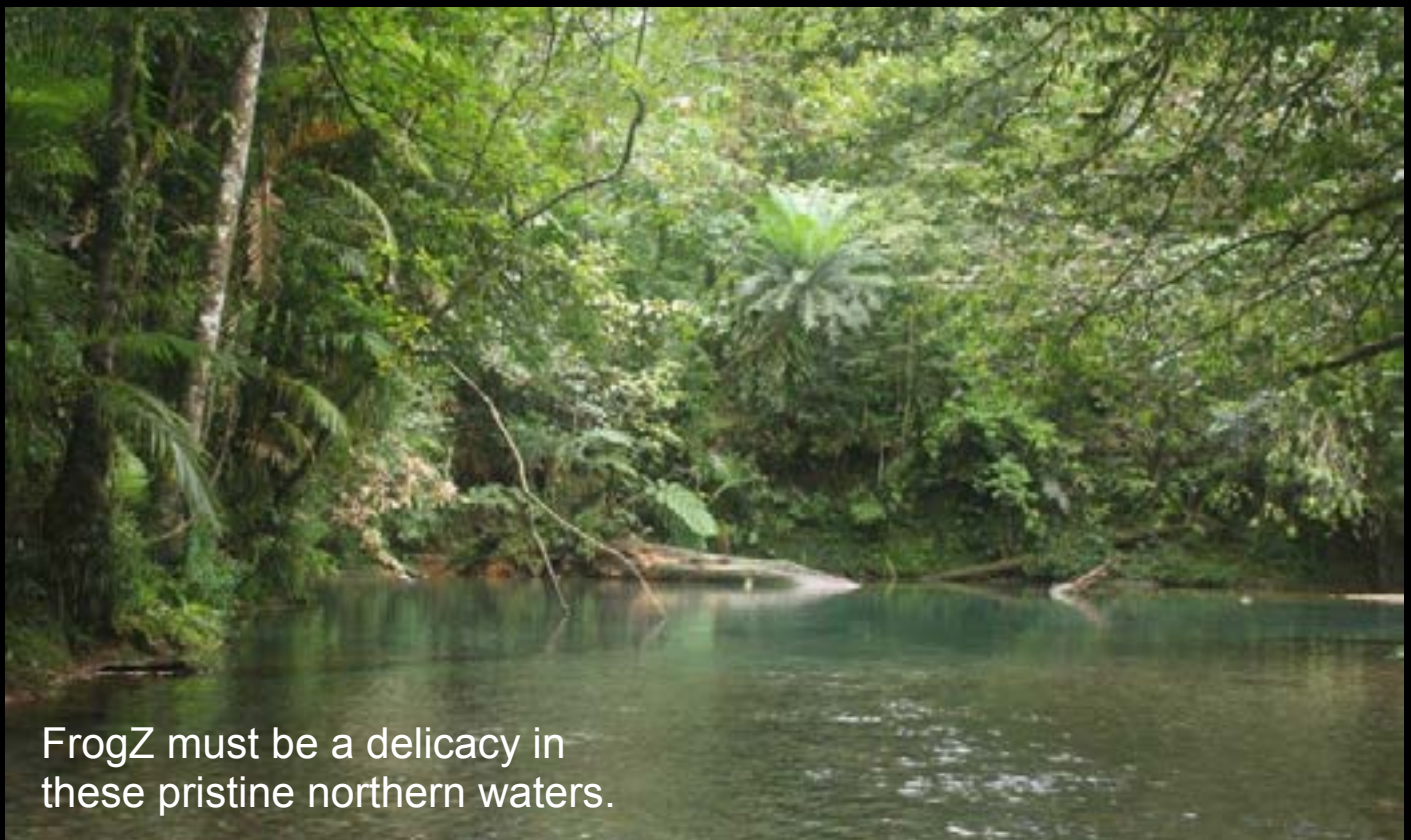




FrogZin' bass snags.



At first the fast burn technique seems like there is no way that anything would attack something skimming across the water that fast, especially our smaller species like bass, JPs and sooty grunter. In our opportunistic native world of eat or be eaten though and because of what this plastic represents food wise in its natural environment, to me it reminds me of a small water dragon scurrying across the surface from lilies to logs, the FrogZ make for easy feed for an awaiting predator. Here's some food for thought, perhaps the water dragon is the native's delicacy, as 90% of the hook ups are on the fast burn not on the pause. Whatever they think it is, it works and with a little bit of ingenuity the 4" frog imitation can be customized to suit all native freshwater fish.



FrogZ must be a delicacy in these pristine northern waters.

Toga are suckers for a well presented frog.



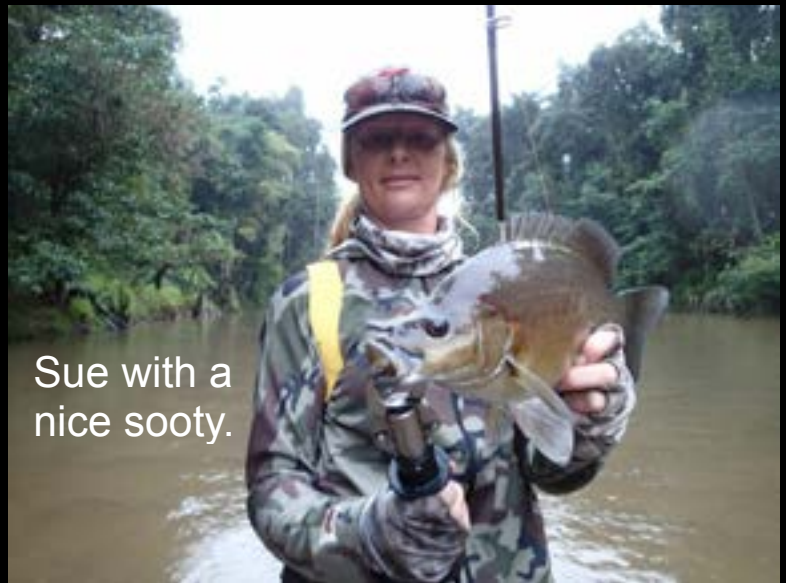
What's a 'fast burn' technique some of you might ask? Basically, when surface fishing FrogZ, it's a high rod tip and a fast enough speed to get the poor old ZMan up on the plane with the legs frantically popping along the surface in an almost frenzied motion. I use a 6'6" – 7' rod and like a big long cast. Depending on species and the bite for the day, I will vary my distance of fast burn, before stopping the plastic for small pauses.

When fishing for Aussie bass for instance I will fast burn my first cast all the way. I then cast to the same spot and burn for 8-10 metres before the pause, or pause where I think fish are located. If you are fortunate enough to be in a kayak, you can line yourself up along the lilies or a timber run for surprising results. I use the same technique within the thick timber snags and lily or weed beds – the FrogZ rigged weedless on a TT Lures 4/0 ChinlockZ jighead means you can get it right into the strike zone and entice the fish out. It's really surprising how far out of their timber comfort zone they will travel to engulf your frog offering.



The author stoked with the surface strike.

As with a lot of surface artificials, especially single hook plastics, your hook up rate can be compromised, depending on species targeted. If you think outside the square your hook up rate can be dramatically increased though. For instance, when it comes to Aussie bass, sooty grunter and jungle perch a 4" Hard Leg FrogZ is quite a mouthful. The hook needs to be sitting as far back in the frog rigging slot as possible and ideally a 6/0 sits back enough... but with the mouth size of target species mentioned it takes a perfect strike to engulf both the frog and the hook. I have solved this problem, when chasing these particular natives over the last 12 months, by using a cut-down 4" FrogZ. Trimming and re-shaping the front of the ZMan Hard Leg FrogZ by about 15mm, coupled with the TT 4/0 ChinlockZ it's the perfect recipe. Your hook up rate will be dramatically increased and eventually, once your confidence grows in the technique and presentation, you will wonder how and why you didn't get the hook up initially.



Sue with a nice sooty.



Robbie with a solid bass on a cut-down ZMan 4" FrogZ.



When chasing barramundi, cod and saratoga I normally run the standard 6/0 ChinlockZ and the stock version ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ. As you can imagine the larger mouth size poses no problem when it comes to engulfing the larger size lure. Technique wise I have personally also been experiencing some Mary River Cod by-catch when using a short burn of 3-5 metres and longer pauses.

Once you have the fast burn down pat you don't even have to be looking at the lure. You can hear when you hit the sweet spot as the burbling and popping sounds are emitted from the crazy paddle legs. If you're stuck you can also use the ZMan Pop FrogZ for this technique but they just don't give out the same commotion or burble, so I prefer to keep those just for popping.



A toga cruises the smallwater in search of your FrogZ...

One of the other benefits with the ZMan FrogZ is that being 10X Tough, super-soft Elaztech, your target species will often come back for more strikes at your presentation. The plastic feels more lifelike and doesn't spook the fish. So when you're on your next native mission, be sure to pack that extra Frog Stomp rod and rattle a few from the surface, you'll be hooked!

How Goods Australia
[slogan copywrite Robbie 2009 ;)]

Cheers Robbie Wells



Robbie and Sue prospect the snags and shady pockets in search of the surface strike.

Rigging & Fishing the TT Lures ChinlockZ Hook & ZMan FrogZ

The TT Lures ChinlockZ has been designed for fishing plastics un-weighted on the surface or on a dead slow sink. It is a perfect hook option for fishing the ZMan Hard Leg FrogZ and Pop FrogZ when chasing bass, barramundi, cod, saratoga and a range of other species.

Built on a super-strong Mustad Ultrapoint, chemically sharpened black nickel hook, the ChinlockZ can handle Australia's hardest pulling sportfish. The moulded chin lock ensures that the plastic stays locked in place, even when casting hard and working the plastic aggressively. This chin lock design is especially effective when using the super-soft and flexible, 10X Tough ZMan ElaZtech soft plastics. The 6/0 ChinlockZ is ideal for fishing the 4" FrogZ, with 8/0 being the preferred size for 6" FrogZ.

An added benefit of the ElaZtech material is it's built in buoyancy. This allows you to rig the ZMan Hard Leg and Pop FrogZ on the minimally weighted ChinlockZ Hooks and they still float, allowing you to buzz them across the surface, twitch them or pause them without them sinking. Instead, they maintain a realistic horizontal position on the surface between movements driving fish crazy. Being 10X Tough ZMan FrogZ also withstand brutal surface strikes, while other brands tear around the head area, making re-rigging virtually impossible.

Technique

Target weed beds, snag piles and other structure that is difficult to target with other lures.

Hard Leg FrogZ

The HL FrogZ have a lively paddle footed action that when retrieved at a reasonable speed creates a bubbling on the surface attracting fish and triggering strikes. Buzzing the FrogZ in weed pockets, snag piles and around structure can result in heart stopping, surface busting strikes! The HL FrogZ can also be paused right in the strike zone due to their built in buoyancy.

Pop FrogZ

With their cup face the Pop FrogZ can be twitched or gurgled across the surface, or popped to attract additional attention and call fish to the lure. Their leg design creates a more exaggerated swimming action, even at slow retrieve speeds.

Pop FrogZ have a cup face, allowing them to be twitched, gurgled or popped to attract attention.



Step 1
Feed the ChinlockZ through the centre of the nose and out of the chin of the ZMan Hard Leg FrogZ.

Step 2
Slide the ChinlockZ through the FrogZ until you reach the moulded chin lock.



(The silver piece moulded near the locking bend and eye of the ChinlockZ)



Step 3
Slide the FrogZ over the moulded chin lock.

Step 4
Allow the ChinlockZ to pivot so that the chin of the FrogZ is locked securely into the rigging bend between the moulded chin lock and the eye of the hook.



The ChinlockZ hook point will swing around into the rigging channel on the underside of the FrogZ. Thread the point of the ChinlockZ hook through the rigging channel and out the top of the FrogZ so that it sits straight and looks natural.



Step 5
Pull the ChinlockZ down so that the point and barb of the hook are hidden in the top rigging slot to minimise snagging and fouling.



Step 6
Get out there and cast your ChinlockZ rigged ZMan FrogZ around weed, timber and other structure.

Penetrating the Weed Barrier

By Dave Brace



On a recent trip to a northern Queensland barramundi stocked impoundment, fishing from kayaks, we were met by some horrendous conditions, mostly due to the relentless heat that was near debilitating. Air temperatures reached in excess of 45 degrees in the shade of our camp from mid-morning to sunset. Consequently the water surface temperatures soared to a ridiculous 37 degrees on most days.

Now you may think this scenario would have been ideal conditions for targeting these barramundi, however it was these unforeseen conditions in the weeks leading up to our expedition that lead to massive environmental changes within this body of water. A game changer that saw us quite bewildered and in turn made us think outside the square in the hope of subduing a few of these large scaled silver fish.

Water levels of the lake dropped extensively, falling below 60% capacity and even visibly dropping while we were camping on the water's edge. These substantial water losses were not only from evaporation, but in fact predominantly due to farmers allocating water to maintain their crops that were just surviving through these dry times, along with nearby coal mining companies who were keeping their coal stock piles wet to avoid combustion.



What this meant for us as anglers was that submerged weed beds were very much being exposed, clearly reducing the areas that we were once able to target. Instead of this weed standing tall, it now began to lie down upon itself, creating a large mess of congested weed. Below the heated surface amongst this weed, water temperatures were much more stable and surprisingly a whole lot cooler. We knew barramundi were within these large weedy structures, after visually witnessing their tailing antics while feeding in the cool of the morning prior to sunrise.

A number of smaller barramundi were caught using ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ rigged on TT Lures 6/0 ChinlockZ hooks during these early morning periods. This was also a dead giveaway and an indication that these fish were within the vicinity of this aquatic weed. During the day these fish gained cover in the weed, where they lay in a sleep like slumber, digesting any morsels they had engulfed earlier. We were very confident though that there were many more fish deep within this intertwined green vegetation that had not fed and it was these elusive barramundi that we set out to conquer.



Nigel with a couple of barra that fell to surface fished FrogZ.

In past trips to this same location the ZMan 6" SwimmerZ in the colours of Pearl, Red Shad and Gizzard Shad have worked absolutely fantastically, so why invent the wheel and change what has previously been so successful. The problem was penetrating this extremely dense aquatic weed, without any of it fouling on any part of the lure presentation, also remembering that this once standing structure was now matted together and lying flat on the surface.

A nice barra on a ZMan 6" SwimmerZ in Pearl, rigged weedless on a TT Snake Head.



After hours of trial and error, it was the tag end of the loop knot that attached the jighead (TT Lures 1/4oz 8/0 Snake Head) that was the most problematic, causing this strand like weed to continually foul. Thoughts of binding this tag end to the leader soon proved to be very time consuming and after further reflection thoughts turned to encasing these extremely effective 6" SwimmerZ in a squid skirt. It may have been the heat... but this out of the box idea was sensationally fruitful, covering the knot in its entirety.

More importantly, amongst this weed the new lure presentation retained its paddle tail action, sending sonic vibrations through the sub-surface layers of the water within the small pockets of water that were free of weed. It was like switching a light on and instantaneously we were catching hungry fish that were taking this lure presentation without hesitation.

Dave slid a squid skirt over the 6" SwimmerZ in an attempt to beat the weed, without reducing the tail action.



Dave's 'SquimmerZ'



Dave is all smiles after extracting a barra from deep in the weed.

Dave's big sooty.



By utilising the 4" Hard Leg FrogZ and the 6" SwimmerZ, rigged weedless on ChinlockZ and Snake Head jigheads, continually applying a generous layer of either Pro-Cure Garlic Plus and/or Mullet Super Gel and fishing short sessions early within the day and during low light periods of the evenings, we were now able to extract quite a good number of these fish laying deeper below the surface and within this exceptional structure. Incredibly a 50cm sooty grunter also took a liking to the 6" SwimmerZ, aggressively striking the lure with a vengeance. We had persisted, changed tactics and overcome adversity, and the relief as a result was totally overwhelming.

The 4" Hard Leg FrogZ were cast and retrieved at varying speeds with high rod tips, leaving a bubble trail, with the trademark blooping sound that it creates as it somewhat sacrificially dances on the surface. It was when these FrogZ were swum in close proximity to these smaller pockets in between the weed that explosive eruptions of water were observed, leaving us in total awe upon hooking up to these majestic fish.



In contrast to the techniques used when fishing the FrogZ, the 6" SwimmerZ were commonly trolled closely behind our kayaks, allowing us to view the lure and meticulously monitor and ascertain its free swimming abilities. We were also targeting the edges of these weed beds, where they had almost formed a submerged hedge.

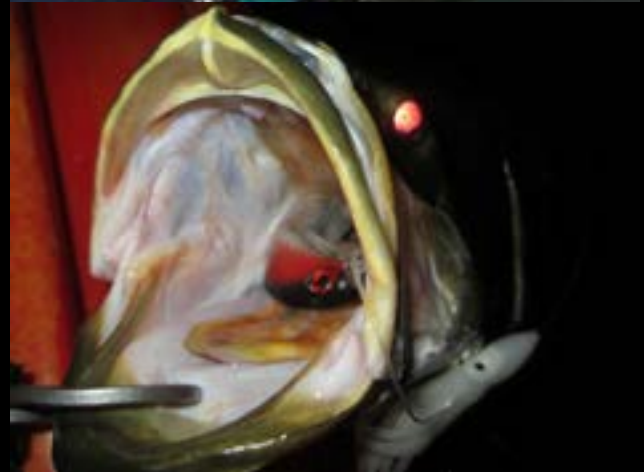
Barramundi were backed in and positioned in ambushing predatory mode just below the surface within these hedges and with most trolling passes we were being rewarded for our effort and persistence. On one occasion I managed to get a slight glimpse of a barramundi unmistakably engulfing my lure and launching itself entirely from the water, displaying the acrobatic skills of a Russian gymnast.

This trip north bound was one of those expeditions where a less than average number of fish were caught and the quality was down, however it was unquestionably one of the most rewarding. Without the use of our go-to TT Lures weedless jigheads, ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ, the ever faithful 6" SwimmerZ and Pro-Cure Super Gel, I strongly believe that our trip would not have been as successful. A battle hard fought and won, and a trip that will be talked about for some time and never forgotten.

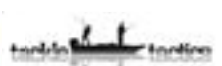
Dave Brace



Chris with a quality SwimmerZ barra.



SPECIES GUIDE



Flathead - Shallow Water Plastics



Flathead are one of our most popular estuary species. They are an ambush predator that fight hard, are well regarded as a table fish and best of all they love lures! They're also the perfect target species for those just getting into lure fishing and kids that want to give lures a go... and they can even be effectively targeted from the bank.

Where:

Flathead are an ambush predator that bury themselves in sand or mud on the bottom and wait for prawns, baitfish and other creatures to get close enough to eat. Remembering this makes flathead easier to target as they will be laying in areas where food will come to them, such as the edges of banks, sandbars, mangrove edges, channels and around weed patches. It is also worth targeting any sandy pockets on weed flats and the mouths of creeks and drains.

The second half of the run out tide and start of the run in is generally the most productive time as this is when bait is forced off the banks and into the flathead's strike zone. Most flathead will be targeted in only a couple of metres of water, with plenty of fish coming from less than a metre of water. Flathead can also be targeted in deep water, but we will focus on the shallows in this guide.

Soft Plastics

Soft plastics are arguably the most effective method of chasing flathead and a wide range of soft plastics will do the job. Softies with tail actions built into the plastic are extremely popular, easy to use and one of the deadliest options is paddle tail plastics, such as the **ZMan 3" MinnowZ** and **3" Scented PogyZ**.

The **ZMan 2.5" GrubZ** and **4" StreakZ Curly TailZ** are curl tail plastics with plenty of action, that are also deadly on flathead. Finally, some anglers prefer a jerkbait style of plastic that has very little action built into the lure, leaving the angler to flick and twitch action into the plastic. **ZMan 3.75" StreakZ**, **5" StreakZ** and **5" Scented Jerk ShadZ** are dynamite jerkbait options.

Jighead:

The key with flathead is ensuring that your lure spends a fair bit of time on the bottom, knocking on the flathead's door and stirring up the sand. For this reason it's a balance between a light enough head so that the plastics drifts down naturally and enough weight to ensure you're hitting the bottom.

For fishing a couple of feet of water you may wish to start with **1/8oz** or **1/6oz**, but a **1/4oz** allows longer casts, even in the wind and gets to the bottom quickly, making it one of the most popular weight heads for shallow water flathead fishing. As you move to a couple of metres or faster currents you can step up to **3/8oz** and then **1/2oz** for fishing deeper channel edges. A 3/0 hook size is a good starting point for 3 and 4" plastics.

Technique:

When chasing flathead you want the lure kicking up off the bottom and then swimming back down. This can be achieved with a lift of the rod tip, or several upward flicks or twitches of the rod tip, followed by a pause where you allow the lure to fall back to the bottom, ensuring you stay in touch with the lure in case a fish bites on the drop. Repeat this lift, lift, pause back to the boat, kayak or bank edge.

Pro Tips:

Keep your lures out of extreme heat for maximum life.

Adding Pro-Cure scent to your soft plastics and blades can attract fish and trigger strikes, while also encouraging fish to hang onto the lure longer, allowing you to gain a solid hook set.

Use HeadlockZ HD jigheads or add a tiny dab of super glue to the grub keeper of other jigheads to lock the ZMan in place. The ZMan is 10X TOUGH ElaZtech, so you can catch more fish per lure and even after getting a bite you can confidently keep fishing, knowing your plastic is locked in place. ElaZtech is also buoyant so the tail floats up in the fish's face rather than just laying lifeless on the bottom.

A person is standing on a rock in a stream, fishing. The stream has a waterfall in the foreground. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

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