

in this issue...

- Whitsunday Wanderings
- The Vibe
Tips for vibing threadfin salmon and flathead
- Jack Attack
Fishing Natural Structure
- Estuary Perch
- Just One of Those DayZ
- Finessing the Rocks
- Exploring Cod Country

Angler: Erinn Ball
Species: Murray Cod
Lure: ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ
Jighead: TT Lures ChinlockZ



Whitsunday Wanderings



By Dane Radošević

One boat, 600 litres of fuel and three good mates on a 900km adventure up the Australian eastern coastline.

Jamie, Garry and I set out on a seven day exploratory trip amongst the islands of the Whitsundays and with hundreds of kilometres of fish rich water to discover, the trouble was deciding where to start? We decided we would base ourselves on Hook Island as it allowed us to fish the other surrounding islands nearby, should the weather prevent us from heading wide. The goal of the trip was to make our way another 30 nautical miles off the island itself, with the intention of exploring some of the less pressured and more untouched reefs... as we all knew this is where memories would be made and trophy fish would be hooked and hopefully landed.

Unfortunately the weather had different plans for us. The first three days really tested our angling ability and willpower to keep fishing. From the onset of day one, we found ourselves idling over in rough seas, with torrential rain that drenched all our camping equipment... swags included. The bilge pump got more than its fair share of a workout! Our willpower outlasted that of the pump, which gave out, blowing two fuses and cutting all power to the electronics! Although all odds were against us, we should have paid more attention to the signs and headed back to shore... but we didn't and persisted on. Things began to look up, fuses were easily replaced and our gear began to dry. We were finally ready for our first day of fishing...



We awoke to the sound of bellowing gusts of wind, howling through the hills surrounding the campsite. We all knew that our options were going to be limited... travelling great distances was not an option. Our first priority was to re-energise ourselves with a much needed hot coffee and bacon and egg sandwich, while we began scoping out a few locations on the local map. The main areas we wanted to target were rocky points and headlands around the high tide period. The intention was to find nice pressure edges forming as these generally hold larger quantities of bait, in turn drawing in GT and Spanish mackerel that we could cast a few larger soft plastics and poppers at. Then, on the slack tide, we intended to move onto the shallow reef flats to cast a few ZMan soft plastics and stickbaits around targeting red throat, trevally and coral trout.

Our intentions were good, we had a solid game plan and we fished hard from dawn until dusk for three days straight, yet our efforts went unrewarded, with a lack of quality fish. We were kept busy with ridiculous quantities of undersized coral trout and small mixed reef species, only managing to raise two GT and one Spanish mackerel. Things were looking dismal, however there was one vital clue that explained our poor result... the bait... it was non-existent in the areas that we were fishing. No matter how far and wide we searched we couldn't find it.



With weather predicted to improve we decided to take a gamble. Really... what else could go wrong? We headed out wide on the fourth day and decided to play it by ear and see how the conditions would pan out. FINALLY, something went our way! It turned out to be a glassed out day, with minimal swell and we happily drifted over the tops of reef flats in 2 to 4 metres of water. Perfect for flicking the ZMan 5" StreakZ and ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ in the many brighter coloured variations. The proven performers were any plastics from the above mentioned range in chartreuse or red colours and a little added Pro-Cure Bloody Tuna Super Gel scent.

We had these rigged on 1/2oz 5/0 TT Lures HeadLockZ HD jigheads and were working them quickly and erratically over the flats. This caught the attention of both coral trout and red throat emperor that struck the presentations with no hesitation. As the tide slowed, so to did the fishing. We opted for a change of tact and began to flick some weighted strip baits around using the same TT jigheads. This is a very effective technique for fishing this country as it provides direct contact to the bait and allows the bait to be consistently on the bottom, in the strike zone. Although this made for a very enjoyable day and helped to fill the esky, we did not manage to land any trophy fish. The decent fish we did hook were just too powerful in the shallow country so close to cover. That night we sat down and reflected on our day. We made a few key changes to the game plan, changing location to a reef further south. We were anticipating this change would provide us with more current and bait as the water was much deeper close to the reef edge.



The ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ produced on the reefies.

Day five greeted us with conditions that were ideal for heading wide and we were confident that some intense fishing was imminent. As we approached the reef edge we were pleased to see showers of baitfish breaking the surface. Our hopes and dreams were finally becoming a reality. After a solid hour of prospecting around the reef I decided on our first location, a large elongated reef flat, sitting at 10 feet and covering approximately 80 metres, with a small channel separating it from the next patch of reef sitting at 30 feet.

The incoming tide created the ideal pressure edge, holding masses of bait. We popped for 3 hours, raising numerous GT ranging from 10kg to 30kg, landing seven and losing another five. This was finally the session that would create some lasting memories for all of us and won't be forgotten.

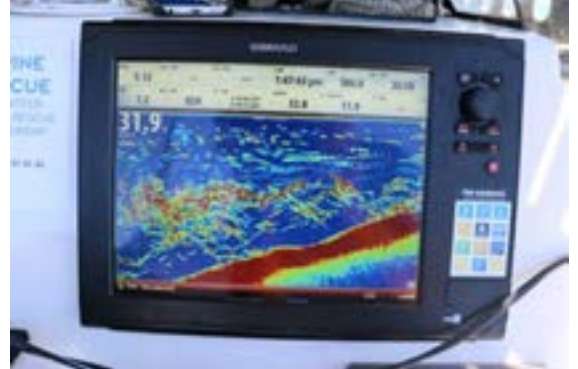
After the tide peaked and began to recede we opted to drop ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ plastics in Nuked Chicken Glow and Coconut Ice Glow colours, rigged on TT Lures 3/4oz 7/0 jigheads, resulting in three trout over 3kg in one drift. The added depth brought with it the better quality fish as we had anticipated. We continued to drift the edge of the reef flat, mixing it up between ZMan soft plastics and 1oz TT Switchblade HDs, picking up more trout, red throat emperor and Spanish flag, whilst donating many lures to larger unstoppable predators.



The boys got stuck into the reefies on plastics and Switchies.



Unfortunately all good things must come to an end and as the weather was due to change again for the worse this was to be our last day fishing. After all of our hard work and effort, to finally be rewarded with a day's fishing like that in new territory, it certainly made the whole experience worth while. We experienced a new adventure, explored some awesome waters, crossed off a few firsts for the boys and set a few PB's. This trip was definitely a very big learning curve and some important lessons were learnt by us all, which I for one can't wait to implement on the next trip. Until then tight lines and fish hard!



Dane with a quality trout on a HeadlockZ HD and ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ.





THE VIBE

By Nick Whyte

The first time I saw a flat metal vibe I thought 'how the hell is this thing going to catch a fish.' The first time I swam one and felt it through a rod I thought 'this thing is awesome and how many fish is this lure going to catch!'

I have been a long time vibration bait fan, since the first bream I caught many years ago. There aren't too many species that won't eat them. The TT Switchblade has become one of my "go-to" lures and these lures are such a versatile bait for so many species and situations. They come in an array of sizes to suit different target species, conditions, depths and tidal flow.

I love slow rolling and hopping them over the flats for bream and flathead, with the 1/12oz Ghostblade and 1/4oz being the best option for this situation. The 1/12, 1/8 and 1/4oz are great sizes for fishing deeper for bream or over shallow reefs for squire and the 3/8 and 1/2oz are probably two of the most versatile sizes in the range, catching everything from bass, cod and yellowbelly in the freshwater to flathead, snapper, jew, threadfin salmon and the list goes on in the salt. Switchblade HD 1, 1.5oz and 2oz are heavy duty models and these are great for deep, hard running water for large reef species, jew and large flathead in the estuaries.

A snapper in the net on a 1/2oz TT Switchblade.



The Whyte BoyZ with a double up on quality river threadfin.



The 1/2oz is my favourite size. I love this size for flathead, jew and one of my favourite estuarine species, the king threadfin salmon. Threadfin salmon can be found all around the top half of Australia and I like to target them in the Brisbane River as they can be found in big numbers, have great fighting capabilities and are also not too bad on the chew.

The Threadfin move throughout the system but seem to congregate in the lower reaches over the summer months. To catch double figure scores of metre plus fish is not uncommon during this time.

The threadys can move around a lot and be quite spread out at times. Having a quality sounder and being able to read it is a massive benefit. I like to sound around, using the structure scan side imaging on my Lowrance HDS 12 sounders to find the biggest congregation of fish and set myself some drift lines through the fish to vertically jig my 1/2oz Switchblades.

Quite a lot of people like to 'Spot lock' on top of fish in deep water and try to cast to them. I find this will pretty much cut down the time that your lure spends on the bottom to twenty five percent. From casting, to sinking your lure down and having to wind it back up to repeat again. Vertically jiggling or tea bagging with the tide will present the lure a lot more naturally and keeps your lure in the strike zone for 95% of the time.

While fishing Switchblades a lot of people really rip the lure hard and fast. Small movements with your hand are really exaggerated when you have it extended out to the end of a 7' rod. I have found when fishing Switchblades to really slow it down and lift the lure just fast enough to get the rod tip to start vibrating. Fishing slow is something I concentrate on with nearly every species, bar pelagics. There is always exceptions to the rule, things change from day to day and sometimes short sharp rips can switch the fish on when they seem shut down, however usually as a rule slow is the go.

Fishing deep for threadys can be quite tedious at times, with multiple fish marking up on the sonar but no fish biting. Sometimes I will sit on fish for two to three hours without a bite. Even feeling the blades rubbing over the fish's backs. They will switch on and when they do you can boat five fish in twenty minutes. So persistence is a must.

When you do finally get that bite it can be a very small pop, almost like a small bream peck, which is not what you would expect from a metre long speedster. When you feel these fish suck in your Switchy make sure you drive the hooks in. Set and forget. You're best off losing the fish at the bite rather than at the net because you didn't get a good hook up.



Brenden with a cracker
thready on a 1/2oz
Switchy in Gold Noggin
colour.

As far as colours go for my Switchblading it's the same rule I use for all of my fishing. Natural colours for clean water and brighter colours for dirty water. In clean water I like Silver Minnow, Green Slimy and Gold Noggin. While in dirty water I like Golden Boy, Brown Mongrel, HS Mango and Pink Bimbo.

I always make a habit of applying scents to my blades to get that second bite when they miss the first swipe. I like the Mullet Pro-Cure Super Gel Scent and also the Shrimp.

Here are my key points for chasing deep water threadfin salmon on Switchblades and all of these points are also relevant for chasing jewfish as well.

- Spend the time to locate fish with your sonar.
- Vertically jig on the drift.
- Slow is the go.
- Constantly apply Pro-Cure scents.
- Natural colours in clean water, bright in dirty water.
- Be persistent.

Another important thing to remember is that these fish don't like being out of the water for long and when pulled from deeper water fish can suffer from barotrauma. If you wish to catch and release you will need to carry a release weight or a venting tool. They are a great table fish and its worth taking one every now and then. Just try and look after the fish you want to release.

The vibe of the Switchblade is deadly on fish holding deep.



The boys having a threadfest!



Back to back Flathead Classic Champions, the White BoyZ include some Switchies in their kit.



Flathead are a great species to target on Switchblades. They are readily available around the country and are an aggressive fish that won't let much swim past them. There are many different places to target them, from a foot of water on the flats through to sixty foot at bar entrances. On the flats we are not going to throw a 2oz Switchblade HD in a foot of water and in sixty foot of water a 1/12oz Ghostblade is not going to be the ideal lure. Here's a little how I use the TT Lures stable of blades to put some flat fish in the boat.

On the flats I like to run a few different sizes. Ghostblades can be a great lure to hop nice and slow around the weed patches when concentrating on an area. The slow sink rate is what you really want in these ultra-shallow conditions.

The 1/4 and 3/8oz Switchblades I still like using in very shallow water and I work them quite fast. Even just a consistent slow roll is effective at times over the broken weed bottom, to stop fouling up and to cover a lot of ground really quickly to locate the congregations of the fish. They are both also a great size to fish that sharper edge, where it may drop from three to ten foot really fast. They are still smallish baits, however the vibe attracts all flathead not just the small ones.

The 1/2oz is a great size for a lot of different situations. You can cover a lot of ground on those deeper weed edges in four to eight foot of water really fast on the cast and it's perfect for casting those deeper edges and to submerged structure like trees and ledges. It's also a great lure to vertically jig in the slower parts of the run around bar entrances.

The big boys in the Switchblade HD range, 1oz, 1.5oz and 2oz, are designed for deep water, hard run and big fish. I use these Switchchys when targeting 60+cm fish around bar entrances, where there is strong tidal flow. Most of the time I will vertically jig with these big guys, however the fast sink rate and wide wobble action is also great to hop and walk down the deep ledges and bottom of rock walls where the big flathead lay and wait for an easy feed.

Here's my top tips for Switchblading flathead:

- Match the weight to the situation.
- Slow roll heavier weights over weed to cover a larger area faster.
- Match lure colour to water clarity. Natural colours for clear water, brighter for dirty.
- Fish slow when around structure.
- Use Pro-Cure Super Gel scents.
- Keep the lure close to the bottom where the flathead lay in ambush.

There is a TT's Switchblade to suit every condition and species. They have definitely earned their spot at the top of my tackle box. Get down to your local tackle shop to check out the colour and size range to find your favourite Switchy.



Switchblades appeal to a wide range of species.





SWITCHBLADE

METAL VIBRATION BLADE

TT Lures Switchblade has established itself as Australia's favourite vibration blade. This popularity is due to its quality construction, deadly vibration and comprehensive range of colours and sizes. Whether it's breamin' with the 1/8 and 1/6oz, getting stuck into the redfin or flathead on the 1/4oz, chasing schooled bass on the 3/8oz or dropping down the 1/2oz for some mulloway or shallow reefies, spinning up some tailor and salmon, or searching the murky depths for threadfin salmon... the Switchblade is a versatile lure that appeals to a myriad of species and can be jigged, cast or trolled.



Colour	1/8oz (36mm)	1/6oz(36mm)	1/4oz (43mm)	3/8oz (48mm)	1/2oz (57mm)
Golden Boy	2301	2381	2321	2341	2361
Sunset Gold	2302		2322	2342	2362
Silver Minnow	2303	2383	2323	2343	2363
Red Nightmare	2304	2384	2324	2344	2364
Purple Glimmer	2305		2325	2345	2365
Gold Noggin	2306	2386	2326	2346	2366
Green Back	2307	2387	2327	2347	2367
Copper Head	2308		2328	2348	2368
HS Mango	2309		2329	2349	2369
Chartreuse	2310		2330	2350	2370
Purple Minnow	2311	2391	2331	2351	2371
Orange Nightmare	2312		2332	2352	2372
Brown Mongrel	2313	2393	2333	2353	2373
Purple Bruiser	2314		2334	2354	2374
Aussie Green & Gold	2315	2395	2335	2355	2375
Peacock Blue	2316		2336	2356	2376
Pink Bimbo	2317	2397	2337	2357	2377
Orange O Ranga	2318	2398	2338	2358	2378
Pink Hussar	2319	2399	2339	2359	2379
Green Slimy	2320	2400	2340	2360	2380

Jack Attack!

Chasing mangrove jack in
natural structure



By Ryan Dixon

Shaking, lost for words and weak at the knees, but filled with determination. That was how I felt when I had my first encounter with a mangrove jack. I remember retrieving my bream lure on Queensland's Sunshine Coast as a teenager, learning the ins and outs of lure fishing, when a 50cm mangrove jack grabbed my lure as I was about to pull it out of the water. At that stage I'd never witnessed line screaming off a reel so quick, nor had I witnessed a fish so strong, only to have me busted off before I knew what was going on. From that day my fishing focus quickly turned to catching a mighty mangrove jack.

Since that day I've learnt different techniques, all mostly through trial and error, have spent plenty of time on the water searching for areas that are best to target jacks and also determining the best times to enhance my chances of catching one. The mangrove jack isn't the type of fish that you can go out and catch every time you go fishing. They are definitely a rewarding fish to target as many hours can be put in without yielding a fish, but when you do, all the hard work is forgotten.

Mangrove jack can be found in many different types of structure but the type of structure I've had most success fishing in is natural structure. Natural structure consists of mangroves, rock bars, undercut banks and fallen tree snags, all of which are ideal haunts for mangrove jack as they provide cover from where they can ambush prey. Additionally, more often than not they will hold bait which is very important when looking for jacks.



Houdini is a favourite colour for Ryan when chasing jacks.



Grayson Fong with a quality jack from natural structure.

Knowing what time of the tide to fish different types of structure is also very important. I find the outgoing tide the best time to target jacks, with the last hour of the run out tide being the time when they are most aggressive. Towards the top of the tide I find the best places to target jacks is under mangroves and undercut mangrove banks, where the tide has washed the sea bed away from the roots of mangrove trees. Ultimately these undercut banks should be as deep as possible and the further they go back the better. Undercut banks really are an underrated type of structure for holding jacks as they provide a perfect hunting ground for jacks to ambush prey as it comes past with the tide or when bait drains out of the mangroves as the tide drops.

Fallen tree snags are my favourite type of structure for chasing jacks and are the type of structure I've had most success on in my local waters of Brisbane. When looking for possible jack holding snags, I look for one that is in at least 1.5 metres of water at both high and low tide, and one that has a deep hole or drop off nearby.

I've found the best tree snags are ones I've found using my depth sounder, as most snags that are clearly visible get fished heavily by every Tom, Dick and Harry. When I find a likely looking snag I make sure that I position the boat so that it will firstly allow me to retrieve my lure in a way that will have the lure in the strike zone for as long as possible, while ultimately in a position that will give me the optimal chance of landing a jack once hooked. Once I've positioned the boat I make up to 20 casts at the one snag, trying different lures with different retrieves. I always retrieve my lures with the current when possible.

Lure selection is very important whilst fishing for mangrove jack. Attempting to match your lure selection to the bait in the area will definitely increase your chances of encountering a fish. It's no secret that the mangrove jacks' favourite foods consist of mullet, herring, whiting and prawns, and there are many different lures that imitate these morsels. My favourite lures consist of the ZMan 4" SwimmerZ, the ZMan 3" MinnowZ and the 3 and 4" Scented ShrimpZ.

I believe that colour choice is more of a personal preference, using what you are most confident with being the best option. My favourite colours are Houdini, Motor Oil, Pearl and Red Shad. The three lures mentioned above can be rigged in different ways to suit the structure, current and the situation that is before you. Choosing the appropriate size and weight jighead, whether it be a standard jighead or a weedless style hook like the TT Lures SnakelockZ to match your plastic, will also increase your chances of catching a jack. If you are having trouble matching a hook size to your plastic you can use the [Tackle Tactics Rigging Guide](#) to help you out with your selection.

When using a ZMan SwimmerZ for mangrove jack, I prefer to use a standard jighead and the retrieve that I find is most effective is a rather fast retrieve with no movement of the rod tip. The paddle tail on the ZMan SwimmerZ has plenty of action and with a fast retrieve I believe it is more of a reaction style bait that will perform best with a small loop knot between leader and jighead.



The release.



Alex Wodd with his first jack.



Even the little blokes go hard!



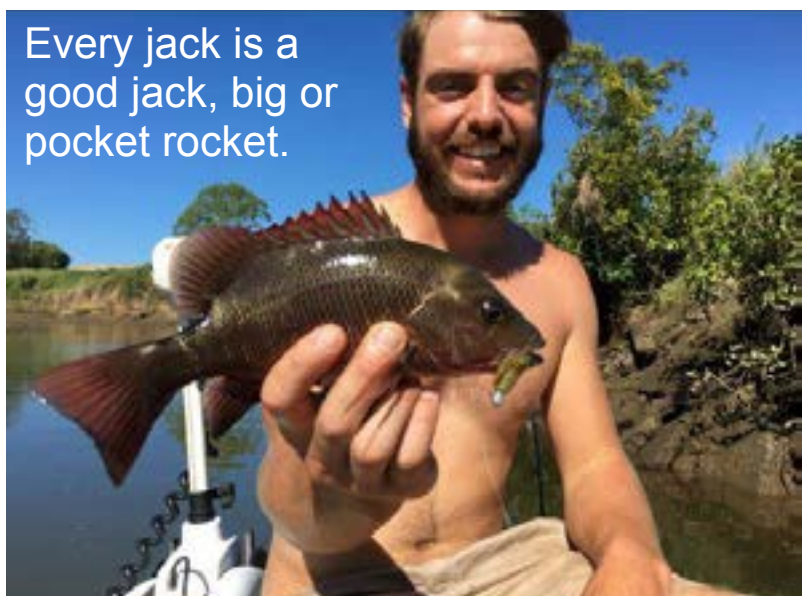
In the net.

A livewell of jacks
prior to release.
ZMan 4" SwimmerZ
the destroyer.



When using a 3" MinnowZ I use either a standard jighead or a TT SnakelockZ and I try and keep the weight as light as possible. I use this bait when I want to choose a slow retrieve and I want to keep it in the strike zone for as long as possible. The ZMan Scented ShrimpZ is a bait that I like to use from January through to March when the prawns are at their most prolific in the creek systems. It's a bait that can either be fished on a standard jighead or weedless on a TT SnakelockZ. Again, I like to fish this bait as light as possible with sharp flicks of the rod tip to imitate a prawn flicking up off the bottom. Adding a dab of Pro-Cure to your plastic will definitely increase your chances of encountering a jack, with Mullet, Shrimp and Inshore Saltwater flavours being the pick when it comes to jack fishing.

Every jack is a
good jack, big or
pocket rocket.



Mangrove jack are the ultimate fighters and more often than not require heavy gear to extract them. As a guide I use no lighter than 15 pound braid as a main line, with a minimum of 20 pound fluorocarbon leader. I will upgrade my line depending on the severity of the structure that I'm fishing and will increase my leader to 40 pound if need be. Bait casting tackle is best when fishing for mangrove jacks, but if a spin rod is being used a reel from a 2500 to 4000 size is most effective. A 4-6 or 5-8 kg rod is perfect for jack fishing and a tight drag is crucial.

I've had many a trip without catching a jack and it can sometimes be disheartening. The most important thing is to be confident in what you are using and treat every cast and retrieve like you are going to catch a fish. Being 100% ready for when that bite does come will turn your stories of the one that got away into stories of how you landed the elusive mangrove jack.

Cheers, Ryan

Ryan with a nice jack
from natural structure on
a Pearl 4" SwimmerZ.



Estuary Perch



By Tim Vincent

Tim talks us through some of the lures and techniques he uses for targeting estuary perch, offering tips on how, when and where you might get hooked up to your first or new PB EP.

After searching for the whole day, a large fallen tree comes into view just around the corner. Could it finally hold the elusive estuary perch you have been looking for? You motor your way up to the snag using the electric and take your 2.5" GrubZ off the rods hook keeper. The lure lands softly up against the bank and sinks deep into the snag. Twitch... Twitch... Pause. The line flicks and you faintly feel a strike. You lift the rod to set the hooks, but by the time you have the slack line back on the reel the fish is well into the snag. You can feel the line rubbing but it's no use... the line goes slack and the fish is gone, with your lure. Welcome to perch fishing!

EPs are one of the most underrated sportfish in southern Australia. Many bream or bass anglers get them occasionally as a by-catch, however few anglers seriously dedicate time to targeting these secretive and elusive predators. Perch populations once ranged from Northern NSW to South Australia's Coorong region, including Northern Tasmania. Estuary perch can now be found from Central NSW, to the border of South Australia and Victoria on the Glenelg River. Nearly all rivers and estuaries hold them, however some have better populations than others. Some of the better known waterways include the Hawkesbury and Clarence Rivers and the south coast estuaries of NSW, along with Victoria's Hopkins, Glenelg and Bemm Rivers, and the area of Gippsland Lakes.

Tim readies one
for release.



Fisheries Victoria started a trial run of stocking of perch in freshwater lakes, which is currently producing fish of up to 27cm in the stocked lakes. Hopefully this will create new opportunities in years to come.

The best spots to start looking for perch are around natural structure, including timber snags, rock bars, weed beds and reeds, however man-made structure also produces many fish around marinas, jetties and bridges. During winter and spring perch school up to spawn and using a sounder to find schooled fish can be a great way to find them at that time of year. Perch will live anywhere from the mouth of a river, right up into the freshwater as far up as possible, which can make them hard to find at times.

Perch are available any time of year, but certain techniques work better at different times. For example, fishing blades and soft plastics, such as the ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ and smaller GrubZ rigged on 1/8oz jigheads, will work best for schooled up perch in winter and spring. In summer and autumn, when the water is warmer, topwater lures and lighter rigged soft plastics are very effective. Perch are known as a low light species, so most of the best fishing is around sunrise, sunset and into the night. You can still get fish in full sunlight at midday, but you need to get right into the structure, which can be difficult. Using weedless rigged lures and skip casting into the thickest, darkest snags you can find can be fun... but also expensive!

Natural structure is a great starting point when chasing EPs.



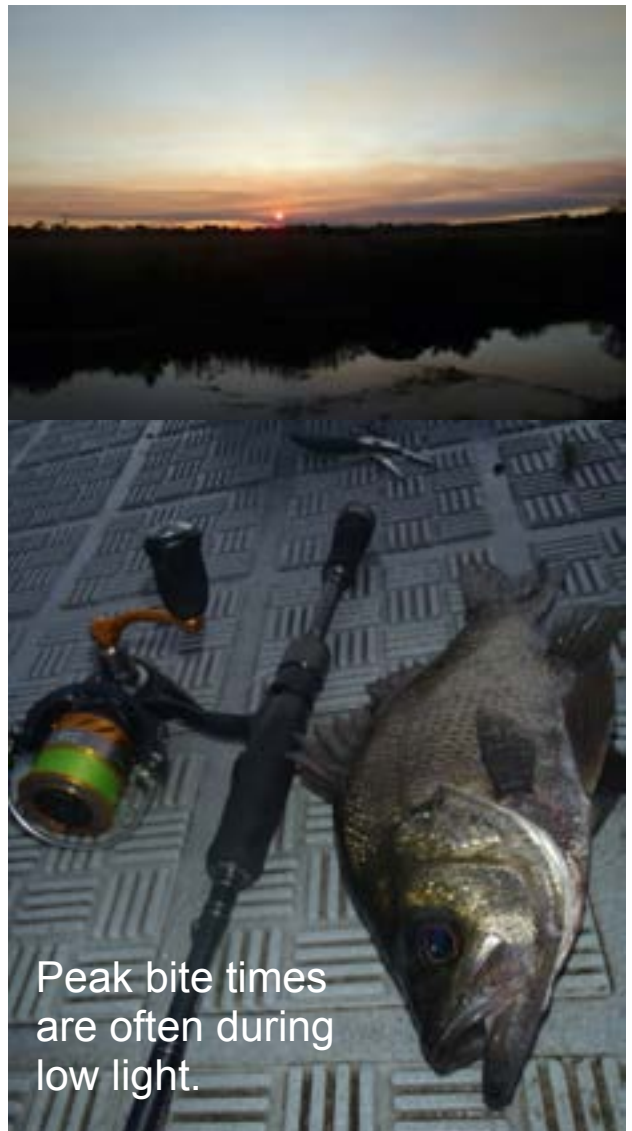


Estuary perch aren't a huge species, averaging from 25-50cm, so overly heavy tackle isn't needed. A good quality 1000 or 2000 size spin reel, with a 1-3kg rod of around 7 foot, is perfect for smaller fish or open water, but if you are targeting big perch or fishing heavy lures, a 2500 or even a 3000 with a 2-5kg rod will be required. Bream rods and reels are perfect for EP fishing. I use 4lb braid on my lighter rods, with a 3-6lb fluorocarbon leader, while a 6-10lb leader is best on heavier rods. Perch have very sharp gill covers, capable of cutting both leaders and hands if you aren't careful. As with all species, fish as light as possible to get the bites.

Just like the rest of the Maquaria family, EPs aren't fussy. You can't go past plastics in the 2-4" range though, imitating anything from mullet to shrimp. The 2", 2.5" and 3.5" ZMan GrubZ are probably the most versatile of perch plastics. The Motor Oil colour has quickly become the go-to lure to get fish in the net, but all colours and especially UV reactive colours will catch perch at some time. The ZMan 3" MinnowZ and 4" SwimmerZ are excellent if you want to avoid the smaller fish and go for quality. Don't be afraid to experiment too, as perch will feed on most food items.

If you are fishing a waterway with prawns a ZMan 3" ShrimpZ on a ChinlockZ hook will get eaten pretty quickly. Recently, I tried fishing a spinnerbait just for fun. I wasn't expecting any perch but first cast I hooked up on a night when other lures didn't work. Spinnerbaits and ChatterBaits in the smaller sizes will work too. An advantage of these is that they are relatively snagless, so can be fished where other lures might not be able to. As I mentioned earlier perch school up in winter and respond well to vibes fished slowly. If traditional blades like the TT Switchblade aren't working for you, try a Ghostblade. Sometimes that subtle action can get the bites. It's all about what works for you on the day.

Because there are so many lures to catch perch on, there are also many different tactics employed to get a bite. With most soft plastics a simple twitch and hop retrieve works best most of the time. Spinnerbaits are best fished slowly rolled, with a pause every now and then. Topwater lures can be fished fast or slow. On some days the fish won't touch a lure fished fast, while on other days they only want to eat a lure moving quickly. Try and mix up your retrieves to find what the perch will be hitting on any given day. Also try and find out how the local bait is behaving. For example, if there are large schools of small mullet splashing and jumping nervously, try using a small grey or silver lure and fish it reasonably fast and twitchy around the schools. ZMan 4" Pop ShadZ are perfect for this.



Peak bite times are often during low light.



Tim with a spinnerbait caught EP.



A solid handful of estuary perch.

Before you hopefully get out and hooked up to your first EP, there are a couple more tips to help find perch. If you have previously caught a perch off a snag or any kind of structure, don't give up on it. Perch live on the same snags for most of their lives, so can be caught and re-caught many times in the same spot. Just like their cousins, the Australian bass, perch will head up small creeks and drains, and into lakes that feed the main river. Launching a kayak in the main river and paddling up these feeder creeks can produce some great fishing at times as these spots might not have been touched by other anglers.

That large eye makes them efficient hunters.



So hopefully you know how, where and when to get yourself onto a perch. You might just land yourself one of the snag dwelling 50cm+ giants that elude many anglers. Be warned though... it can get extremely addictive!

Tim Vincent



The smile says it all.
Tim with a cracker EP.

**Just one of
Those dayz...**



By Andy Gunn

It was almost knock off time on a Sunday afternoon. A quick check of the weather forecast for the following morning, followed by a quick phone call to one of the mates and we had organised an offshore trip fishing the close in reefs for the next morning.

With the alarm going off at 3.00am the next morning the anticipation of the day ahead was growing. After packing a few drinks, a couple of rods and my ZMan plastics, I was ready for what lay ahead. Arriving at the boat ramp to find my mate waiting, with just a quick transfer of my gear to the boat we were on our way.

Arriving at our destination, we sounded up the bait and positioned the boat, using the bow mount to hold the boat in position, and we were ready to go. Firing out a long cast over the reefy bottom, I let the plastic sink down and started to hop the plastic up around one to two metres off the bottom, then let it sink back down again.

Repeating this process it wasn't long before I felt the bump of a fish and then the rod loaded and line started peeling off the reel. After a few good solid runs I had started to turn the fish and gain some line back. The biggest problem I had at that moment was that I had fired out a long cast but was only fishing in about ten metres of water. At any time if the fish got its head down and headed for the reef I would have a lot of trouble trying to stop it. Keeping the rod high and the fish's head up allowed me to avoid losing the fish and after a few more runs and anxious moments I had a nice snapper in the net. Over the next half an hour we managed to land another four nice snapper and drop a couple of fish.



Not a bad way to kick off the day.

The ZMan GrubZ doing the job on a mixed bag of species.



Once this spot had quietened down we decided to head up off to another area of similar depth that had produced for us on previous trips. It wasn't long again before line was peeling off my reel and the drag was screaming. A different fight this time, harder runs toward the bottom but not as long. I managed to get this fish under control fairly quickly and this time I had managed to land a nice grassy.

We managed to land another couple of fish from this area, until it also went quiet. This could have been due to the sun now getting up in the sky or just the commotion caused by the fish we had landed. This is one of the draw backs of shallow water plastics.

Be aware of the conditions.
Safety first.



Next we headed out to the slightly deeper water, holding some better structure. This time, rather than casting the plastics, we were just free spooling the plastics down when we located the fish on the sounder. Feathering the line down through our fingers gave us more control over the plastic and feel for when the fish were hitting the plastic. This worked well for a couple more fish before they went quiet as well.

On one of my retrieves I gave the plastic a sudden burst of speed to imitate a fleeing baitfish. Doing this, my lure reached about five metres off the bottom before the ZMan 3.75" StreakZ in Opening Night colour got smashed. With a brutal fight and hard runs trying to get straight back to the bottom, I was unsure what I had hooked or even if I would land this fish. Staying deep, with constant circular runs under the boat, I still had no idea what I had hooked. Before long my mate had tried the same retrieve and found himself hooked up to a similar species.

I just kept the fish's head coming up and to my surprise I had hooked a nice yellowtail kingfish. It had actually been a double hook up on these hard fighting fish and once landed it was time for a few quick photos and then they were returned to fight another day.

Andy with a fun-size kingie on the StreakZ.



Finessing the Rocks

A coastal scene featuring a rocky foreground with large, dark, moss-covered rocks. In the middle ground, a sandy beach meets the ocean, with two people standing near the water's edge. The background shows a forested hillside under a cloudy sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

By Angus Gorrie

Most of the time when we see anglers down on the rocks of SE QLD they consist, for the most part, of your typical 'old school' rock fishermen. Armed with 12+ foot surf rods, Alvey reels and the quintessential Alvey shoulder bag, these anglers are chasing bream and dart on pipis, or throwing large chrome or gang hooked pilchards for tailor. There is a reason this style of angling has endured the generations and that is quite simply... it works! However the rocks have so much more to offer the sports angler and many already have the arsenal but do not realize it. For the past 6 or 7 years finesse fishing on the rocks has become a passion for me and although my tactics and approach have evolved and been refined, one thing remains the same. This is the use of light gear that one would normally expect to see in an estuary or canal fishing application. Light gear opens up so many options and I will cover the key benefits in this article.



There is a wide variety of species available, including the humble bream.



Angus with a tailor on the StreakZ.

Soft Plastics: The first and foremost benefit of light gear off the rocks in the surf is the ability to use soft plastics. The question I hear raised time and time again on forums and social media is “do plastics work in the surf?” Of course soft plastics, being a lure designed to imitate various natural bait, work wherever predatory fish reside. The problem in the surf is working them effectively, something rendered almost impossible immediately with cumbersome set ups designed to throw heavily weighted bait rigs over great distances. In comparison, set ups such as 2000-2500 sized reels and 7’ to 7’3” rods can still flick a reasonably light jig head (something in the 1/6oz to 1/12oz range) a considerable distance. There are several successful ways to work a plastic through the surf and practice and experimentation is king as each day can vary significantly in regards to current, surge and tidal movement.

Using the surge: Learning to use the water’s own surge is crucial when first trying your hand at finesse gear on the rocks and different soft plastic choices can make all the difference. For example, when the surge is light and the conditions very calm I love using ZMan 3.75” StreakZ and between a 1/6oz and 1/12oz weighted jig head. Calmer conditions demand a little bit more action imparted by the angler and the StreakZ do this admirably with a variety of weight options. On that note, when fishing finesse, a 1/6oz jig head weight might seem extreme, however in the surf, even on a calm day, you have a lot more leeway with both jig head weight and leader class. It actually pays to up the ante for both as light lead can just get dominated by the conditions. As for leader, as well as being far less visible in white water conditions in comparison to estuary waters, you can just never tell when a larger surf bound predator will pounce.

On rough days I love a paddle tail. As clichéd as it sounds, I strongly recommend using the 'match the hatch' approach in this regard. Many maintain the mentality that big baits/lures equal big fish, however this is proved time and again to be false if the fish are feeding small. If the seas are up and the bait in the water is large pilchards, by all means larger plastic are the go and my preference is the ZMan 4" Diezel MinnowZ or ZMan 4" SwimmerZ. However, often when the surf is up, smaller bait hug eddies and the protected sides of rocky outcrops and headlands in an attempt to escape the larger water movement. It has taken me years to discover that the predators are well aware of this fact. In these conditions ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ are gold. As small as these might seem they perfectly represent the bait on offer and everything from bream and dart to tailor and kingies will happily smash them. Regardless of size, the advantage of the paddle tail is the ability to let it rest in the water, having to give the plastic little added action. The pulsing, surging movement of the ocean is more than enough to make the tail do exactly what it is meant to. As little retrieve is required, this also allows the angler the ability to cover a lot more ground and more time in the strike zone as the plastic actively wafts through the white water.

A finesse bream from the rocks on a ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ.



Connectivity: As opposed to a standard bait rig, when using a jig head and plastic, the angler remains more directly connected and can respond to a hit much faster. This connection can prove critical when chasing toothy fish such as tailor on light gear as the strike must be applied rapidly to set the hook in the lip, before the fish has a chance to swallow the whole offering and snip your leader clean through. On a recent foray to Stradbroke Island this theory was proven again and again as a fellow angler was constantly losing good fish on 20lb leader (bait rig), whereas using only 12lb myself and a friend were landing the vast majority. Braid to leader also helps here as the sensation of fish mouthing or fully engulfing the plastic is more rapidly detected.

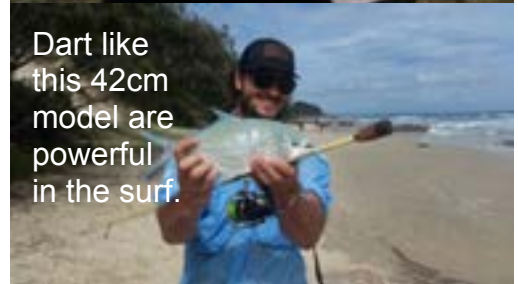
Versatility: I have mentioned a reasonable range a couple of times with regard to jig head weight and the decision is made on a day by day basis, depending on the conditions. Usually between 1/6oz and 1/12oz covers all bases. However, even with a 3.75" plastic, I have used up to 1/4oz and down to as light as 1/20oz in both extreme and calm weather respectively. Some anglers seem reluctant to change it up, but if you're not catching mix and match until you find something that works! While most jig heads suffice I prefer to use the HeadlockZ range. When fishing the white water off rocks the hits fish make are often clumsy and if they miss hit and the plastic becomes poorly presented or half pulled off as a result, they rarely hit again. The extra traction given by the HeadlockZ grub keeper usually ensures the plastics remains well presented and more than often the fish (or one of his buddies) comes back for a second go.



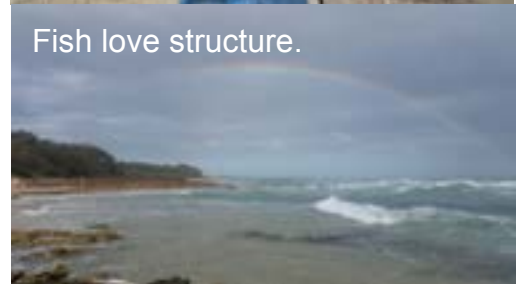
Trevally go hard on light gear.



Tanya with her first Slim SwimZ dart.



Dart like this 42cm model are powerful in the surf.



Fish love structure.



Tailor are awesome quarry on light gear.



Slim SwimZ in the surf are deadly on dart.

Distance doesn't matter: One of the key learning experiences I have had while experimenting with light gear on the rocks is knowing how far to cast. To a novice angler the desire to fling it out as far as possible is irresistible but not always ideal. When rock fishing, in many cases, the fish you want can be swimming quite literally right at your feet, under the ledge you are standing on. This is where a combination (and understanding) of our previous subheadings, 'Using the Surge', 'Connectivity' and 'Versatility' come into play. By refining your skills in all these areas you can work your plastics mere metres from the rocks to great benefit. Often large fish are either patrolling the ledge for scared bait schools or waiting for prey such as crabs or cunjevoi to come loose from the rocks. Either way the need to cast far is negated by the fact that the fish you want to catch are only a couple of metres in front of you.



Turbulent water behind the safety of the ledge.



You just never know what will come along.

Micro Jigs: Only recently I have also been dabbling in micro jigs on the rocks and in the surf. Micro jigs were once reserved in my mind for boat based fishing where the action and retrieve is vertical. However, after some experimenting (and inspiration by TT sponsored angler Bryce Francis) I decided to give the TT Vector micro jigs a go, with great success. Using light gear it is possible to flick even the smallest model Vectors great distances. The jigs can then be cranked like a chrome slug for dart, tailor and even kingies, or hopped like a plastic for bream and other fish sitting a bit deeper. The effect of the wash and surge on the jigs design ensures that you get heaps of action on the drop, which is irresistible to many fish. Micro jigs are ideal for those days when distance is required, but the conditions are making it tough to get a plastic out far.

Overall light tackle in the surf and off the rocks is not for everyone, but if you want a challenge, one that ensures each and every fish is sporting and fun, give it a crack!

Angus

The Vector micro jigs are ideal when the schools are further out.





ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ

The little ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ has proven deadly on a stack of different species, including everything from bream, flathead, trout and bass to tarpon, giant herring and trevally. The softness and flexibility of the 10X Tough ElaZtech material, combined with the under hooked paddle tail design, achieves a tail action that would be otherwise impossible to create, bringing the Slim SwimZ to life in the water.

As with any plastic that is producing for anglers it doesn't take long for the requests to flood in for more colours and the team at Tackle Tactics have taken these requests on board and added 6 new colours to the range. These 6 favourites are sure to grow the success of this perfect little baitfish imitation and see it firmly pinned in the mouths of even more species. Fish on!

GEAR



3174 - Pumpkin



3175 - Baby Bass



3176 - Electric Chicken



3177 - Bad Shad



3178 - Mood Ring



3179 - Calico Candy

NEW

ZMan 4.5" RaZor ShadZ

RaZor ShadZ feature a segmented, fish-shaped body and forked tail that creates an extremely lifelike baitfish profile in the water. Originally designed as a trailer for spinnerbaits and ZMan ChatterBaits, clued up anglers have been fishing the RaZor ShadZ in a variety of ways and catching fish.

Rigging options include HeadlockZ jighead rigged, weedless rigged on a TT ChinlockZ for a floating presentation that dives erratically when the rod tip is punched down and then slowly rises to the surface again on the pause, ChinlockZ SWS rigged for a dying flutter into structure and finally SnakelockZ rigged for deep snags. Whether rigged as a spinnerbait / ChatterBait trailer or on its own, the RaZor ShadZ has already proven its worth on a range of species.



3310 - Bad Shad



3311 - Redbone



3312 - Houdini



3313 - AYU

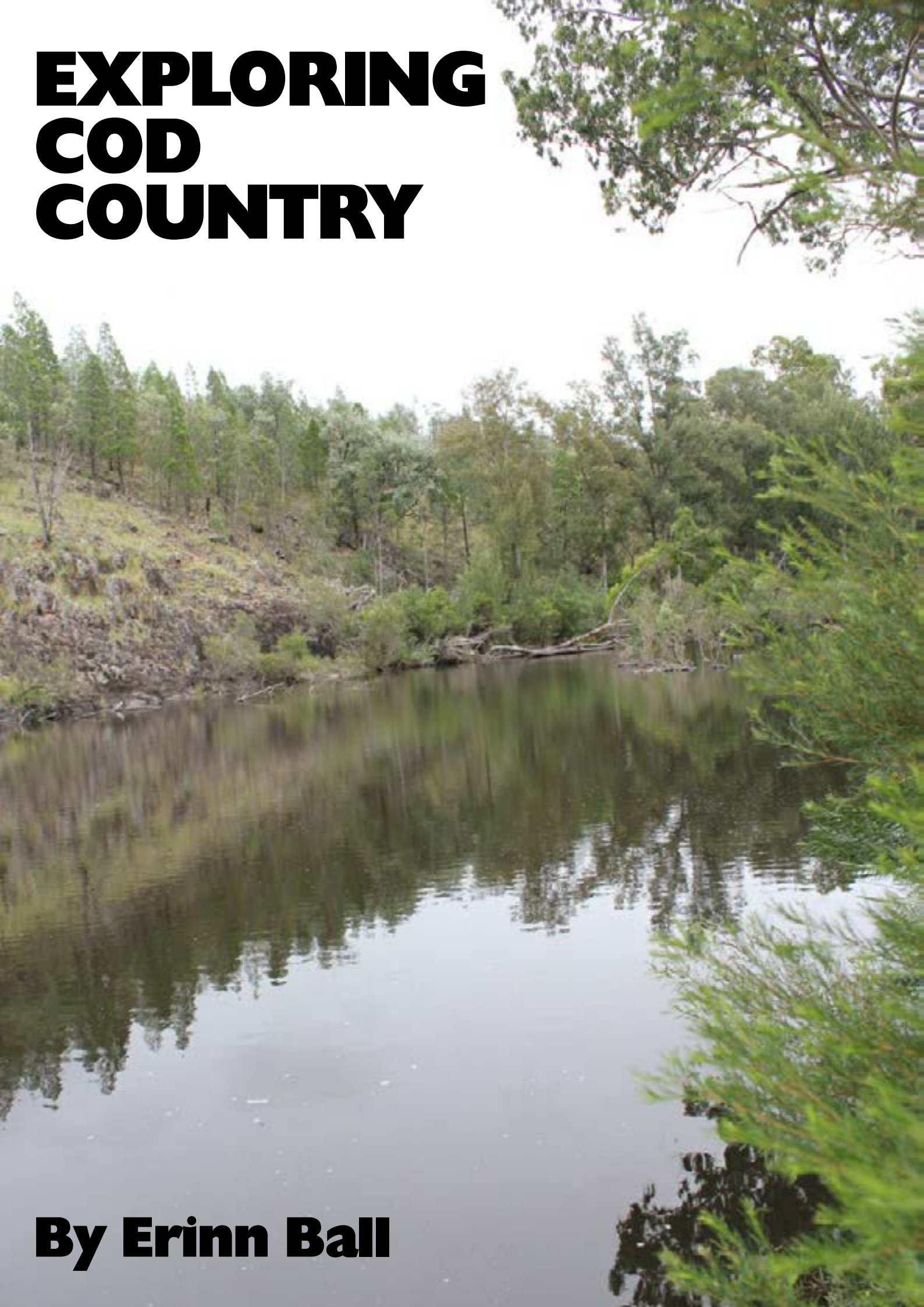


3314 - Smoky Shad



3315 - Pearl

EXPLORING COD COUNTRY



By Erinn Ball

For the past couple of years, I have been dreaming of chasing the all mighty Murray cod in the gorges of the New England Region and recently I had the opportunity to fulfil my dream. For weeks leading up to the trip I had been busy talking with a property owner in the region regarding access to his property, to fish some incredible looking water holes I found via searching Google Maps and NearMap.

Property owner Ben was more than happy to allow Guy Struthers and myself access to the property, which meant we had a 3.5 hour trip each way ahead of us, and oh yes... this was just going to be a day trip. To say that this trip was awesome is an understatement. We had rain, pig hunting dogs, 4WDing, surface cod action and incredible scenery.

Arriving at the property mid-morning, we wasted no time and began walking the banks casting lures into any structure that we could find... and WOW was there a lot of it! This was the kind of structure that loves to steal your lures and not give them back. As we had to walk quite a distance in difficult terrain I packed quite lightly. I took a selection of ZMan soft plastics, including 6" Pop FrogZ, 4" Hard Leg FrogZ, TT Lures ChinlockZ jigheads in 4/0 and 6/0 size and Striker Spinnerbaits in various weights and colours, with 1oz being the heaviest.



After an hour of fishing and hiking through the thickest scrub imaginable, we came up empty handed and so we returned to the car where Ben had left us a two-person canoe to borrow. Heading upstream in the canoe, I fished a 1oz Striker spinnerbait in Purple Blue Scale colour and immediately received two thumping cod hits that came as I ran the lure past a fallen tree, in the middle of the small rocky gorge. Unfortunately I missed both of the hits due to my lack of attention.

With the storm clouds rolling in over the mountain range, we had to start heading back downstream towards the car, but not before we threw a few casts at some impressive overhanging trees. Guy slowed the canoe down so that I could get a skip cast in under a tree. With a slight pause of the lure I happened to yell "THIS SNAG HAS TO HOLD A COD!" and then with an almighty BOOF I was hooked up to my first cod, which also happened to be off the surface. After a short tussle the cod was in my grasp and ripping the buggery out of my thumb. After a couple of quick happy snaps the cod was back in the water and ready to fight another day.



Erinn admires her first cod, a beautifully marked fish.



Within casting distance of the car it was Guy's turn. He opted to fish a 3/8oz Striker spinnerbait in Chartreuse / Blue / Green Scale colour. Guy also had never caught a Murray cod. He threw the perfect cast into a back eddy in the creek and was monstered not once or twice, but four times in the one retrieve, unfortunately missing all of the hits...

We continued downstream, through some impressive country, where Guy stepped up and hooked up to his first cod, which also fell victim to fast retrieved surface lure. The fish came in at 60cm and Guy couldn't wipe the grin off his face. Throughout the afternoon he managed to land another two impressive surface cod.

Tackle

When fishing remote areas I like to take two combos with me, just in case I have a failure with one of them. As I was going to be predominately fishing surface lures, I chose to take rods that were in the 6'8" range. When surface fishing I like to use a rod that is quite long as I find that I can implement action into the lure easier. I also like to use a longer rod as I am able to cast further, which is great when I am trying to cast to the other side of large pools. As I had never fished for cod before I was a little unsure of what weight combos I should take, deciding on a medium weight combo that was an 8-14lb fast action 6'8" casting rod and a 10-20lb fast action 6'8" casting rod. One rod was loaded with 18lb braid and the other was loaded with 30lb braid. I also ran a rod length of 30lb leader to each set up, connected via an FG Knot with a Rizutto finish.



For me the trip wasn't only about the fishing, but more so about the adventure. I went into this trip with very little knowledge regarding the location and terrain that we would be walking/canoeing through, which made it more exciting. We both set ourselves an achievable goal of at least landing just ONE, 'first' cod, so when we ended the day with a combined total of 4 fish, it made the long drive completely worth it. I would like to say a special thankyou to Ben for being so kind and allowing two total strangers full access to his property.

If you are wanting to follow my adventures, fishing for species such as bass, bream, barramundi, marlin and dolphinfish, to name a few, be sure to like my Facebook page

Erinn Ball – Girls Fish Too.

www.facebook.com/Erinn-Ball-Girls-Fish-Too-1402456606749390/



Erinn was absolutely stoked with her first cod!

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.



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- **Heavy duty Kevlar cords**
- **Carabiner for simple and secure attachment**
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