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Angler: Vinnie Versfeld
Species: Sooty Grunter
Lure: ZMan 3" MinnowZ (Pinfish)
Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD



UNBLOCKING DRAINS



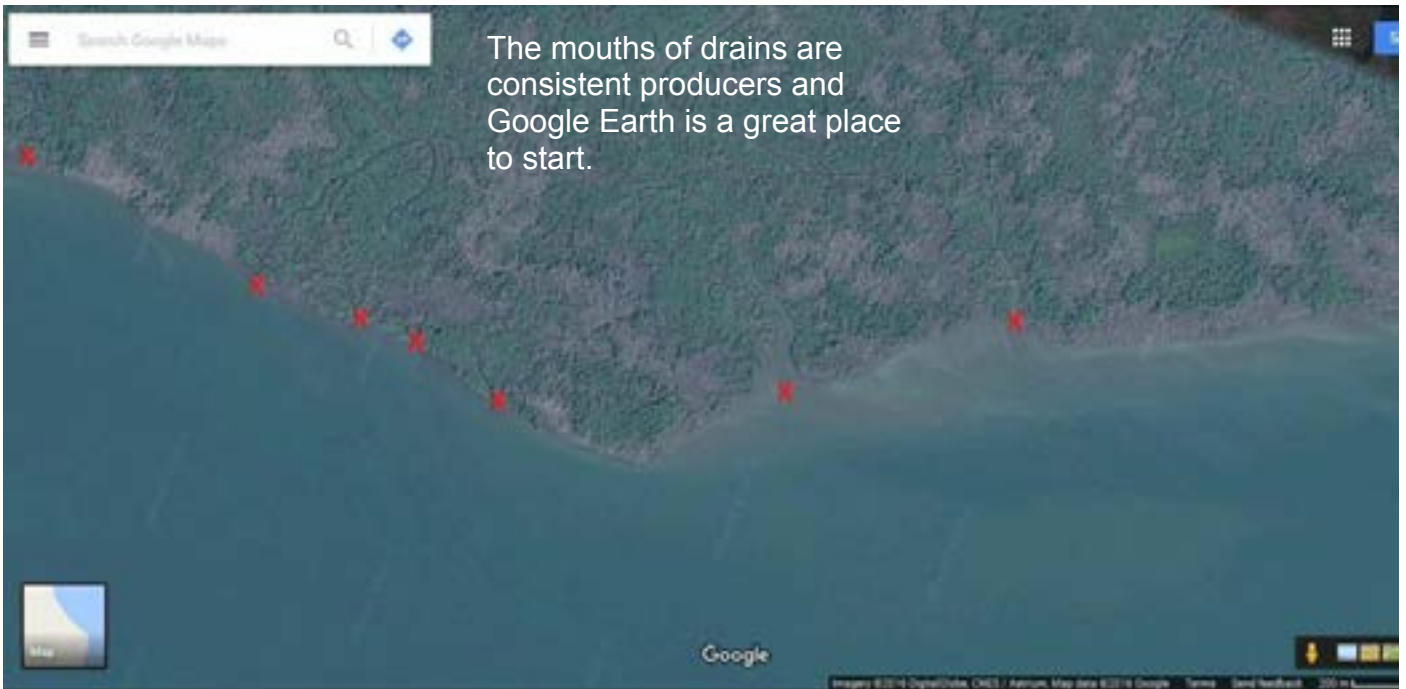
By Vinnie Versfeld

Drains on the right time and tide are super fun structure to fish. They are quite often overlooked as just cast netting spots for bait collectors, but there is no doubt that drains are bait funnels... and where there is bait, the predators won't be far away. Drains act as highways for both predatory fish and bait, allowing them to get to and from the substrate the tide floods, such as mangrove roots, as the tide moves over the flats. They are surprisingly easy spots to target. Drains can comprise of nothing much more than a little furrow on a mud flat to something resembling a small creek and I concentrate on the ones on mud and sand flats that drain into relatively shallow water. I will share some tips and techniques that I have learnt over the last few years of actively targeting them. Go out and give them a go and I'm sure you will be hooked too!

Finding drains is relatively easy as they are clearly noticeable on low tide. If you are fishing new water and arrive on the top of the high tide side imaging sonar can be used to locate them by driving your vessel over likely areas. Google Earth and the Navionics web app are great internet based tools for locating drains before you even hit the water. Finding good drains is a matter of trial and error, spending time fishing them. In one particular area that I fish there are three drains within 100m of each other of which I've only consistently caught fish from one. Why? I'm not sure as they all look the same and drain off the same flat...

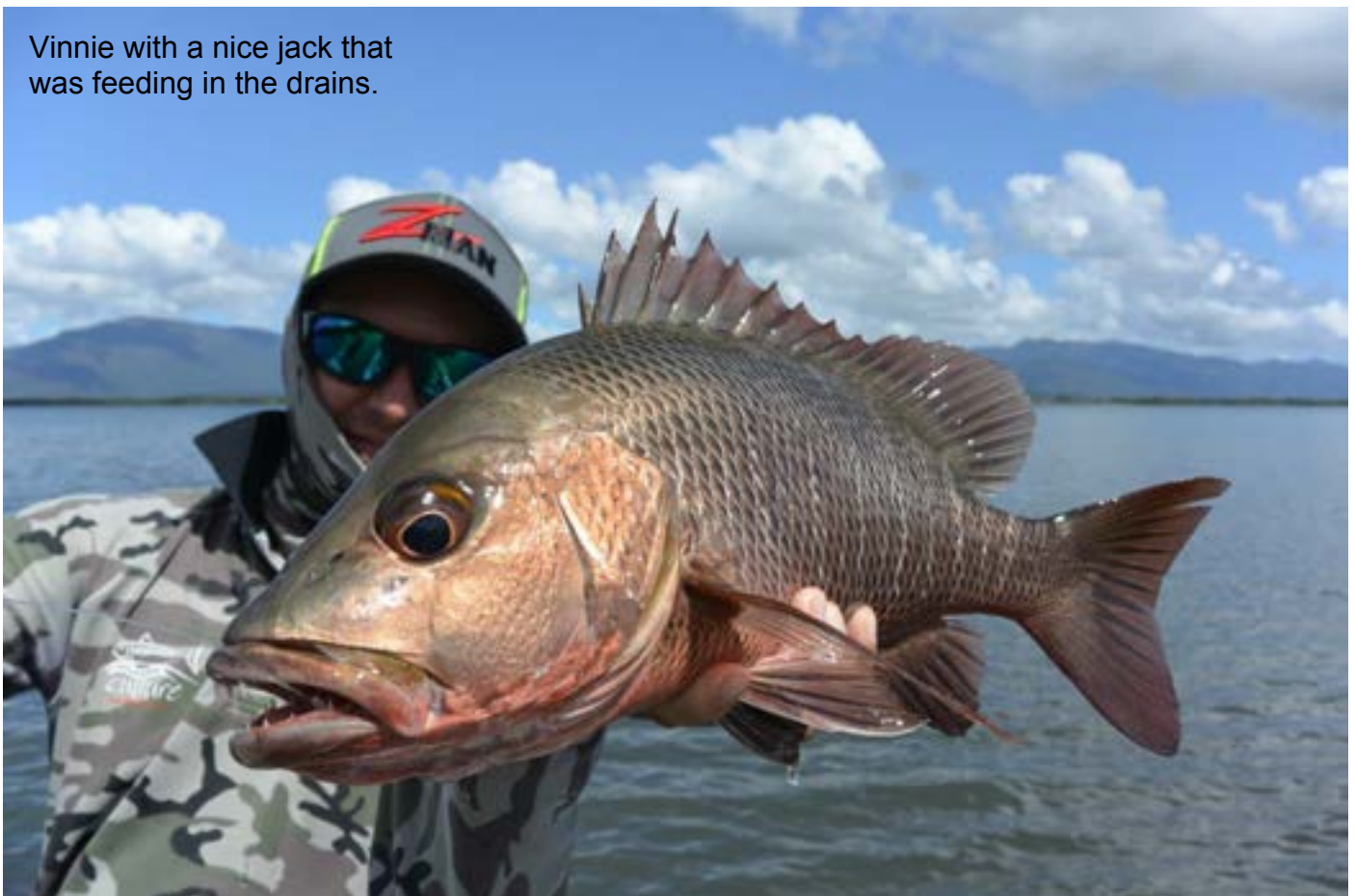
Drains funnel bait from the flats and act as travel routes for bait and predators as the tide rises and falls.






I concentrate on drains mainly two hours either side of low tide and the lower the better. As the saying goes, 'more run, more fun' and I've found this particularly true when fishing drains. Consider giving them a crack on the bigger tides, especially on the outgoing and just before the bottom of the tide as that's when the last bit of water is funnelling out and the bait running out of water has no option but to leave the security of the drain and spill out on the flat. Bad thing for them, great thing for us!

Vinnie with a nice jack that was feeding in the drains.



A fisherman wearing a grey wetsuit, a black cap with a red stripe, and blue mirrored sunglasses is holding a large, silver and yellow barra fish. The fisherman is looking at the camera. The background shows a body of water and a blue sky with white clouds.

Barra can be found in the drains in surprisingly little water.

On the other end of the scale, in the colder months as the midday tide starts pushing over the shallow flats and into the drain, the water temperature could rise up another 5-8 degrees in no time as the shallows have had time to warm up, baking in the sun. This, in the winter, is often all that's needed to get the fish out of their sleepy winter slumber, get their metabolism pumping and make them hungry.

When fishing drains most fishing will take place in less than half a metre of water, the shallower the better. I have, on many occasions, watched barra and jacks swimming on their sides chasing down poddy mullet and prawns.

Because the water is so shallow and is experiencing a fair bit of tidal movement the water that you will be fishing in will mostly be quite dirty. Do not be put off by this as stained, dirty water is your friend and often the dirtier the better. Dirty water disorients bait and is a great environment for predators to ambush their prey. I have caught jacks, which I have mostly regarded as a visual predator, in water resembling an out of date Ice Break that's been rolling around the car for a few weeks. Colour lines and mud lines offer a good visual target to cast at and will often be in close proximity to the actual drain.



Drains can be located on the sounder.



Another thing to keep in mind while fishing drains and taking the shallow water into account, is that boat noise is probably your worst enemy. I can't stress enough to try and keep boat noise to an absolute minimum and I even go as far as to turn my sounders off. I always approach the fishing area upwind of the drain so that I can use the wind to drift me past the area, rarely needing to use the electric motor for positioning.

Gear:

Long casts are key. Due to the shallow water and the lack of structure that the fish have to hide in, they are effectively out of the comfort zone and super flighty. I run 7-8ft rods and 2500 – 4000 sized reels spooled with 10 and 15lb braid. The reasons for the lighter gear are the longer casts that I can achieve and also because there is little to no structure to be towelled up in. For a leader I run 45lb fluoro for targeting jacks and if the barra are around I will tie a short (8-12") 60lb bite trace onto the 45lb with a double uni knot for abrasion resistance to the barra's sandpaper mouths.

Lure wise I try and match the hatch, keeping my offerings on the smaller side. Lightly weighted ZMan 4" Pearl SwimmerZ, 3" MinnowZ and the more recently released 3.5" Trick SwimZ and 3.5" EZ ShrimpZ are all favourites. On occasion, during the summer months, I will even throw 4" Hard Leg FrogZ or Pop ShadZ for some surface action.

The swimming baits (paddle tails) I run rigged on a 1/8oz HeadlockZ HD jighead and the FrogZ and Pop ShadZ on 4/0 ChinlockZ SWS. The EZ ShrimpZ get rigged on either HWS (Hidden Weight System) jigheads or 4/0 ChinlockZ. I also tie with loop knots. Personal preference I guess but I feel a loop knot gives the smaller plastics just that extra bit of body roll.



Mangrove jack love busting up bait in the drains. Jeff with a nice one.

Colour wise I like keeping it natural, with Pearl a stand out, along with Bad Shad, Pinfish, Mud Minnow and then latter releases Chartreuse Silver and Golden Boy at the other end of the scale. Golden boy works really well in dirty water with high sun as it gives off a lot of flash and makes it easy for the fish to notice.

Technique:

Once you have located your drain and selected your lure of choice, try to position the boat about a cast length (or as close as you can get in your boat). Cast as far as you possibly can, right up the drain and slow roll the plastic out with a high rod tip. The predatory fish will be in the drain facing the direction the water and bait is coming from, so always try to work the lure with the direction of the tide.

More often than not the first cast counts. After this I will start fan casting around the mouth of the drain. Just like everywhere else there will be definite bite times and dull times. Watch the bait. The fish smacking bait will give it away when it's go time. If you see fish smashing bait within reach of a cast, try and land a lure a



A wide range of species will feed in the mouths of drains on lower tides and in the drain when the flats are flooded.



The ZMan 3,5" Trick SwimZ is a dynamite baitfish imitation for working the drains.

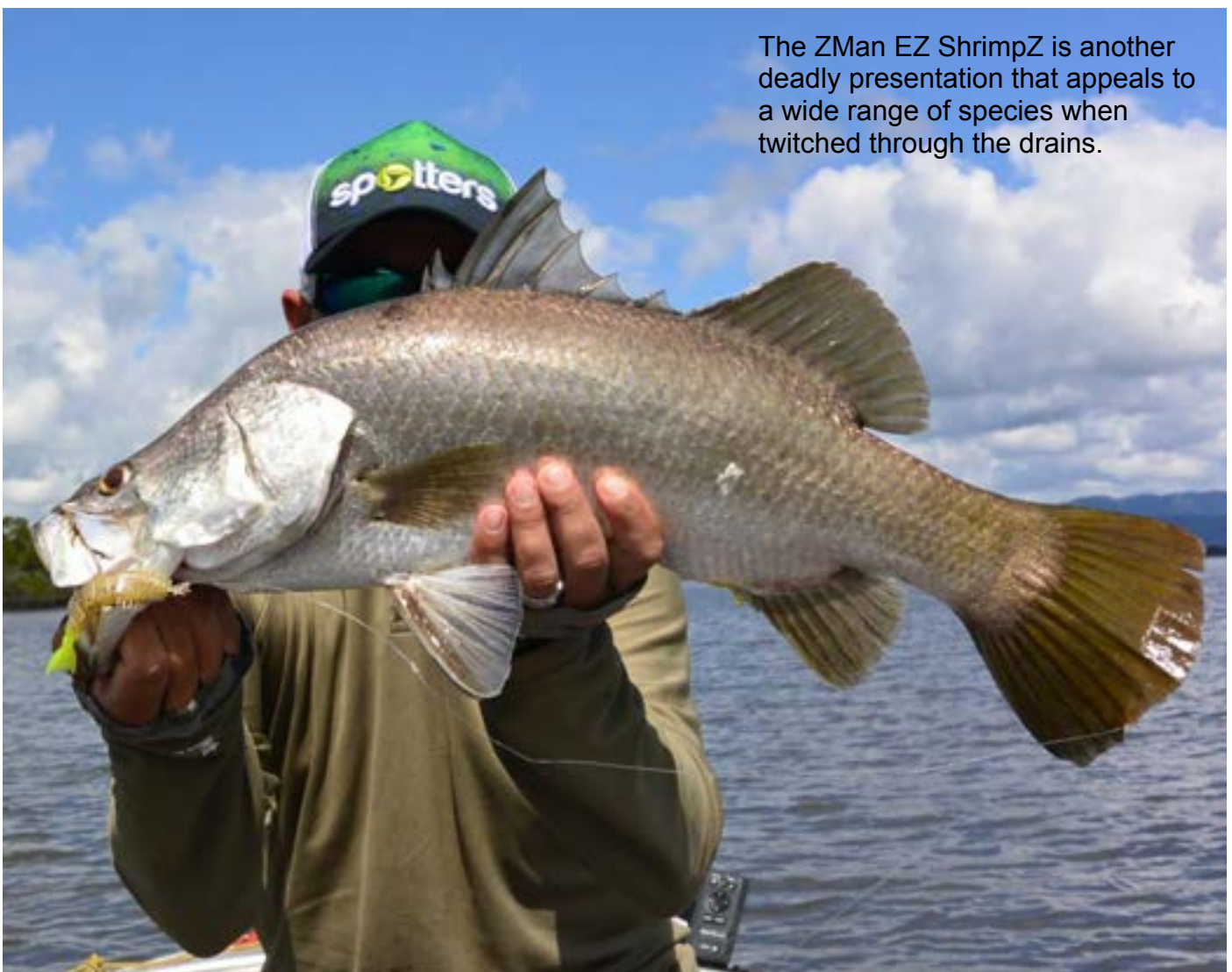


foot or so past the action and then work it right through the ruckus. The reason for casting past the action is that often landing a lure right in the thick of things is enough to shut down a chase.

Once the tide has stopped running there is normally a lag of no movement for about 20-30 mins and this is a good time to have a break and check knots etc. because as soon as the tide starts moving things should heat up pretty quickly as the bait starts gearing up to get on the move again.

It pays to have a few drains up your sleeve as they often only hold a certain number of fish. I try and pick four or five for a day, close to each other, that I can rotate through the low tide. This gives them a rest after banging a few fish off one and then often coming back to it after thirty minutes or so you can almost always crack a few more.

So next time you're on the water and cruising past some drains, pull up and have a go. They are super effective and relatively easy to fish. The lack of snags and no massive need for accuracy makes them a great training ground for taking the kids to throw some plastic around and the myriad of species that feed in the drains make it fun, as you never know what you're going to catch from one cast to the next!



The ZMan EZ ShrimpZ is another deadly presentation that appeals to a wide range of species when twitched through the drains.



Coming... Septmeber 2016...

EZ SHRIMPZ 3.5"

The ultimate 10X Tough ElaZtech prawn / shrimp imitation, designed with a segmented body for a realistic action and glide. This super-realistic profile also features 3D eyes, along with thin legs and antennae for added realism and lifelike movement. Everything eats a prawn!

EZ SHRIMPZ 3.5" - RIGGED (2pk)

Ready to fish straight out of the packet, the rigged EZ ShrimpZ comes in a pack of two, rigged on weighted Mustad, chemically sharpened, black nickel, UltraPoint hooks.

The weight design locks into the EZ ShrimpZ to secure it in place on the jighead and ensure a balanced, realistic glide on the sink. Out of the packet the EZ ShrimpZ weighs in at about 1/4oz, with the unique segmented weight system allowing you to clip off sections of the weight with a pair of cutters should a lighter presentation be required.

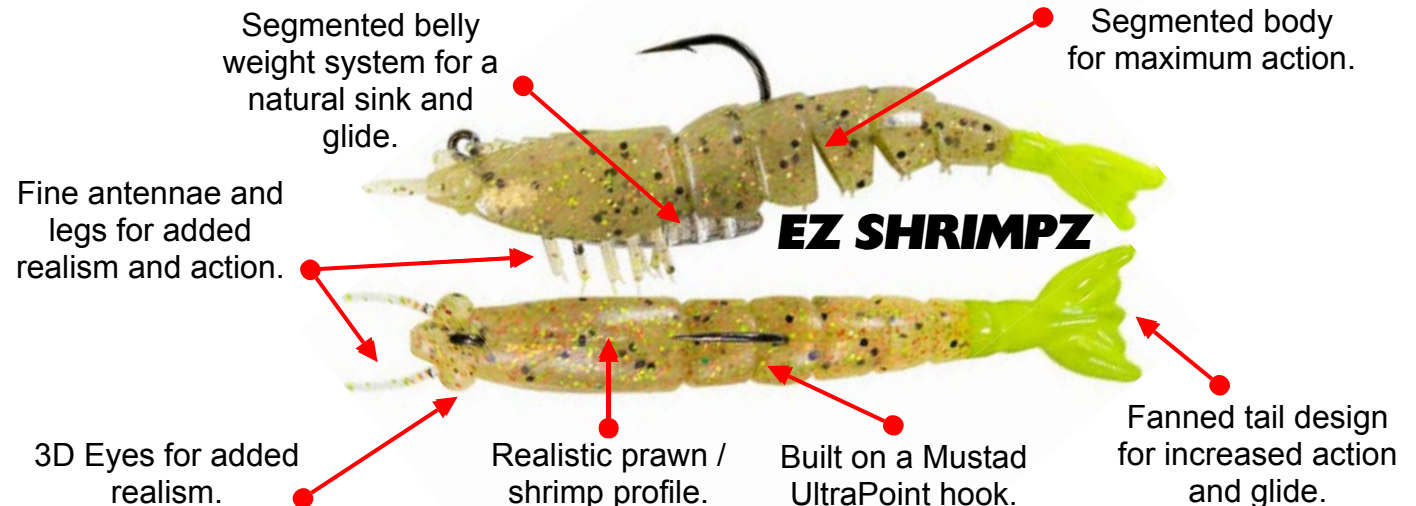
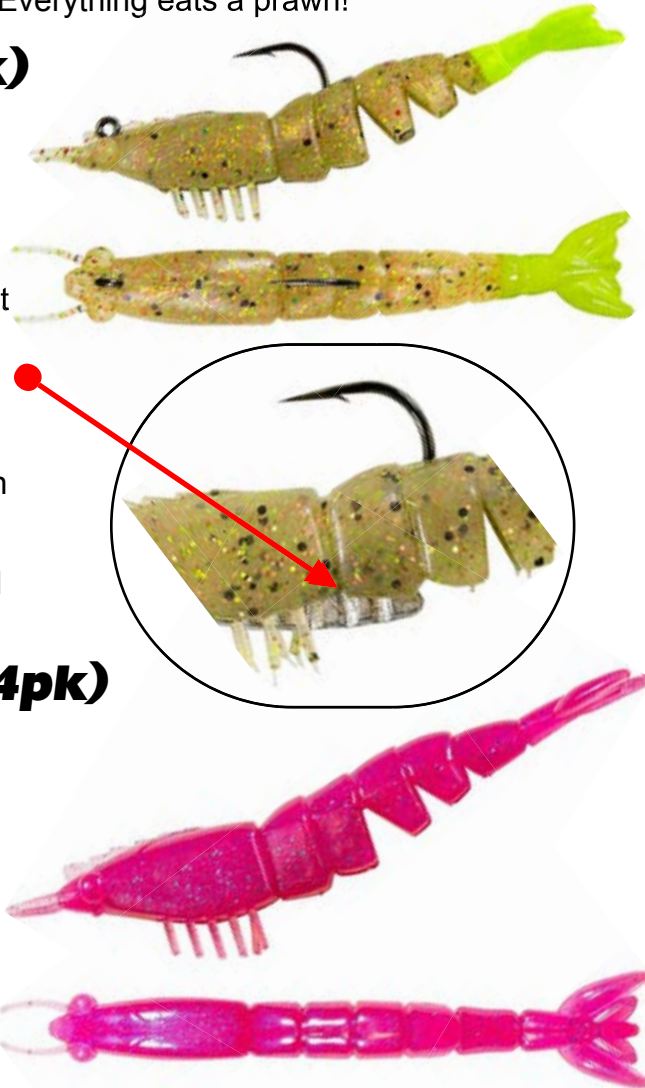
Everything eats a prawn and it's hard to beat the natural fall, realism, durability and action of this artificial.

EZ SHRIMPZ 3.5" - UNRIGGED (4pk)

Unrigged EZ ShrimpZ bodies come in a pack of 4 and act as replacement bodies for the rigged version, while also being dynamite as a stand alone soft plastic presentation rigged on your favourite jighead.

The TT Lures 'head lock' grub keeper found on the HeadlockZ and DemonZ jigheads is ideal for locking on the super-soft and flexible 10X Tough ElaZtech EZ ShrimpZ when fishing in open water, with a 3/0 hook size a good starting point.

When it comes to fishing snaggy areas a weedless jighead is an option, with the TT Lures ChinlockZ, ChinlockZ SWS and SnakelockZ all designed with a 'chin lock' to secure the ElaZtech plastic in place. Again a 3/0 hook size is a good starting point.



MELBOURNE PINKIES



By James Papas

Soft plastics are a great way to fish and are a fantastic alternative to using bait. Pinkies (a local reference for juvenile snapper) are a great species to catch on soft plastics and they will eat just about anything, but it still needs to be presented well. The difficulty often lies in actually finding them. I will explain the gear I use, the best location options and how I catch them in Melbourne, although there is no reason why you can't use these techniques universally in different parts of Australia.

Location:

How do I know if I'm fishing in the right place? I like to walk a lot of beaches in Melbourne and flick around soft plastics for pinkies... but I don't just cast in any random spots. You need to try and think like a fish... what type of ground would you be living on? I like to look for drop offs when I am fishing off the beach. Anywhere that has a sand flat that drops off to a depth of two metres or more will usually prove to be a good spot. It's also a good idea to look for weed beds and reef using polarised sunglasses. I use a pair from Spotters, the model is the Coyote with ice blue glass lenses, which cut the glare out and allow me to spot those darker patches.

Polarised sunglasses cut the glare off the water making it easier to locate drop offs and structure.



The sand will be exposed in this area at low tide allowing anglers to walk out and fish the drop off.



Pinkies tend to sit on the edge of these drop offs as the tide is going out, waiting for little fish like mullet to get sucked off the sand flats and over the edge where they lay in wait. The photo hereabouts is an example of a good location: on low tide the sand will be exposed and you could walk to the drop off and cast towards the boat moorings.

It can be just as effective to stick to piers. Melbourne piers are surrounded by good bottom, along with manmade structure such as the pylons of the pier that provide food for the predatory species. Some of Melbourne's best piers for Pinkies include Brighton Pier, Mordialloc and Mornington. These techniques can also be applied in a boat and kayak, using your depth sounder to sound up deep holes, reefs or drop offs that you can sit on the back of and cast at them.



Lure Selection

My lure preference has to be the soft plastics from the ZMan range. The reason that I love to use ZMan for pinkies and other bay species is because of the strength of their soft plastics, thanks to their unique ElaZtech technology. This is precisely what you need when chasing these fish as they have quite sharp teeth and will wear through most other soft plastic brands. ZMan allows me to get real value for my money by creating a plastic that is resistant to wear and tear, and I will get a lot of use out of each plastic.

For pinkies I have two favourite ZMan soft plastics. Firstly the ZMan 2" GrubZ and ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in any colour, but by no means are these the only ones that work. My personal favourite is the Motor Oil colour and both sizes work well, although I prefer to use 2.5" so that I don't get as many small fish.

The second plastic is the ZMan 3.75" StreakZ in any colour, but for my area I prefer to use Pearl, Smokey Shad and Ralph's Shad... along with the trusty Motor Oil. These four colours work best in my area because they resemble the whitebait and mullet in my area. Remember, always try and match the hatch.

Pinkies of all sizes will eat a small ZMan plastic, along with plenty of by-catch species.



Jigheads:

As for size, my universal jig head for 2-6 metres of water, depending on current and wind, is 1/16oz but this will vary depending on external factors. If the wind is up and I'm fishing some deeper water I'll up the jig head weight and if there is little or no wind and I'm fishing shallow water I will reduce the jig head size. The reason I change my jig head size based on conditions is that I will constantly try and present the plastic in the most natural way possible.

Retrieve Technique:

The retrieve technique with the GrubZ is simple; you cast the lure out and let it sink to the bottom on a tight line to ensure you feel any hits on the drop. Then I like to use a series of hops as my retrieve technique. Once the lure has hit the bottom I use a double hop/jerk before letting it sink on a tight line and repeat this method for the remainder of the retrieve. Don't be afraid to vary the retrieve speed either, it can sometimes make all the difference. I use a very similar technique with the StreakZ however because they don't have that awesome curl tail that moves around I tend to give them a much more vigorous jerk so that they dart off looking like and injured baitfish.



Melbourne pinkies are available to anglers fishing land based, pier fishing, along with kayak and boat anglers.

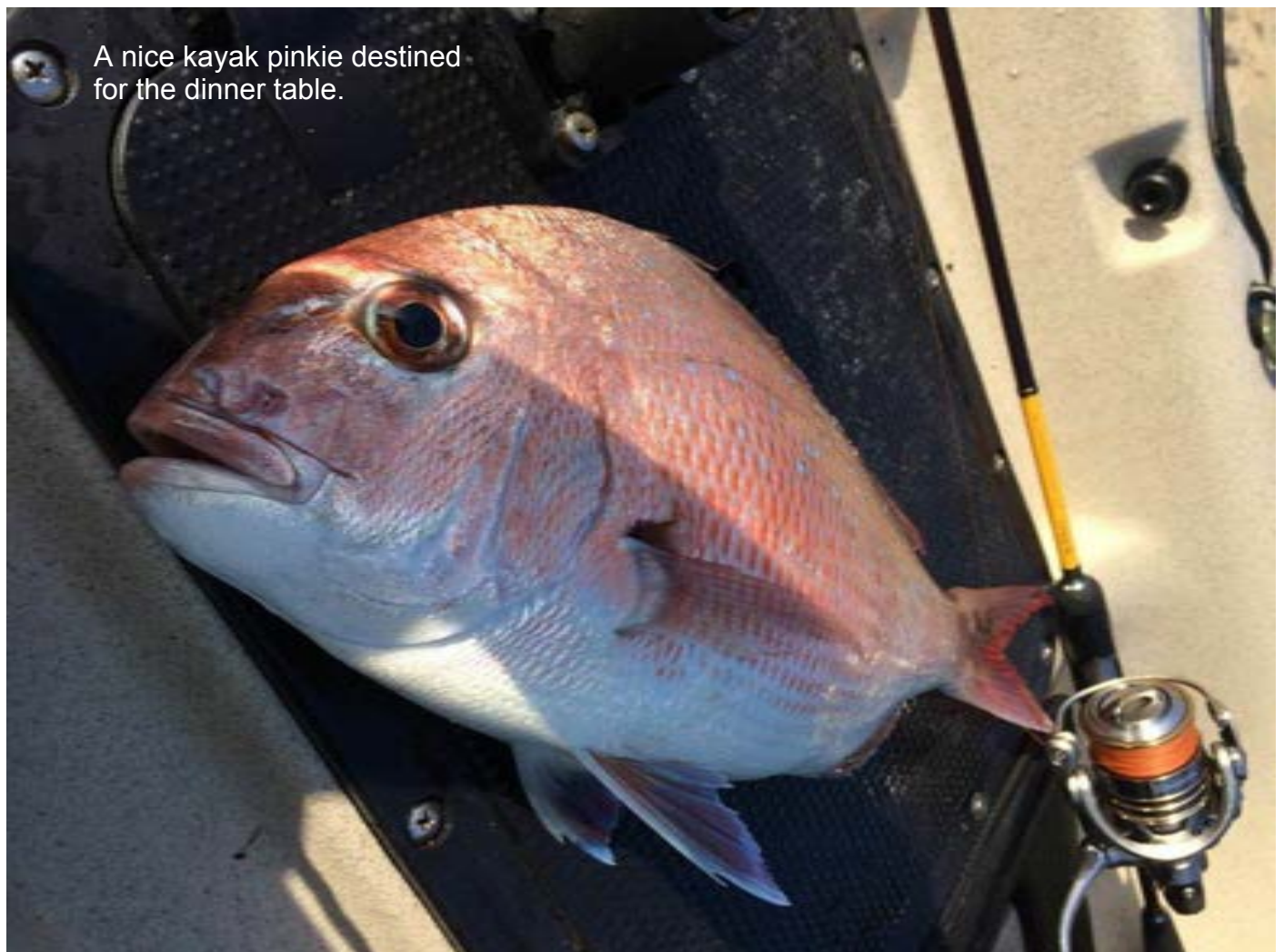
Rod/Reel:

Gear of choice: The gear needed to fish for pinkies using soft plastics really is quite simply just a light rod rated 2-4kg or 1-3kg, depending what you prefer, and a small spinning reel anywhere from 1000-2500 size. Spool that with 6lb to 8lb braid and you're set. My preference is to use a graphite rod when fishing soft plastics as you feel a lot more due to their sensitivity. The particular rod I use is a 2-6lb, built on an Ultra-Fast Tapered blank. My reel of choice is a 2004 size spooled with 8lb braid. I run that through to a 6lb fluorocarbon leader and I tend to use two rod lengths of leader to aid the lure presentation.

James Papas



A couple of nice pinkies on the ZMan.



A nice kayak pinkie destined for the dinner table.

AQUAVENTURE SOOTIES



By Justin Willmer

Flights booked, bags packed and a quick check of the weather report showed wind warnings for our planned destination of Missionary Bay, Hinchinbrook Island, a couple of hours north of Townsville. We needed a Plan B and the opportunity arose to join Vinnie from Aquaventure Fishing for a couple of days chasing sooties, with the chance of encountering a small headed grunter... a new species for me.

Aquaventure... aqua, I love the water and adventure is right up my alley, so it sounded like an excellent option and I couldn't wait to land in Townsville, catch up with my fishing partner for the trip and old mate Richard, crack a coldie, rig our gear and then hit the sack ready for Vinnie from Aquaventure to pick us up at 5am.

After reaching our destination we loaded the Argo 8 wheeler, climbed aboard and we were off on what would turn out to be an awesome adventure. A couple of water crossings and we were cruising the sandy riverbed, hopping a few rocky sections and we arrived at a section of faster running water, with plenty of fallen timber that created shade, eddies and shelter for fish. The anticipation built as we rigged our ZMan 2.5" GrubZ on a 1/6oz 1/0 TT HeadlockZ HD jighead with a Jig Spinner attached. The Jig Spinner adds a bit of flash and vibration that fires the sooties up, helps them hone in on the lure and also helps reduce snagging. The gear we were using was made up of 6'6" – 7' spin rods and 2500 size spinning reels loaded with 10lb braid and 10lb leader.



The Argo 8-wheeler opens up a load of country for fishing. 8-wheel drive and a boat in one!

A couple of casts in more open water, toward a large lay down on the other side of the river, soon produced a couple of rattles and a solid hookset. I had only chased sooties once before and now it came flooding back to me; the brutal strike and first run, quick rod work required to keep them out structure, stubborn fight and the reflex sounds that flowed from us as these brutes struck our lures, much like a boxer receiving a heavy blow. Fish on!

Vinnie was directing traffic, 'get a cast in that pocket under that log', boom, 'fire a long cast along that edge, fish on! Rich and I had pulled a few from the running water and Vinnie had captured a few photos of this early morning bite, before we told him to get a cast in and he landed a few quality sooties. We were all pumped and Vinnie suggested we follow the river upstream further to fish some sections of slower moving water, targeting numbers of sooties around submerged rock bars.



A few quality sooties from moving water. Get that lure in there and hang on!

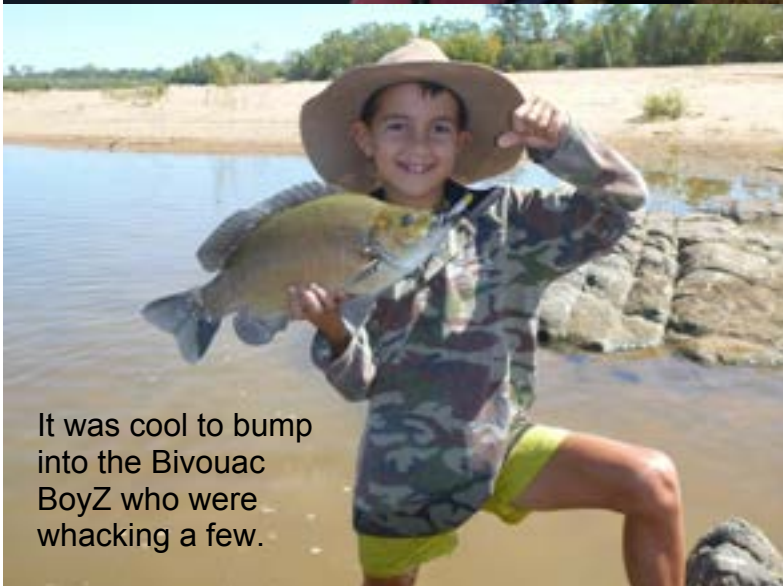




Vinnie's knowledge of the submerged rock bars helped produce in the slower moving pools.



Richard with a nice one from a submerged rock bar in a large pool.



It was cool to bump into the Bivouac BoyZ who were whacking a few.

These slower moving sections of water took a little more finessing than the moving water, which had been all about getting the lure on the spot and then getting it moving. We peppered unseen rock bars with small TT Vortex spinnerbaits, Jig Spinner rigged plastics and 1/4oz Switchblades, mixing it up between a slow roll and small hops on the bottom. The hits were sometimes subtle, but more often brutal and we landed plenty of sooties, with an average size that was pretty impressive.

After fishing a few more sections and getting some tips from Vinnie on using the variety of lures in his kit, including retrieve techniques for different lures and structure types, we pulled up along a magic section of river for some lunch. The plan after lunch was to work over one of Vinnie's favourite sections of water... an area where there was a chance of landing a small headed grunter. I couldn't get my lunch down quick enough, I had seen photos of these fish and after fishing virtually my entire life it's rare to get the opportunity to target a new species. Game on!



1/4oz Switchblades were a deadly presentation.



Vinnie with a smally.



Richard with his first small headed grunter.

Vinnie suggested we tie on 1/4oz TT Lures switchblades to wake them up and we opted for a variety of colours, including Golden Boy, Gold Noggin and Purple Minnow. The bite started slowly until we found the areas where they were holding, the style of retrieve they were after on the day and then the bite was hot for a while, with several double hook ups.

Vinnie landed a small head, soon followed Rich with his first and it was high fives and photos as Rich admired this unique species. For me it was all sooty grunter, although I wasn't complaining as they were quality fish and I spent some time wading the sandy river, targeting visible rock bars and others that were only located by bumping the lure across them. The bite slowed and we made the most of this period to refine our techniques with different lures, working a bit harder for the bite but enjoying the rewarding feeling of making the cracker cast and working the lure in a way that triggered a strike from these balls of muscle.

A few more subtle taps closer to the end of the retrieve and I had hooked my first small headed grunter. It fought differently to the sooties, holding deeper, not spinning or twisting and pulled even harder for its size... something I wouldn't have thought possible! I admired this new species as I slid it into my hand, lifted it up to show the boys and then readied it for a photo in the water... where it kicked, dislodged the sticky little trebles that I regularly struggle to get out with pliers and was gone in a spray of water. The peanut gallery burst out laughing and I was soon told that they saw nothing and it didn't count unless you had a photo. I was still stoked and would just have to catch another one.



The size of fish being landed would put a smile on any angler's face.



As it turned out we caught a few small headed grunter each, along with plenty of sooties and if our trip ended there I would have been totally satisfied with the environment we were fishing in, fish we had landed, what we had learnt from Vinnie and the great day that we had shared cruising in the Argo, fishing, laughing, sharing plenty of stories, sledging each other and escaping the hustle and bustle of life. Our plans though were to set up a lightweight camp on the river for the night, cook over the fire, share a few coldies and fishing tales, and just enjoy the stars and the serenity. We even managed a couple of fish from a dozen casts while dinner was sizzling over the coals.

After a false start 'doesn't count without a photo fish' Justin was stoked to land his second 'first' small headed grunter.





The crew even managed a few from the basic comforts of camp. Vinnie with a smally.

A late wake up was soon followed by a short walk to a rock bar that produced some nice sooties and some epic bust offs as the sooties tempted you to cast further and further into a wild mix of timber and rock bars in search of those brutal strikes and bigger fish. It was then time for a late breakfast and a journey further into the wilds aboard our 8-wheel offroad vehicle and boat as it turns out, fishing some sections and then boarding the Argo for river crossings.

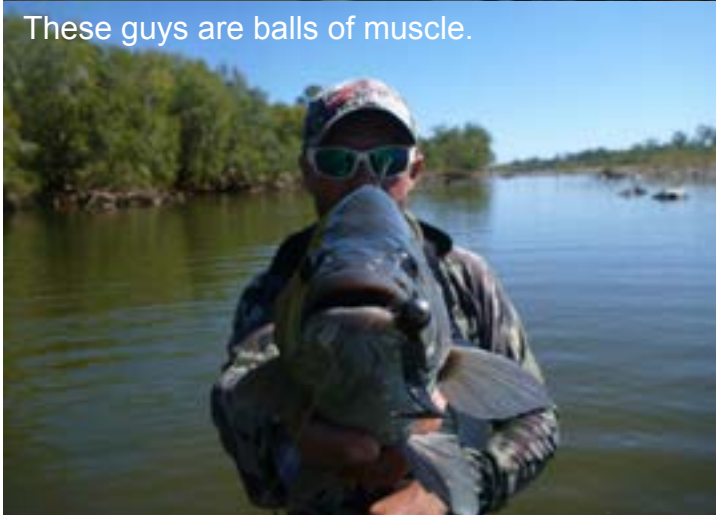


This cracker nailed a ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Pinfish colour.





Tribe Spinnerbait sooty.



These guys are balls of muscle.



One of several double hook ups.



Black GrubZ sooty.

Vinnie made the call to fish one more section of fallen timber snags before making the run back to the car. I can honestly say that this session was one of the best fishing sessions I've ever encountered, producing fifty plus quality sooties, including double hook ups, triple hook ups and 'fish a cast' action. The standout presentation was the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in natural colours such as Black, Pumpkinseed, Watermelon and Motor Oil, rigged on a #1 HeadlockZ HD jighead and rigged with a TT Jig Spinner for added flash and vibration. Cast this presentation close to structure and if it doesn't get nailed on the drop start a slow roll to get the Jig Spinner blade spinning and the GrubZ tail working and buckle up!



A hefty slab of north QLD sooty grunter.

On the return journey we used the water flow to hitch a ride downstream in the Argo, navigating through deeper sections that we had previously fished and 8-wheel driving over the sand and rock bars. The aqua element had been awesome, with some breathtaking scenery, wildlife and fishing... and the adventure element is something that I believe we all crave, escaping the digital world, the crowds, the rat race, the hustle and bustle... and just returning to the simple things like mateship, Mother Nature and exploring this beautiful country. Where's your next Aquaventure going to take you...

See you on the water...

Justin Willmer

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When your car's a boat - navigating home.



What a way to finish an adventure... triple hook up!



SLIM SLIMZ FISHING

By Tim Vincent

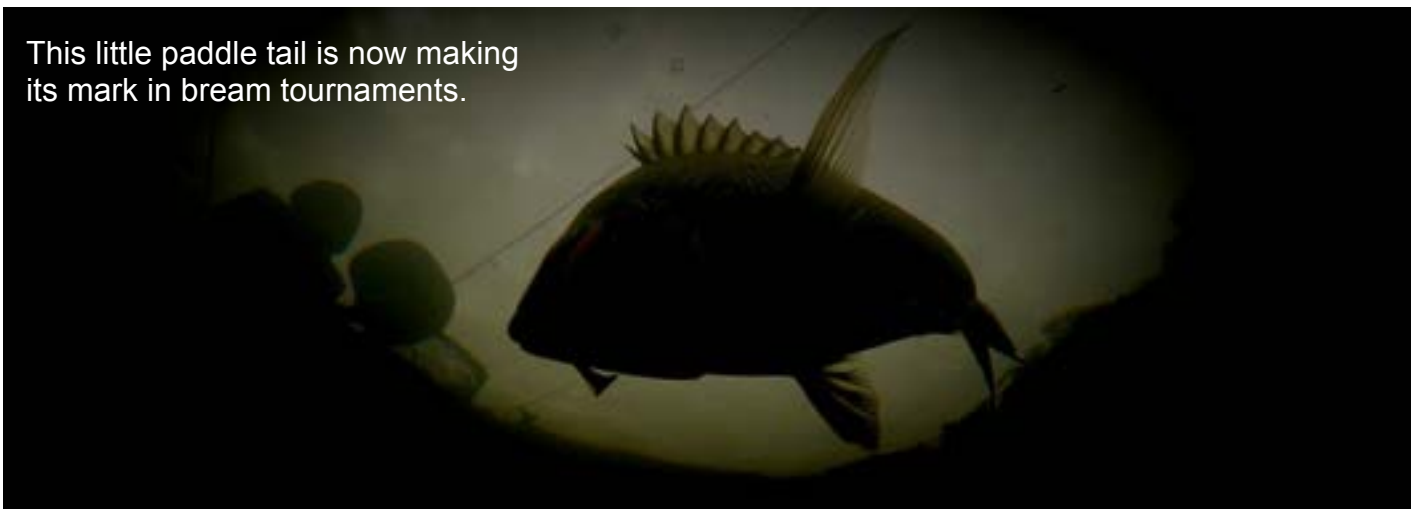
Slim SwimZ BreamZ.



If you were asked what the most versatile lure you use is, what would you answer? Something that can be used in saltwater, freshwater, fished top to bottom, and that imitates a wide variety of species. Answers might vary, from worms to grubs, stickbaits to prawn imitations, but mine would be a dead easy answer... the ZMan Slim Swimz 2.5". I honestly don't know of a lure that can be fished using so many techniques, appeal to so many fish species, has a colour for any situation and still has the legendary 10X Tough material that holds up to fish after fish.

When these lures first came out, a couple of years ago, I immediately bought a pack in Watermelon Red, a colour that has served me well in the 2.5" GrubZ. I took a small jighead and rigged it up but the problem was I couldn't get it straight and I put the pack in the bottom of the tackle bag and forgot about it. Fast forward to a year later and I was looking for a different lure to try and found the Slim SwimZ. I grabbed a 1/20oz TT HeadlockZ head and rigged it up perfectly first go, then free spooled the plastic down to the bottom of a pontoon and a few twitches later I had a little bream around 28cm hooked up.

This little paddle tail is now making its mark in bream tournaments.



The session continued, with several bream and estuary perch falling victim to the little Slim SwimZ. Since this session I always make sure there's several packs of these deadly little plastics in my bag wherever I go. I still don't know why the initial attempts at rigging didn't work... most likely because it wasn't a HeadlockZ head being used (these heads are definitely an advantage when fishing any plastics). I'd say these are one of the easiest plastics out there to rig and I've actually discovered that you don't even need to rig the plastics dead straight to have them swimming properly, unlike many other soft plastics. Sure, it's best to have them as straight as possible, but having the hook slightly out of place doesn't make a huge difference. These lures have a deadly body roll and tail kick, yet another factor that makes these lures so useful.

The 2.5" Slim SwimZ can be rigged in several different ways, all useful in different situations. Standard jigheads, worm hooks, Jig Spinner rigged plastics, Hidden Weight System (HWS), and spinnerbait and ChatterBait trailers are all common ways to fish this lure. They can even be used as a surface lure, using a worm hook, as the material is buoyant.

Rigged on a TT Lures HeadlockZ for fishing open water.



Adding a Jig Spinner for additional flash and vibration can be an effective technique.



Worm hook rigged for surface and weedless fishing. A TT ChinlockZ or SnakelockZ Finesse is ideal for locking the plastic in place.



A TT Lures HWS jighead conceals the weight and creates a slow natural sink.



Tim with a nice bream on one of his go-to colours, Watermelon Red.



My two favourite ways to retrieve this lure are the standard twitch/pause and the slow roll. The first technique, twitch/pause - cast out the lure, let it sink and give the lure a few seconds to sit motionless on the bottom. Then give the lure a couple of quick flicks, or slow draws of the rod, depending on the mood of the fish and let the lure sink back down, then repeat. Often when I get a bite and the fish misses the lure, I simply get the line tight and shake my arm slightly. This allows the lure itself to stay motionless, in the strike zone, but gives the tail an enticing movement that often delivers bites from fish that may become uninterested in the lure if it moves away from the strike zone.

The slow roll method I use involves a very simple cast and slow retrieve along the bottom. I often pause the lure too, depending on the species targeted. Don't be afraid to experiment with other retrieves as well. Another example being when pelagic species such as salmon, small tuna, tailor or rat kingfish are busting up small baitfish such as hardy heads, small pilchards, mackerel or jelly prawns. A faster retrieve is used, with pauses when a fish misses, to imitate a killed baitfish dying after being attacked. A natural colour such as Blue Steel or Blue Glimmer is very useful in this situation.

With such a wide range of colours, you'd be hard pressed to find a bait species that this lure doesn't imitate. For fish feeding on prawns, such as bream, flathead, whiting, barramundi, mangrove jack, trevally and estuary perch, a colour such as Pink Glow or Greasy Prawn, fits the bill perfectly.

Possibly the bait species the Slim SwimZ imitates best is the humble baitfish. Most of the natural (blue, grey, clear, silver, white) colours work well for impersonating a small fish. But don't be afraid to try different, or seemingly crazy colours. My personal favourite is Calico Candy, a deep red colour that comes up well in UV light.

Others I've had good success on include Watermelon Red (imitating a gudgeon), pearl and blue glimmer (imitating whitebait), and some unnatural but effective colours such as Suicidal Rooster, Electric Chicken and Space Guppy. Pink Glow has been very handy when fishing deep snags for big estuary perch in the middle of the day in the freshwater rivers. Here, in the southwest of Victoria, Motor Oil is by far the most popular colour for bream, estuary perch and mulloway. So don't think for a moment this lure only imitates a naturally coloured fish!



I find light spin gear is best to fish the Slim SwimZ, including a 1000-3000 spin reel with a 1-3, 2-4, 2-5 or 3-5kg rod. For bass and natives bait casting gear can be used when the jighead is over 1/8oz or you have good control over the reel.

So next time you've got a finesse bite, or just want to try something different, grab a few packs of Slim SwimZ in any colours that appeal to you and your target species and give them a go. You won't be left disappointed!

Tim Vincent



Tim all smiles with a solid EP on the Pink Glow colour.

ICAST 2016

In 2016 we again boarded the long haul flights and commenced our journey to ICAST to catch up with the crew from the brands we distribute in Australia, add some new products, plan future product developments and releases, and it was also exciting to see our HeadlockZ HD jigheads in Bass Pro Shops and other retail outlets in the US.

ICAST was again mind blowing in terms of both size and the passion anglers have for the sport... along with a stack of cool new product releases and some awesome boats to check out. The ICAST On The Water event was also cool and the crew from FLW were there for the ICAST fishing tournament. Check out the following pages for a few of the new releases.

It was then time to hit the water to test a few of the new products, give some new TT Lures products a run in US waters and work on some new product concepts for next year. After a few flight delays and re-routed flights we were back in Australia two days late and the night before it was time to load up and head to the AFTA trade show on the Gold Coast.

Some impressive watercraft at ICAST 2016.



Bass Pro Shops



Recycled Ocean Rubbish



NEW RELEASES



ZMan 3" MinnowZ - Green Lantern



ZMan 3" MinnowZ - Chartreuse Silver



ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ - Laguna Shrimp

ICAST 2016



ZMan EZ ShrimpZ Rigged - Due September 2016



ZMan EZ ShrimpZ Unrigged - Due September 2016



ZMan 3.5" Trick SwimZ - Due September 2016



ZMan 4" Turbo CrawZ



Random land based fishing at Tampa and side of the road ponds in Orlando.



How's this fish display in the airport!



ZMan Project Z - Swim Jigs



ZMan Project Z - Flip 'N Cast Jigs



- Bloodworm
- Pilchard
- Aniseed

Pro-Cure New Flavours



Boomerang Tool - Zinger Duo



TT Lures & ZMan getting it done on the Louisiana redfish and in the Mexican Gulf. HeadlockZ Extreme jigheads and 10" HeroZ in the gulf.



Boomerang Tool - Mid Size Zinger Carabiner



T-Reign - Sml, Med & Lge Gear Tethers



T-Reign - Attachment Accessory Packs

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A delayed trip home from the US saw lots of last minute madness for AFTA 2016 on the Gold Coast. It was awesome to catch up with loads of other fishing tackle wholesalers, our fishing tackle retail friends from around the country, fishing media, Pro Team and a few special guests.

This is our main opportunity throughout the year to present new products to stores and hopefully a few of the following start appearing in your favourite tackle store soon.



TT Lures - BuzzlockZ

Add your favourite soft plastic and attract some insane surface strikes.

Weedless design allows you to fish weed and structure. Three blade sizes and quick change wire loop to change hooks or attach to other lure types.

TT Lures - HeadlockZ Extreme

The ultimate big fish stopper designed to handle the fish that eat the latest wave of big plastics, including the ZMan 8" Mag SwimZ and 10" HeroZ.

Available in an XHD 9/0 and 10/0 hook in 2oz, 3oz, 4oz and 6oz weights and featuring the TT Lures 'head lock' grub keeper to lock your plastic in place.



TT Lures - SnakelockZ Finesse

The SnakelockZ system is now available in a finesse version, allowing anglers to rig smaller plastics and target light line species such as bream and bass in structure.

Available 1/12, 1/8 and 1/6oz in #4, #2, #1 and these three weights plus 1/4 and 3/8oz and 1/0, 2/0 and 3/0 hook sizes.



TT Lures - ChinlockZ Finesse

Now you can rig your favourite smaller soft plastics weedless for surface fishing or a dead slow sink, on these chemically sharpened, black nickel Mustad hooks, complete with TT Lures 'chin lock' to secure the soft plastic in place.

Available in sizes #4, #2, #1, 1/0, 2/0 and 3/0 to suit even the smallest ZMan plastics.

TT Lures - ChinlockZ SWS Extreme

The ChinlockZ SWS is now available in an extreme version in size 10/0 and 12/0 in both unweighted 'ChinlockZ' version and weighted 'ChinlockZ SWS' version.

These hooks are XHD and capable of stopping BIG fish. Ideal for rigging larger plastics, including the ZMan 8" Mag SwimZ and 10" HeroZ.



TT Lures - Jig Spinner HD

The TT Lures Jig Spinner is now available in a Heavy Duty version to handle sooty grunter, cod and other tackle destroying species.

Attach it to your jighead to add flash and vibration to your soft plastics or out of the box anglers also add them to blades and other lures.



Gearing up for AFTA 2016.

FISHING SMALL SYSTEMS



By Corey McLaren

Is the saying 'bigger is better' for estuaries around Australia actually a true indication of fishing opportunities? Some would say that fishing the bigger systems is the only way to go but down in South West Victoria we are lucky enough to have some of the best small estuaries and these areas offer endless opportunities for anglers to experience some of their best days fishing.

Like many people nowadays I don't like wasting time when I do get on the water and the estuaries down here definitely allow you as an angler to make the most of time due to the size of them. How short is too short? Why would the fish hold here rather than a bigger system? These were all questions I asked myself going back a few years ago, before I started stepping out of the 'norm' and fishing less popular systems. With this came some of the best sessions. Sessions that I will remember for the rest of my life. These are locations where people see just a small river lying along our rugged coastline and drive straight past them because they don't look like much. They're missing out on the hidden gems.

A couple of thumpers from the livewell fishing a small system.





The most popular small system on the South West coast is the Hopkins River, right in the heart of Warrnambool. Anyone who knows me will tell you that I believe this estuary is one of the best in Australia for black bream, with fish of a lifetime being able to be chased all year round. These fish can be targeted on a variety of baits, lures and soft plastics all up the river. Structure such as rock walls, reed beds, man-made structures, sand banks and mud banks line the banks leaving it open to a variety of options.

Being only able to navigate approximately 10km of the estuary, due to Toorum Stones creating a natural barrier, it can be worked in a day or a weekend trip. It still holds the records in the state wide tournament, the Vic Bream Classics Series, for heaviest bream at 2kg and heaviest 5 fish bag @6.96kg, which shows just what the system can produce. It is also from where I have my PB bream at 47cm, caught on my favourite lure ever made the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in the Motor Oil colour.

But is it just bream that grow to trophy size in here? Fortunately for us that live here the answer is no and we do have some very big estuary perch and mulloway at times making their way into the system. Perch to 2.6kg have been caught in this section of river and mulloway to 50lb also landed by experienced anglers who put in the time for them. However with the popularity of this system I like to change it up and fish some different areas just for a change.

Most of the time the change I speak of is the Fitzroy River, a super narrow estuary that can be navigated for km's but most of the action happens in the lower 4km of river. Trophy size estuary perch can sometimes be targeted when the water flow picks up leaving the perch no option but to follow the current and bait downstream to more targetable areas for us anglers. Last year I was lucky enough to finally crack the 50cm mark when the ZMan Slim SwimZ in Opening Night colour that I was testing was engulfed by a big girl that was smack bang on 50cm. This was one of four perch that were caught for the day, all between 43 and 50cm.

Mulloway also frequent the estuary and can be a massive handful when using ultralight tackle targeting bream. The bottom is pretty much featureless, with a few reefs and boulders being the only structure off the endless reeds and undercut banks where the better fish will sit and wait to ambush their prey. Bream in this system have traditionally been on the small size but they certainly make up for it with the way they fight. I find this river is a great place to try new techniques or just to perfect another and then take it into one of the bigger systems.

So next time you're planning a trip out on the estuaries around your local area maybe take the second or third most obvious option and you too could be landing that fish of a lifetime.

Cheers Corey



Mulloway are a viable option in many small systems.

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