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Angler: Luke Smith
Species: Mulloway
Jighead: TT Lures
Plastic: ZMan Slim SwimZ



FINDING BREAM ON BIG TIDES



By Ryan Dixon

Finding bream on big tides can often be rather challenging as the current and sheer amount of extra water can make it extremely hard to locate fish, and once found, it can be difficult to target them. Strong currents make it hard to get your lure or bait to the right depth and also make it difficult to keep your presentation in the zone for the maximum amount of time. In the past I personally haven't had a lot of success on big tides, with the option of doing work around the house being preferred, once I identify a big tide on my tide guide. In saying this, in the last year or so I have put a lot more time into fishing big high tides and have definitely been surprised by the amount of fish I've encountered.

Although bream are a very common species throughout Australia, they can at times be rather tricky to catch and can often be very hard to locate on big tides. One major thing I have found when looking for bream on big tides is they love getting into places where they normally couldn't on a normal size tide. Mangrove edges that have a deep tree line are perfect hunting grounds for crabs, barnacles and other critters that bream love to feed on, while also providing shade and areas of less current. Although mangrove edges that are very dense with trees will hold plenty of bream, it is almost impossible to fish on top of the tide as you can't cast your lures through the trees. Spots like this are best fished once the tide is running out of the mangroves, as the fish push out with the tide and sit just off the tree line waiting for small baitfish, prawns and other tasty morsels that get filtered out as the tide drops. Finding a bank where mangrove trees are more sporadic makes for easier fishing on the top of the tide and it is somewhat easier to land bream in these areas also. As long as there is plenty of shade during the daytime high tides the bream don't need much water to happily feed, with 200mm of water being plenty deep enough to hold good numbers of bream.



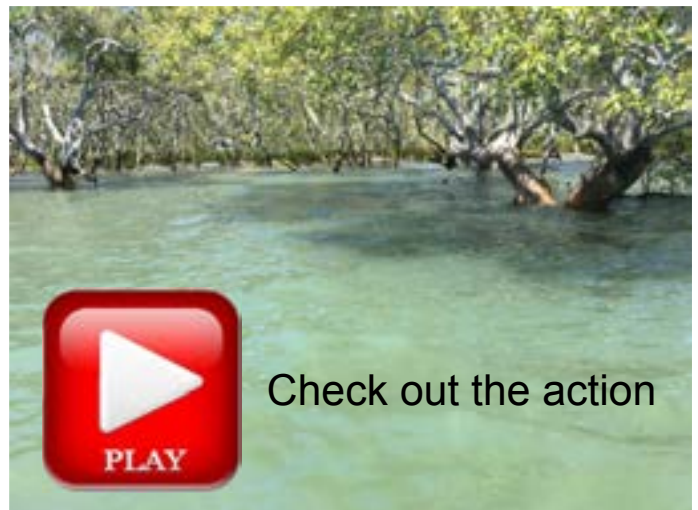
Get that lure right into the shady pockets.

Once a likely looking mangrove edge is found I rummage through my arsenal to find the appropriate presentation for the situation I have in front of me. Personal favourite lures don't always work, so it pays to have a good range of baits on hand. I find areas that are shallow or have little to no current are best fished with a bait that is as light as possible. TT Lures HWS (Hidden Weight System) jigheads are ideal in this situation when fishing soft plastics. Matched with a ZMan 2" or 2.5" Grubz or ZMan 2" Crusteaz they make the perfect offering for hungry bream.

Not much of a retrieve is required in this situation, with just a slow sink and then lift of the rod tip once finding the bottom. When the tide is falling out of the mangroves I like to use a slightly heavier jighead and slightly quicker retrieve as I believe the bream become more aggressive, trying to fill their stomachs before the tide has fully dropped. ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ, GrubZ and 3.75" StreakZ are my plastics of choice in this situation and I'm sure to cover my plastics in Pro-Cure Super Gel every few casts. A good covering of Pro-Cure Super Gel on your plastics also helps them to skip across the surface better, which is imperative when fishing a mangrove tree with a heavy canopy.



The author working his way along the mangrove edges and fish on!



Other places that fish well on big tides are flats and canal systems, and I find that both of these places can provide areas away from the current. Sand flats fish well on early morning or late afternoon high tides as they don't provide enough shade through the middle of the day. On the other hand flats that hold good amounts of sea grass, rocky rubble or broken reef will fish well through the middle of the day. Using a heavier presentation on sand flats allows you to make long casts as bream can be easily spooked in shallow water. Flats with rocky reef and weed banks can be fished rather effectively with a TT Lures SnakelockZ Finesse weedless jighead as it allows you to present your plastic into nasty country without getting it snagged every few casts. Once again ZMan GrubZ, CrusteaZ, ShrimpZ and also Slim SwimZ are perfect presentations for this situation.



The boys rewarded for getting their lures right up in amongst the structure.

Canal and marina systems are no doubt one of the best places to target bream and this is no exception on a big tide. They offer plenty of shade and provide the perfect hunting grounds for hungry bream. I always keep a keen eye out when fishing canals as bream can be easily spotted feeding on the edges of pontoons and moored boats. Light line is a must when fishing canals as most of the time the bream in these systems are incredibly smart. Being able to cast accurately is a massive advantage in this situation as the bream are likely to be in tight little shady pockets between boats and pontoons where long skip casts are required.

More often than not in canals bream will sit very high in the water column, meaning the lightest possible jighead is most effective. TT Hidden Weights and standard 1/16oz jigheads are the most commonly used, with 1/12oz size heads getting use when there is extra current. ZMan CrusteaZ, GrubZ and Scented ShrimpZ are my plastics of choice in canal systems, with a generous lathering of Pro-Cure being an added advantage.

I use a light 1-4kg rod, matched with a 1000 size spinning reel and spooled with 6lb braid and I find this to be the perfect weapon for feeling the smallest of bream bites.

Although big tides can be challenging to fish, they can also be very rewarding. So next time you see a big tide on your tide guide, grab a rod and a packet of plastics and do some big tide breaming.



Manmade structure can also hold plenty of bream.

A photograph of a tiger skull and antlers resting on a large, weathered log in a swampy or forested area. The skull is positioned at the top left, and the antlers extend across the middle of the frame. The background is dark and filled with dense vegetation. The water in the foreground is dark and reflects the log and the skull.

TIGER COUNTRY JACKS

... don't cast too far back!

By Dave Rae

Weedless rigging allows you to more effectively fish heavy cover.



Mangrove jacks are renowned for fighting dirty, powering back into structure immediately they feel the hook and even doing a U-turn in front of the lure and hitting it at speed, as they head for home. Success is made more difficult by their reticence to travel far from their favourite snag during daylight hours. Jack anglers soon develop the skill to place their lure close to cover, be it a shoreline snag, rock pile, sunken log or bridge pylon, then moving it with a sense of immediacy, being ready to strike solidly and click in the skull-drag mentality instantly. Failure to do so usually leads to a limp line, nylon trace ending in nothing... in combination with a second or two of slack jawed-ness before the reaction, which is highly variable, sets in.

I think it's the violence in combination with the difficulty of landing a decent jack that attracts so many anglers to the pursuit; at least it does for me!

After many years of throwing hard bodied minnows at jacks, I'm now a firm soft plastic tosser, and after experimenting with a variety of lures and hook styles, I have come to the point where my favorite rig is a ZMan 4" SwimmerZ minnow rigged on a TT Lures ChinlockZ SWS (Snagless Weight System) hook in 2/0-4/0. When correctly rigged, this combination of plastic and hook results in a bait that swims true, sinks slowly when on slack line and casts extremely well. The 1/6oz weight is heavy enough to cast, but when combined with the slight positive buoyancy inherent in a ZMan plastic, results in a nice slow sink rate.

I've had success with other plastics and varying coloured ZMan SwimmerZ, but it's the red ones that I always cast with first. Jacks love them and time and time again, they out-fish everything else. I'm not exactly sure why; they don't have an erratic motion that I impart to a hardbody to catch fish and indeed the jacks prefer a slow and steady retrieve, with a dead stop mixed in. They don't twitch this way and that, but they do swim upright with just the tail wafting side to side, as does a cruising fish.

The one downside I experience with these lures is of my own making; I often throw them too far back into a snag, right into the maw of tiger country. My response is always the same: "please don't hit it yet", which they invariably do, and from so far back, getting them clear is far from assured!

Of course, I'm throwing way back when the 'front door' shots have drawn a blank, so I suppose you could forgive me. However, there are some jack possies that can only be reached by casting into tiger country, small gaps in the V of a branch or as is the case with one I visit, a tangle of logs a few metres behind a sunken tree trunk. This spot has been set up for the last 10 years, it's got shell life growing and it's really hard to extract a fish from, but the jacks that live on it are massive.

Red Shad coloured ZMan SwimmerZ are a favourite for the author.



I wouldn't throw a hardbody because it's hard to get the lure back over the log. Given the terrain, I cast into the timber jam and retrieve the lure across the top. The plan is to skim the jacks across the surface and then skip them over the log, which I managed with a horse of a jack on the SwimmerZ, only to have the 40lb trace snap when the fish bolted into the clear. Bugger!



By-catch in the form of a greedy bream.

So what's so good about the ZMan 4" Swimmerz / ChinlockZ SWS rig? Well, they have the required weight to cast with accuracy, the hookup rate is good for a snagless hook and they are largely snag resistant, making it possible to cast WAY TOO FAR back, and hop the lure through and over obstacles.

These lures and jighooks are dynamite on jacks ... and would be even better if I'd calm down with the casting!



Another nice mangrove jack falls victim to a soft plastic presentation.

JEW ON THE CHEW



By Luke Smith

Luke with a nice mulloway from a small system.



As I adjusted the electric and worked my way along the drop off, I noticed some bait flickering on top of the flat. I loaded up and punched out a Baby Bass coloured ZMan Slim SwimZ in front of the flighty mullet. With a couple of short sharp twitches I attracted a subtle bite that turned into a screaming jewie when hooked. A few nervous moments followed as I chased the fish up the flat, trying to keep it away from the sunken timber, but when the net was lifted clear of the water with a silver slab inside, the nerves quickly disappeared. After a quick photo shoot the fish was swum beside the boat and released to fight another day.

In recent times the Hopkins River has seen an influx of mulloway enter the system and terrorise the local baitfish population. Fish have been ranging from 50cm to beyond the magic metre mark. When these fish are past the 80cm mark they are a serious competitor on light 4lb bream outfits. It makes for some exciting fishing as one cast you may land one of the many bream that frequent this river, only to be losing line rapidly the next to an angry jewie.

As with most forms of fishing, finding the fish is half the battle. With Hopkins River mulloway there is a few known locations to target them with bait at night but for us lure fishos it can be a bit more challenging. It can be thousands of casts in between fish but when they are located the action can be hot... as I found out recently.

After catching a mulloway two weeks prior I had a starting point to try and locate them again. I fished the same steep rocky bank and the adjacent sand flat with no luck, then made my way up the river to the next closest sand flat. After a few searching casts, I noticed stacks of bait holding on the edge of the flat, making the confidence grow.

A few casts later and I was tight to a Hopkins River mulloway. The bite of a jewie can range from the slightest of touches, similar to a mullet grabbing the tail, to a solid whack with a squealing reel. This bite was nothing more than you would expect from an inquisitive bream. The trick is to treat every hit as if it is a jewie and strike firmly to set the heavier gauge hook. I love TT HeadlockZ Finesse hooks for bream but mulloway have a happy knack of destroying jigheads if hooked in the jaw. For this reason I prefer the HeadlockZ HD jigheads in the smaller sizes to suit the plastic of choice.

After releasing the mulloway I had confidence of another as their mates are never too far away. I continued to work along the steep drop off and throw a Slim SwimZ into two feet of water. From there I would work it back into three metres of water, before casting again. Every few casts I would vary my retrieve, from small subtle hops to aggressive twitches and rips of the rod. Over the years I have had success on both methods, so it pays to mix it up and break the habit.

The ZMan Slim SwimZ has become a go-to for the author.





Luke's mum wasn't missing out on the fishing action.

A short time later I had braid peeling off my little reel again and this time I passed the rod to my mum so she didn't miss out on the action. This fish played dirty and kept trying to go under the boat and after a few minutes of trying to drive away from the fish we had it up on the surface ready to be landed. It's important to try to tire these fish out as netting a feisty mullet isn't easy when they take up most of the net. A few happy snaps and the fish was on its way.

Both of these fish were taken on a Baby Bass coloured Slim SwimZ. After a few more casts with no result I felt it was time for a change, swapping to a StreakZ Curly TailZ. The move paid off straight away with two more fish falling to the new lure and mum landing her PB mullet. Over the next few evenings I snuck out and headed straight for the same spot with the plan for more mullet. I was not disappointed with eight fish in three two hour after work sessions. One lesson I learned proved the difference and that was to keep mixing it up.

Too often I find myself throwing the same coloured Slim SwimZ and GrubZ over and over again, whether I am catching fish or not. I would always start with them as I have great confidence in their fish catching ability and I would be reluctant to change as I knew they worked. So I decided to leave the old faithfuls at home and throw some different colours and styles. This move paid off and I found myself catching mullet on lures I normally wouldn't have thrown.

Jighead selection is also an important part of the process. There's no point having the ideal plastic, only to rig it too heavy and have it plummet to the bottom or too big a hook and have the plastic lose its action. I always try to fish as light as possible to allow the lure to sink unimpeded and spend as long as possible in the strike zone. For mulloway fishing in this situation a 1/16oz weight jighead is a great weight for water under two meters, when the wind allows. If the wind is blowing I will usually swap to a 1/12oz, just to help reach the bottom and prevent the wind from catching the line as badly.

With hook size it varies greatly from plastic to plastic. The trick is to choose a hook with a big enough gape so that the hook point has plenty of exposure but not too big that the length of the shank ruins the lures movements. So for this reason I usually run a #2 HeadlockZ HD hook on my Slim SwimZ and GrubZ, and if using Finesse HeadlockZ I go up a size to the #1 hook as the hook patterns vary.



Find the fish,
catch the fish.



Slim SwimZ
Victim.

Scent up!



Another nice mulloway on the Calico Candy coloured Slim SwimZ.



GrubZ, Slim SwimZ, StreakZ Curly TailZ, MinnowZ and Trick SwimZ all worked in those three sessions. Colours varied across Gold Flake, Bad Shad, Pearl Blue Glimmer, Baby Bass and Calico Candy. These colours are all different but worked at some stage. Some are more natural and resemble the bait they are chasing to a degree, while others are the opposite and may entice a bite from a curious fish rather than a hungry fish.

With using many different styles and sizes of plastics, it pays to have a large selection of jigheads in different sizes and weights. For storage try keeping the cardboard out of the packet in with jigheads in the tray. This is a handy way of quickly and easily identifying the sizes and weights. The new Moncross trays have been brilliant for jighead storage as the lids shut firmly over all of the compartments, so there's no mixing up of the jigheads. There is a great range of trays from small pocket size trays through to larger bulk storage trays.

Breaking the habit is a hard thing to do but the rewards can certainly pay off. So next time you are struggling to get a bite, try something different and cast out a colour or style of plastic that is completely from left field. Cheers.



Baby Bass colour getting the bite.

EASTERN CAPE YORK ADVENTURE



By Richard Quincey

After a 9 hour drive from Townsville, North Queensland, we hit the first bit of dirt road at Laura, Cape York. We were definitely in Far North Queensland now and it was time to find out if the boat trailer modifications would stand up to the Cape York Peninsula Development Road. There were many hundreds of kilometres to go to reach our destination - some of the more remote rivers and estuaries of Cape York Peninsula. As we slowed down to get out of the dust from the lead rig I thought - It doesn't look like it has rained here in years – that might make catching barra a bit tricky.



Trailer mods complete and ready to roll.

It is a great thing when four married guys with kids all get a leave pass for two weeks to explore the creeks of eastern Cape York Peninsula. That sort of trip is usually the territory of single blokes in their mid 20's. The excitement was visible during the overnight stop at Musgrave Station... nine days of fishing was getting ever closer. However, there was plenty of dirt, dust and teeth jarring corrugations to go before setting up camp the next evening.



The journey can be as memorable as the destination.

Up early on the first day of fishing, we found a place to put the boats in, no getting your toes wet in croc country. This was my first land based trip to the remote far north and these days Google Earth provides a big advantage. I had spent many hours on the computer preparing fishing strategies A, B, C and D (as well as E to Z). Even better was having a few colour printouts of the intended fishing areas in the tackle box. Many times I went to these satellite images to guide me in and out of a new creek mouth or through the shallow reaches of a creek, particularly at half tide when the water just covers the mudbanks. In these remote areas the satellite shots were much more useful than the GPS maps.

Now which of the 26 trip plans do we try first? We headed out of the main creek for a run up the coast to some even more secluded estuaries. We had two boats on the water and always travelled together and knew exactly where each boat was fishing. There is no coast guard up this way and a safe trip relies on you and the trust you have in your mates.

While detailed planning is time well spent, be prepared to move through your options until you find what is working and what is not working. For us finding what really worked happened on day three. It was worth the effort as after that we experienced fantastic estuary lure fishing sessions. I had banked on high tides over the flats around the front of creek mouths as a certainty and while this did produce fish, at this dry time of the year a good run out tide up the end of the creeks turned out to be much more productive and reliable.



Time to execute plan A, B, C and maybe D.

The number and size of mangrove jack that we caught daily were outstanding. The competition for food displayed by these fierce predators left me in awe. We regularly pulled 40cm plus jacks from shallow snags, only to watch two more follow their mate all the way to the boat. What is even more memorable was seeing Queensland Groper leave the safety of cover and swim right to the boat, fixated on trying to inhale a hooked mangrove jack.

Queensland Groper are a magnificent creature and a protected species, we did not want to target these fish and did everything to avoid catching one. However, with each productive snag holding a resident groper an incidental catch was always a possibility.

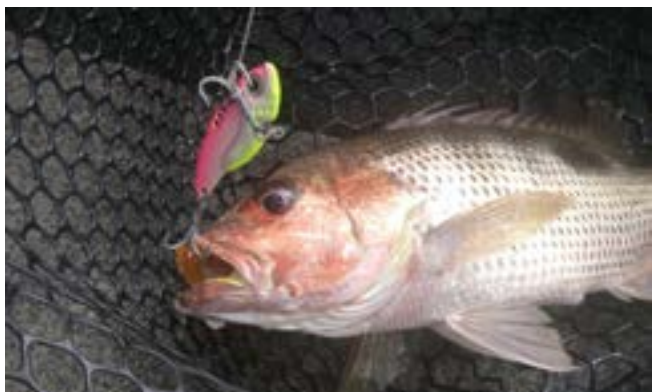
It is a good reminder that no matter what you are targeting, preparation for quick and careful handling is essential to a good release. A soft and fin friendly landing net is a must. NO lifting a big fish by the jaw; support the weight of fish under the belly. Have a wet, cool surface for the fish to lay on. If you are going to take photo's ensure the camera is accessible and at the ready to make sure fish are released quickly.



All efforts to avoid... but landed, handled with care and released



“Can I tell you I was not putting my hand in the water up here to either remove a hook or swim a fish before release.”



The fish that stood out for me most on the trip were actually the fingermark we caught. I expected we would catch some decent fingermark in deep holes and straights using TT Lures Switchblades. I was not expecting to get as many solid fingermark casting at snags on the edge of creek banks. It is something that really sets fishing with soft plastics apart from hard bodies. I like the ability to swim a ZMan through heavy timber and then let it drift to the bottom at the edge of the snag, where fish like fingermark and javelin fish have carved out a niche'. The ZMan plastics accounted for many more javelin fish and fingermark when compared to the traditional hardbodies used by my fishing companion. Both caught fish, but I accounted for a greater diversity of species with the soft plastics.

I used a fair range of ZMan plastics, from 2.5" Slim SwimZ to 5" Grass KickerZ. The ZMan 4" DieZel MinnowZ and 3" MinnowZ were a consistent choice. Mostly I rigged these weedless on either a TT Lures SnakelockZ or ChinlockZ SWS (snagless weight system) to keep them snag free, allowing me to fish deep into the timber. This is where mangrove jack live. The wind and the current are the two things that usually determine which rig I use, with the SnakelockZ easier to control in a bit of wind or current. I always go as light a weight as possible, with 1/8oz and 1/6oz heads a staple. Be patient and let the plastic stay in the strike zone.

I did force myself to stray away from the go-to MinnowZ and over the trip caught 15 species of fish on everything from Grass KickerZ and Pop FrogZ, to SwimmerZ and EZ ShrimpZ and even Scented CrabZ. With every cod and mangrove jack regurgitating



Javelin fish were also readily available.

mangrove crabs I needed to give a ZMan 3" Scented CrabZ a go, rigged on a ChinlockZ SWS. I learnt that if you land them in the spot, they get snavelled, just like a crab that fell off a log.

After nine days fishing in paradise it was time to pack the trucks and head back down the Cape York Peninsula Development Road. How things can change... from bulldust to stuck road trains and kilometres of slushy mud. The night before we left we got over 100mm in one storm which raised the level of a couple of creek crossings. Unfortunately it was not enough rain to see me stuck on Cape York for the wet season...

The jacks alone made the trip worthwhile.

Check out the action.



THE CITY SLICKER DOES LENTHALLS DAM



BY PAUL CHEW

Lenthalls Dam, about three hours north of Brisbane, near Maryborough, has been producing plenty of barramundi around the 50-60cm range throughout summer, with a few surprises up into the 90's. With plentiful weed and lilies, Lenthalls Dam retains its water temperature well into winter and is one place where the barra will bite well even into the cooler months. Paul Chew takes a look back on a Lenthal's adventure from last summer, firing us all up for our own barra adventure.

With the January weather hot and steamy, my city slicker mate from Brisbane decided it was time for another sojourn north, this time to try and capture his first impoundment barra, after a couple of failed attempts at Monduran Dam. After a phone call on the Thursday a plan was made, with him to head up Friday arv and have a look around Saturday morning, while I would shoot out after work on Saturday. With excellent directions given I hung up the phone, happy that he would find a fish in the morning. On my arrival it turned out that he had trouble even finding the dam, for a variety of reasons... one being terrible instructions... apparently...

Let the Lake Lenthalls
adventure begin!



Searching for the treasures of changing water levels and off target casts.



We cracked a beer and discussed some of the world's current issues, global warming, over fishing of the waterways, how Aldi always sells out of camping gear... and listened to the dulcet tones of air escaping from the back tyre of the Pathfinder. Just a note for anyone camping, make sure you take a big hammer and strong pegs as the ground is super hard at the moment. We (Grant) pegged down the gazebo. Four pegs... an hour later, sunburnt and using my hammer, finally it was secure. More or less. I still tied it to the Pathfinder, just to be sure that it was still there when we got back. Geez, these city slickers have some learning to do. At least my beer was cold.

Finally it cooled off, so we decided to go for a look around. I gave him the grand tour of a couple of the arms of the lake and we did a bit of exploring, climbed some trees looking for lures and even had a bit of a fish. Just on dark, finally a bit of bait started moving on the surface and not long after the big fella's rod buckled over as a little bronze barra launched out of the water and promptly spat the lure back into the boat. Deflated would be an understatement and the decision was made to go and have a bite to eat, shower and try to get some sleep.



Anticipation builds...



Fish on!... and off...



Grant passed out pretty much straight away, saying it was five degrees cooler than the night before, however I had trouble sleeping, between the heat, thunder rumbling around and the campground birds making a ruckus. The alarm went off at 3am, so I got up and fumbled around for a while, had an Ice Break and apple for breakfast and re-rigged a rod before I kicked old mate out of his swag.

Heading up the dam, first light at our stern, it was easy taking in the beauty of a brand new day. We pulled up at our first spot and with some guidance from my mate I was soon casting my go-to surface lure of late, the Bagley Rattlin' Finger Mullet, as far from the boat as possible and letting it sit for a few seconds, before walking it back towards to the boat.

Grant was casting a ZMan 4" Sexy Mullet coloured Swimmerz and 1/4oz 4/0 TT SnakelockZ combo, when I raised a fish on the RFM, so he picked up his rod with the same lure and shot gunned a cast in. Before it even moved, BOOF, it was engulfed and the fight was on. Giggling like a young child, he fought the little Lenthalls Dam fish magnificently, until it fell off... I figured one of two things was going to happen, crying or a tantrum, but to my surprise he just tweaked the lure and cast out again. We raised a couple more fish, but with no hook-ups we went for a look further up the dam.

Finding some nice country we worked it over with SwimmerZ and Rattlin' Finger Mullet. I was starting to stress a little as I really should have been able to put my good mate onto a fish... but at around 7am time was running out. On our side was some low cloud that was filing in, with hot steamy conditions. My city slicker mate, who was clearly used to sipping coffee in chilly air conditioning, was struggling a little, grabbing cold water from the esky frequently. Even the local cattle were neck deep in the dam, chewing through the lilies with gusto.

Working our way back down the dam now we spotted a likely looking island with a few lay down trees and so we began working down it. With bait flicking and moon set approaching, I was feeling confident. I had a miss on topwater and Grant had a good bump on the SwimmerZ, before fifty metres or so on his little spin rod buckled over, the drag screeching in protest as the TT ChinlockZ hook found its mark. I was pretty confident now... unless he got busted off and so moved the boat out to clear water. A few more tense seconds (Grant suggesting forcefully that I hurry up and net his fish) and the little fish was in the boat. High fives all round, a couple of snaps and the fish was released, clearly thinking these city people are a bit strange after Grant was sitting talking to it. Who am I to judge :)

Success, with a Lenthalls barra in the boat.



There was no stopping the boys once they got started.



Smiles all round, with barra in the boat.



I then managed a couple on my fave Rattlin' Finger Mullet, giving a great aerial display before succumbing. Wanting a surface fish, my mate tied on a Red Head RFM and persevered before finally bringing home the bacon, with a nice little 50 something fish bashing the lure hard. As I went to net the fish to my surprise I missed, or so I thought, however as the net was now attached to the line, it became clear that the net now had a hole in it. Clearly these guys from the city need some lessons on gear maintenance also. Luckily the fish was tired, so I slipped the lip grips on, flipped the net and landed the fish. Happy days. Once extracted, a couple photos and the barra swam free.

It was getting hot already so we quickly fished our way back to camp and packed up, which included changing the tyre that by now was dead flat. What a job in the heat... so we met Jode in at Sexy Coffee on the highway for a great Eggs Benny before it was time to say goodbye again.

Bring on the next trip full of fun and frivolity.

The Wrap

Lenthalls Dam is about 10 km North of Maryborough and about 3 hours from Brisbane, with a few minutes of rough dirt road once you leave the highway. Just take it steady, make sure your trailer is in good condition and you should be fine. The campground is good, with amenities including toilets and cold showers available. You can set up right on the water and leave your boat or kayak in. It's a beautiful place to sit and watch the sun set, with plenty of birdlife including black swans and pelicans in abundance.

Kayak fishos can find good fish close to the campground, and those with a boat can head further afield. Currently I am finding the morning bite easier, with Bagley RFM's and ZMan 4" Turbo CrawZ being winners for me, and then we just throw ZMan 4" Diezel MinnowZ or 4" SwimmerZ on the way back. Easy fishing. I am using 25 or 30lb Schneider leader, with 20lb braid, to try give me a chance with the odd bigger fish being encountered. Make sure you give Rob a ring before you head out, if camping, to make sure there is a spot available. Please clean up after yourself while there and don't forget to have a current SIP (Stocked Impoundment Permit) on you. There is plenty of info around on fishing the dam and also plenty of video clips on how I work my lures out there.

Hope to see you around.

Tight Lines
Chewy.

Chewy with a nice Lake
Lenthalls barra.



PAUL CHEW TAKES 5 WITH

ABBEY JONES

This is a great sport that we're involved in and it's awesome to see the girls participating more, be it tournament fishing, a social flick or a boating or kayaking adventure. Paul Chew caught up with keen young angler, paddler, nature enthusiast and photographer Abbey Jones, to shoot a handful of quick questions at her. Fish on!

1. What's your first fishing memory?

My first fishing memory would probably be when I first went to north shore at Burrum Heads when I got my first fishing rod.

2. Who has been your biggest influence in terms of getting you into fishing and more recently, photography?

My biggest influence in fishing would be dad because we would always be out in the boat. After I got into bird watching I then started getting into photography as I found I loved to take pictures of birds and other wildlife.

3. Do you have anything on your bucket list that you would like to catch or photograph?

To be able to get more pictures of Australia's great wildlife and its rarest birds is definitely on the bucket list.



4. Do you have a funny fishing memory that you would like to share?

One of my favourite funny fishing memories would be dad teaching me how to put yabbies on the hook, with the yabby leaving its claw on my finger. You could have heard me squealing from Cape York!



5. Do you prefer the boat or kayak to get about and why?

The kayak would definitely be my favourite as you can get around easier, it's great for bird watching and is very quiet.



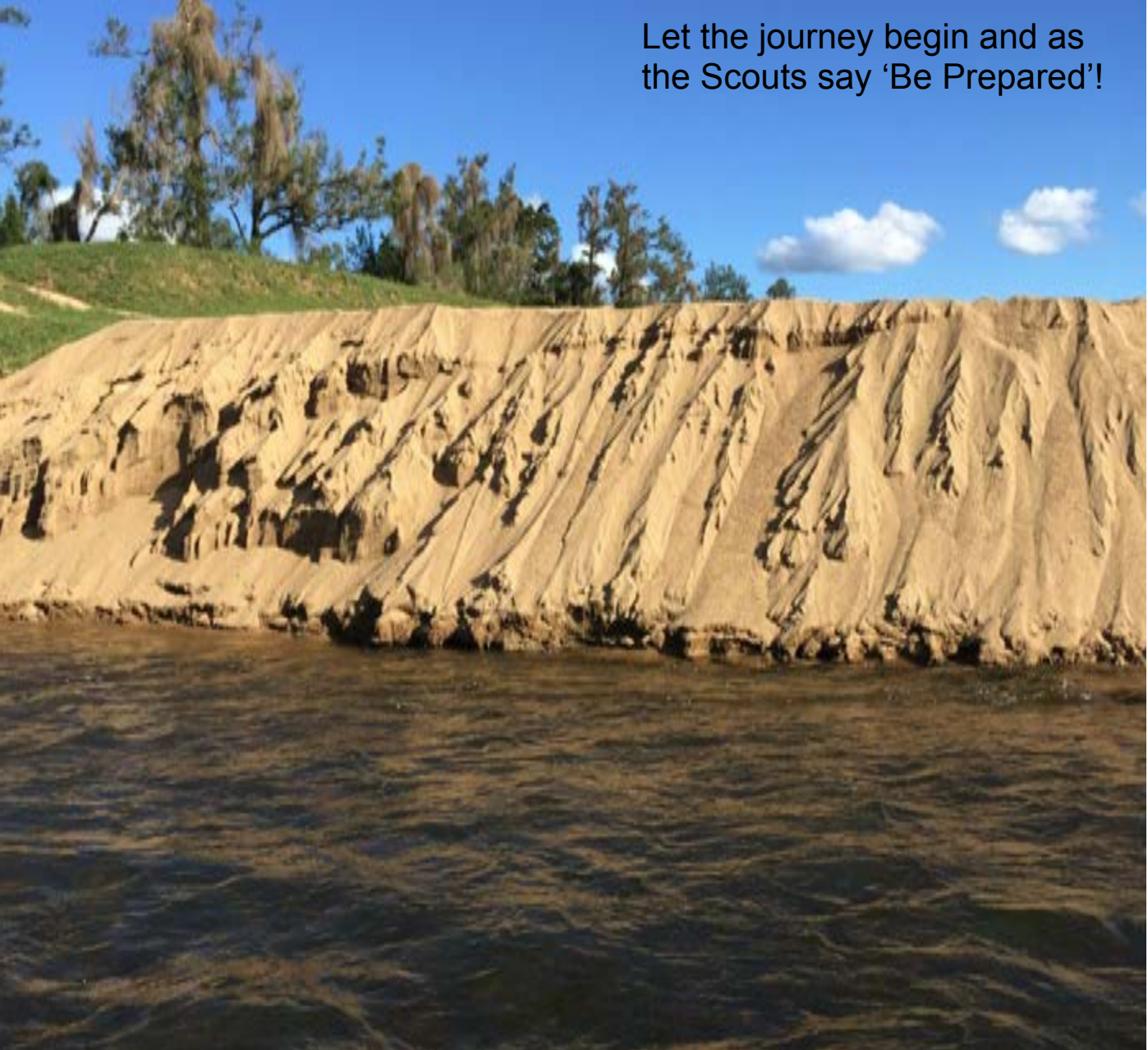
CREEK ADVENTURE



By Bryce Francis

There's something special about mapping out an area and making a plan to get to a stretch of water where people rarely or never go. Putting in the effort to get to these remote locations, knowing that it might be all a waste of time or it could become the trip of a lifetime. Either way, the environment these trips take you to never fails to amaze.

In a remote part of South East Queensland, we had mapped out a stretch of freshwater creek from a private property that we had gained access to, down to a road bridge 15km downstream. Locals had told us it would be hard and possibly impassible in a boat, leaving us unsure what we would come across. The possibility was there that we would get stuck, without being able to head upstream or downstream. We launched the boat and after making sure we had enough food and water, started the trek downstream. Once we crossed the first set of shallow rapids we realised that there would be no heading back upstream.



Let the journey begin and as the Scouts say 'Be Prepared'!

Ash with a nice sooty pinned on a TT DemonZ jighead.



Our adventure began by sliding the boat down a steep embankment, hoping to find some areas where fish may have never seen a lure. The punt was getting pounded by the rocks as the strong current pushed us through the shallow rapids. Being a flat bottom it scraped over rocks and logs with relative ease and after roughly seven kilometres of rapids we finally found a deep pocket of water at the back end of a big rapid.

We tied on ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Hardy Head and Pearl colours, rigged on 1/4oz TT DemonZ jigheads. Using the spot lock function on the Minn Kota electric motor, we spot locked just below the rapid and cast the GrubZ upstream into the fast flowing water, letting them drift back into the deep hole. First cast of the day Ash hooked up. After a solid fight in the fast moving water we were expecting a big bass to come to the surface and were shocked when what looked like a sooty grunter was swung into the net. Sure enough this big black fish was a sooty. After a few quick shots it was released healthily back into the stream.



Magic country.

Still in shock, we kept casting and five minutes later I hooked up to something. Again, another soot, this time slightly smaller and with an almost orange tinge, compared to the glossy black of the last fish. For the next half an hour or so we hunted that stretch of water for another three sooties.



It was getting late and we still had roughly 8km to the bridge where we had planned to get picked up. We didn't even know if we could get there as the creek was very skinny in more than one stretch. The most difficult stretch saw us having to get out and drag the punt across rocks and over logs.



Contrasting colours were interesting - GrubZ and Slim SwimZ producing.





The environment changed along the way... but would there be a light at the end of the tunnel...

The next stretch we entered was very skinny, dark and a bit eerie. There was no phone service, so we had no idea how much further the bridge was going to be. Worried we had underestimated the distance to the bridge and with daylight getting less we pushed on. Eventually we were relieved as we came out at the bridge, dragged the boat up the steep cliff and loaded it onto the trailer. This was the end of a great exploration adventure that had paid off.



Solid balls of muscle.

The gear we used consisted of a 1000 size reel, a 1-4kg rod with 6lb braid and 6lb leader. The boat was a 3.6m flat bottom punt with a 9.9hp outboard, along with a battery and Minn Kota electric motor. All the casting decks and floors were pulled out to minimize weight. The Flat bottom hull helped it to slide over rocks, logs, rapids and shallow areas easier.

We packed ZMan Slim SwimZ and GrubZ, TT DemonZ jigheads, some surface rigged ZMan Turbo CrawZ with TT ChinlockZ, a few small hardbodies and some TT Vortex Spinnerbaits. We had sufficient food, fuel and water and made a backup plan for if we couldn't get to the bridge. This trip was done before closed bass season and we are already planning another one once bass season opens again. Always remember safety first and be prepared.

Lure Checklist

ZMan 2.5" GrubZ

ZMan 4" Turbo CrawZ

TT Lures ChinlockZ jigheads

Selection of hard bodies

ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ

TT Lures DemonZ jigheads

TT Lures Vortex Spinnerbaits

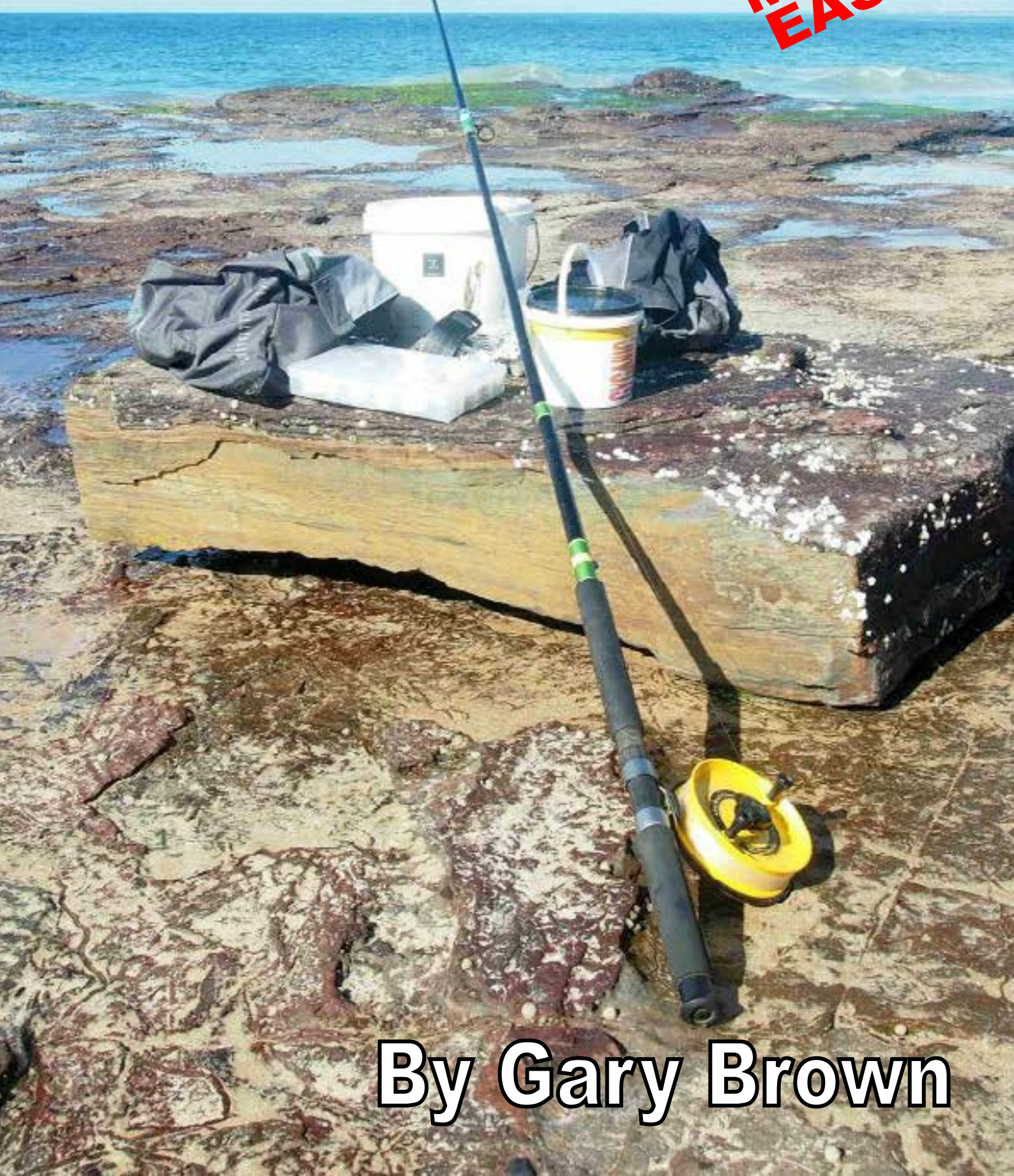


A successful adventure
and a solid sooty.

FLOAT FISHING

WITH LURES & BAIT

**MADE
EASY**



By Gary Brown

I guess my obsession with float fishing started as a kid when I watched these old guys float fish for luderick off a set of baths at one of my old haunts in Ramsgate, NSW. The baths are still there, but not in the form that they were previously. Nowadays you can't walk along the old timber structure, as it is now only wire netting.

Watching these old anglers do their balancing act, walking along these narrow timber structures, setting up camp at the platform at the end and chucking out a few handfuls of berley. They then carefully placed the stem float in amongst the maze of sand and finely chopped up weed and proceeded to sit and watch for that float to go under.

It wasn't long before I was taken under the wing by old Dick, who was a retired commercial fisherman who previously set nets out for mullet and prawns in Botany Bay. Dick let me borrow one of his outfits and sit beside him to learn the trade of fishing with a float.

Now these were stemmed floats that you would have a bent safety pin at the bottom, so that you could run the line through, and then at the top you would have to do a couple of half hitches to set the depth of your bait. Not only did this make kinks in your mainline, damaging it, it would reduce the time that you had your float in the water.

Green weed for the picking off a local rock platform.





To save time you need to have a few rigs pre-done and spare tackle at the ready.

We also used Styrofoam floats, with a hard plastic tube running from top to bottom. To stop it from moving up and down the line Dick would break off a piece of his matches and jam it into the top of the tube. This too damaged the line and the float, while sometimes the match stick would come out rendering the float useless.

Fishing with a float has come along in leaps and bounds since those early days. Stemmed floats now have rings at the top and bottom, you can get floats with rubber sleeves, you can buy plastic stoppers and the list goes on.

Just recently I was introduced to a Tackle Tactics product called A-Just-A Bubble Floats. They are a moulded, hollow, see through piece of plastic that is narrower at one end. Running through the middle is a piece of surgical silicone tube that runs from the top to the bottom. At each end there is a stopper that is attached to this piece of surgical tube that can be pulled out and twisted to lock and unlock the float onto the line.

They are available in Clear or Translucent Green and come in four sizes in the range, 3/8, 1/4, 3/16 and what they call Mini.

To give you a bit of an idea of the size of these floats I will give you the length from top to bottom, the diameter at the widest and smallest point.

Size	Length from top to bottom	Diameter at the widest and smallest point
Mini	41mm	19 to 8mm
3/16	53mm	19 to 6mm
1/4	55mm	21 to 8mm
3/8	63mm	28 to 8mm

Rigging the A-Just-A Bubble Float is very simple. Just feed your mainline through the float, slide it into the required position. Then gently pull out the top cap to twist (at least 5 to 6 turns) the internal surgical rubber. Then place the cap back into the slot, locking the float onto the line.

This allows the float position to be adjusted in seconds, without the use of pegging a match into it or doing a couple of half hitches around the top. This can be very time consuming and damage the line, and the A-Just-A Bubble Floats overcome this.

The A-Just-A Bubble Float can be used when either fishing with bait or a lure off the shore in the estuary or fishing a wash off the rocks or out of a boat. To give you a bit of an idea of the ways you could use the float I will take you through a few scenarios of how I have been using them.



The next time that you are in your local tackle shop keep a look out for A-Just-A Bubble.



These drummer were caught while using green cabbage and the larger 3/8 A-Just-A-Bubble float as it is easier for me to see in the wash.

Drummer off the rocks

Now when using the A-Just-A Bubble off the ocean rocks when targeting drummer, I find that I need to always use the 3/8 bubble as the larger bubble is much easier to see in the wash.

The rig when using the 3/8 bubble is quite simple. A small running ball sinker down onto the top of the bait or a small ball sinker down onto a small swivel, with a leader of about 30cm to the hook.

As for baits, you could try peeled prawns, cunje, brown or red crabs, cabbage, green weed and even white bread.

When fishing off the rocks I prefer to use my 3.6m, 3 to 6kg rod, mounted with a side cast reel and spooled with 6kg line.



Now using this method isn't just for drummer. You could target bream, trevally, mullet, squid, tailor, salmon and many more species off the rocks. Now baits aren't the only thing that these fish species will bite. Try substituting a peeled prawn with a 2" or 2.5" ZMan GrubZ, 3" Scented ShrimpZ, 2" CrusteaZ or a 3" Scented CrabZ for brown and red crabs. How about a ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ in Pearl for a white bait or what about as a substitute for a pilchard you could try the 5" Scented Jerk Shadz in Nuked Pilchard Glow colour.

Luderick in the estuaries

When targeting luderick in the estuaries and out of a boat I prefer to use two anchors, so that I can position the boat at 90 degrees to the shoreline. This enables me to move the boat sideways with the coming and going of the tide.

To save time you need to have a few rigs pre-made, spare tackle at the ready, berley prepared beforehand, bait and net at the ready and all of this close by.

Finding the correct depth for the bait is critical. Too high in the water and the smaller fish will take the bait and too low in the water the bait will drag along the bottom and get snagged, leading you to believe you have had a down. This is where the A-Just-A Bubble comes into its own, as it is so easy to change the depth with a few twists of the cap.



In this shot you will notice that the boat is perfectly positioned where the edge of the weed and sand meet.

It may have taken us a while to get a few fish, but spot 6 produced the results.



When the float has gone under I will usually allow about three seconds before I wind in any slack and then slow lift the rod to strike. As luderick are tough fighters and will use the current to put pressure on your gear, you will need to take your time when playing the fish back to the boat.

As you will see there is no stem on these floats, so at times you may find the bubble hard to see, especially when there is a fair amount of chop on the water. When the chop is high I will tend to use the 3/8 and if the water surface is very calm the Mini comes into play.

While using the A-Just-A Bubble targeting luderick in the estuaries I don't put any water inside the bubble, as I have already pre-determined the weights (spit shot sinkers) to suit the height I need the bubble to sit at.

My preferred outfit is a 3.2m, 2 to 5kg rod mounted with a threadline reel and spooled with 4kg floating line.



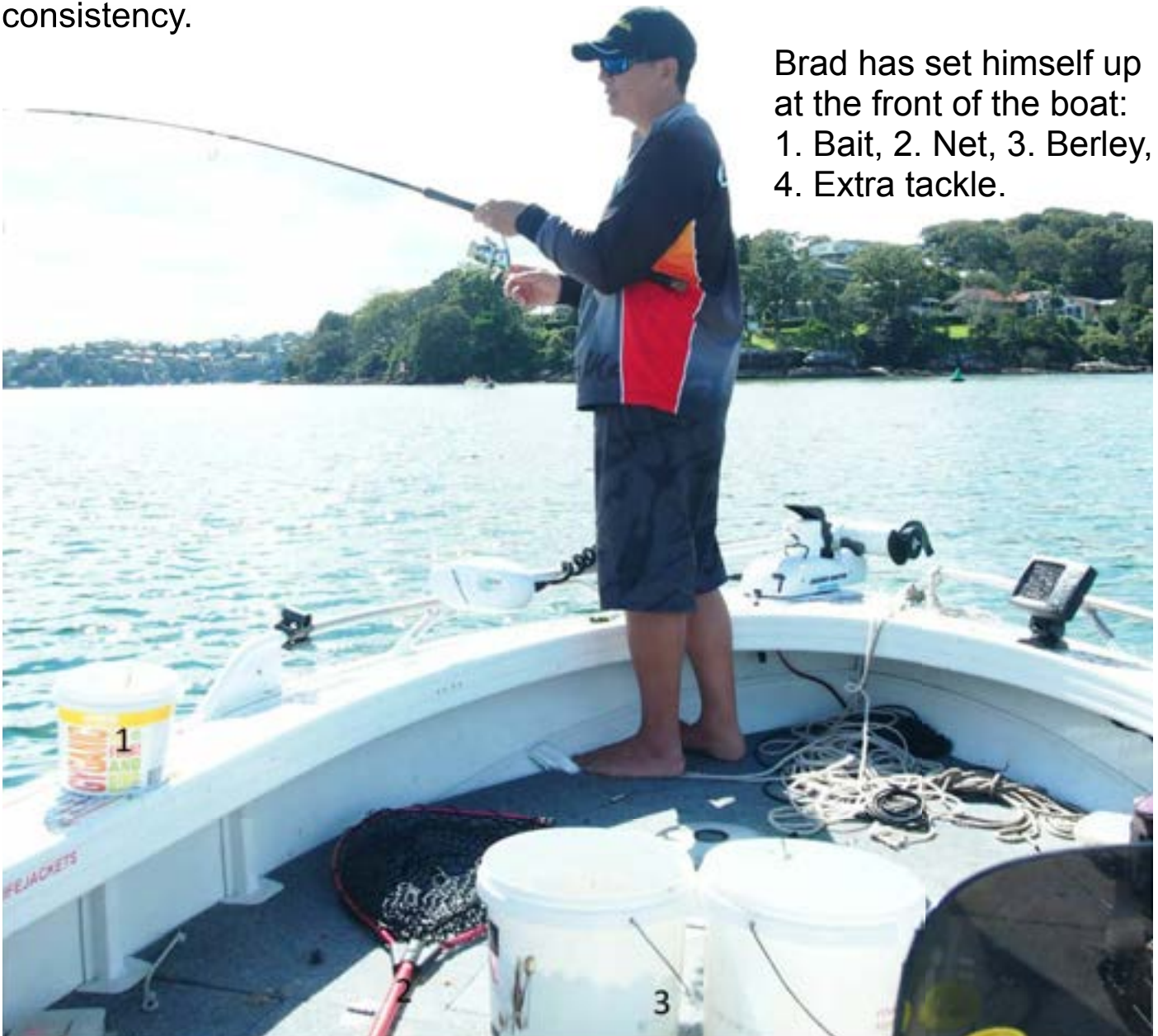
Mullet and garfish in the estuaries.

Most of my fishing for mullet and garfish is done in shallow water (30cm to 1.5 metres) and I will tend to only use the Mini bubble. Mainly due to the ease that the mullet and garfish will either pull the bubble under or move it from side to side as they try to eat the bait.

When rigging the bubble up it's just a matter of threading the line through the surgical tubing, twisting the cap about 5 to 6 times to set the depth, then tying on a small number 12 to 14 hook, putting on a small bit of pre-made pudding bait, then casting out and waiting for the mullet or garfish to take the bait. Berleying with bread crumbs does help to bring the fish on the bite.

My pre-made pudding bait consist of the following; white bread with crust cut off, water, flour and a couple of caps of the Pro-Cure Scent in either Bloodworm or Aniseed. This needs to be mixed into a plasticine consistency.

Brad has set himself up at the front of the boat:
1. Bait, 2. Net, 3. Berley,
4. Extra tackle.





Try suspending either a soft plastic or a bait under an A-Just-A Bubble and drifting it over the weed beds in your local estuary.



Used or disused oyster racks are prime snag country. Try suspending either a soft plastic or a bait under an A-Just-A Bubble and drifting it over them.



Try drifting either a live bait or a soft plastic under a float across the flats for flathead.

Flathead and Bream over the weed beds and flats

Have you ever thought of suspending a 2" or 2.5" ZMan GrubZ under an A-Just-A Bubble? I hadn't until I was doing some research on the net and came across a You Tube clip of using the bubble while fishing for bream beside a breakwall.

<https://youtu.be/qFbX0j3DPzM>

So, next time I was on the water I left the bait at home and concentrated on using the A-Just-A Bubble and instead of putting on a bait, I tried a soft plastic while fishing over a set of weed beds in my local waterway. On my first, second, third and fourth attempts, it didn't work. I would cast it out and let it drift around waiting for the bite. Much like when you are bait fishing. It was just bobbing around doing nothing. Each time I would get more frustrated as I quickly wound it in.

That was until I remembered what Will did in the You Tube clip that I watched earlier. Rather than just cast it out and let it float around, while waiting for the fish to find it, I used the tip of the rod to twitch the bubble so that the soft plastic would rise up from just above the weeds and then slowly float back down. It worked as the float disappeared out of sight and I was hooked up to a decent fish.

What you could also try is to let some water into the bubble so that it sits very shallow in the water. This will give you more casting distance and slightly more resistance in the water, keeping you in touch with the line and soft plastic. Much like when slow rolling a hard bodied lure.

I have found it effective if you rig the 1/4 A-Just-A Bubble Float with the narrower end of the float toward the rod tip when using soft plastics. When using a live bait, say a small poddy mullet, I rig it so that the wider end of the float is towards the rod tip. This will help stop the poddy mullet pulling the float under.

My preferred outfits when using these techniques are my 2.1m, 1 to 3 and 2 to 4kg outfits. Using this length of rod enables me to be able to fish weed beds and flats up to 1.5m in depth.

Even though the A-Just-A Bubble has been around for a number of years and I have only just been introduced to it, I have found that this extremely effective piece of tackle can be put to great use when it comes to using baits and soft plastics.

I have been told that you can use flies while using the A-Just-A Bubble and I can't see why this would not work. Maybe you will come up with a few more techniques when using it. If so you might like to share them with us.



Check out the beautiful markings that luderick have just out of the water.



Bridge pylons and rock walls are ideal spots to try the A-Just-A Bubble out.



Try suspending a squid jig under an A-Just-A Bubble.

BASS SEASON OPENER



By Dave Brace

Dave Brace loves his sweet water fishing and here he shares with us his opening adventure to the bass season... a species that is a favourite target and that occupies an unhealthy amount of Dave's head space. Fish on!

If you suffer from Aussie bass fishing withdrawal in the off season, you are most definitely not alone! Referring to these iconic Australian species within the wild rivers and creeks, rather than inland locked environments, I pass some of the time during the closed season period (between June and August on my home waters of QLD), preparing for the new season's opening in September. Here I'll explain how I maintain my passion in the off season and fine tune my skills, locate new water to fish and select lures to give myself the best chance of landing these Aussie battlers.

Let's face it, targeting one particular species year round can be very mundane, and although everyone gets great enjoyment out of witnessing a variety of fish sliming the decks of their boat or kayak, I'm sure most anglers also have a favourite species that they prefer to target. By archiving past images of fish caught into locations, dates and times of when they were caught, patterns emerge, knowledge is obtained and soon enough targeting a particular species becomes easier and this is no different when it comes to Australian Bass. Recording factors such as water levels, moon phases, barometric pressure and even tidal movement narrows those windows down for effectively targeting any fish species. Studying their breeding cycle and their spawning rituals is all beneficial when targeting these fish.



Where the salt water meets the fresh, turning the water brackish. Discoloured water with suspended sediment makes for a fun playground after the spawning season.

Down the hatch is a ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Houdini colour. The Aussie bass is an aggressive feeding fish.



In southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales, Australian bass make their way from the upper reaches of creeks and rivers from about June, moving from the sweet water to where the salt meets the fresh in brackish water to spawn. After these fish have spawned they then make their way back upstream during this closed season. So when the bass season opens, it is within the brackish water that I tend to start exploring, with the mindset of heading upstream.

Mind you, there are many, many manmade structures along these water systems such as barrages and weirs that prevent these fish from migrating downstream during their spawning season. Finding these areas where barriers exist is also a great starting point, keeping in mind that there may be restriction zones above and below these structures. In Queensland it is now legal to fish non tidal waters for Australian bass during the closed season, however my advice is to check local regulations before heading off on your adventure. Closed rivers and restriction zones can be found on government fishery websites.

During the closed season much of my time is spent with coffee in one hand while exploring Google Earth in search of new water to fish, with the intension of locating more remote areas. Normally my curiosity is too great and I find myself exploring these uncharted waters located using Google Earth, sometimes with no fishing gear prior to the season opening, predominantly for access either land based or for kayaks. The euphoria and hype of anglers posting their catches of fish on social media these day's only leads to more excitement upon the season opening and in turn extra traffic in more accessible areas. Hence the reason why it is getting harder and harder to find less pressured water.

With any sport, practise makes perfect and for mine, fishing is no different. Honing your skills casting with pin point accuracy will be beneficial when the season opens, whether it is done targeting other species among similar structure while on the water or casting a plug in a park or a back yard hitting targets. Australian Bass fancy hiding in thick cover under overhanging bushes, however casting lures into this particular structure can sometimes be quite difficult. Getting a lure deep within this type of structure requires a different approach sometimes by skimming lures across the water surface. Selecting the right lure to use in this scenario is imperative to avoid snagging up. Rigging a soft plastic, such as a 3" MinnowZ or GrubZ for instance, on a weedless ChinlockZ jig head would be a fantastic option. To achieve the skimming action of the lure an angler is required to get down at almost water level, so practising casting in a hunched position or on one knee will also be advantageous.



A bass anglers' paradise

When it comes to rod, reels and line, I prefer to use a baitcasting outfit, the rod rated at 3-5kg and about 6 feet in length. I have complete confidence using an Okuma's Cerros reel with its 9BB + 1RB bearing drive system and an incredible drag to pull any sized bass up, along with a spool that has plenty of line capacity. Braided main line rated at a minimum strength of 10lb is what I prefer to use with a leader length of half the rod length rated between 15-20lb, depending on the structure I'm fishing. Due to these fish being dirty fighters, abrasion on the mainline is usually evident from rubbing on underlying structure as the fish tries evading capture. As a result of their belligerent attributes, during the off season as part of the prepping process I'll also re-spool the reels I use to prevent future disappointment.



Lure selection can also be fickle at times depending on the water conditions, however Tackle Tactics range of lures will cover every situation you'll need to capture one of these fish in the wild. Whether you are chasing your first Australian bass, wanting to improve your PB or you are striving to capture a 50cm milestone bass, my advice is not to complicate and be overwhelmed with selecting a lure, rather keep it real simple. Bass are more active during low light periods and feed closer to the surface during these times, rigging a variety of ZMan soft plastic lures such as the new 2.75" Finesse FrogZ, the 3" MinnowZ and the 3.5" ZMan

GrubZ, on TT Lures unweighted 2/0 and 3/0 ChinlockZ will more than cover this situation. Using the same soft plastics rigged on a 1/4oz. or 3/8oz. 3/0 HeadlockZ jig head will give the same opportunities down deeper in the water column when the sun is higher in the sky and overhead.



Spinnerbaits are a great option and should be a compulsory item in any anglers lure tray especially when targeting Australian bass. When used correctly they can cover all depths of the water you're fishing and are pretty much snag proof. They are also very easy to utilise by using a slow rolling retrieve and letting them sink to the desired depths, where you hope the fish are holding. The higher you raise



your rod tip during this process, the closer the lure is worked to the surface. Opening your bail arm on a spin reel or free spooling your bait caster reel during the retrieve will allow the lure to drop immediately deeper within the water column and at times this is when a fish strike can occur unexpectedly. TT lures Vortex range of spinnerbaits is a preference of mine as they come as standard with stinger hooks and in a variety of weights and colours. Their fine gauge chemically sharpened hook also allows for great hook up rates, penetrating the fish's mouth with ease as the fish hone in on the flash and vibration of the spinning blades. The depth of water you're fishing will decide the weight of the spinnerbait to use. In really shallow, skinny water 1/8oz. weighted spinnerbaits are very versatile, while in deeper water 3/8oz. or 1/2oz. weighted spinnerbaits will get your lure down deeper faster.

TT Lures Vortex spinnerbaits are a staple in Dave's bassin' kit.



TT Lures Switchblades are a very effective lure when it comes to attracting bass, however due to the nature of the structure you're fishing, keeping to a 1/4oz. Switchy is advisable. As good as they are at pinning fish, they are just as good at pinning logs, tree limbs and rocks under the surface. Fishing these lures higher in the water column and closer to the surface is a worthwhile option as bass have a tendency to eat them like lollies.

Preparation is the key to success and if you are like minded, you will be able to relate to the fact that it can be a fun experience. The results will come and all that work you have put in during the closed season will be all forgotten and a drop in the ocean when you are showing off those happy snaps and bragging to your mates about that Aussie bass of a lifetime you just experienced landing.

Nothin' ventured, nothin' gained!

Bass fancy hiding in thick cover, under overhanging bushes and rewards come when casting into this structure.



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