

ESTUARY FISHING SECRETS



ESTUARY FISHING TIPS:

TROLLING:

Pontoon 21's 48mm DR Crackjacks, are best for depths from 1 to 2.5 m, best colours Bloody Tiger Prawn, Ghost Gill, and also Spanish Red in dirty water, best size 48mm, Zerek Tango shads work well too.



Lively Lure's Micro Mulletts are great for depths 2m to 4m for flathead, best colours are the orange & gold, and anything with pink in it, or the green and black one.

Savage gear 3D shrimp 5cm xdr are a great trolling lure too! The brown gold, brown shrimp, and sand shrimp colours are good.

We use Atomic arrowz and Shimano Sonic pro rods 6'6 for trolling, 7 ft for blades/vibes, 2500 Sienna reels with Shimano braid, or Toray 6lb PE 0.6 or any good quality, thin diameter braided line to get deeper easily, tied with an improved albright knot to about a metre of 10lb fluorocarbon leader, there are youtube videos demonstrating how to tie. Shimano and Sunline braids are good too.

Trolling speed is as slow as possible so motor just in gear, if you have a headwind then adjust as needed, and try to always troll with the tide and as close to the bottom as possible, a fish finder is very useful for this. Have the lures about 20 metres or more back.

The edges of weedbeds and sandbanks will always produce fish. Very important that the lures are swimming straight and free of weed. Tune them with long nose pliers to swim straight if they're not by bending the metal towpoint a tiny bit at a time the opposite way to which the lure is swimming. Remember not to grab the lure by the bib, it ruins their swimming action.



DRIFTING:

For drifting use metal blades in the 40mm size, best blades are the Ecogear ZX40 in colours 440, 441, 442, 414, 415 & 447 (deadly! and Strike pro cyber vibes, best colour 1460B, as are the small Atomic semi hardz and Zerek fishtrap vibe (Fat betty colour deadly on big flathead). A constant very short sharp flick of the rod is the best jig action, 6lb braid with 10lb fluorocarbon leader tied with improved Albright knot. Slow up or speed down the jigging action until you get hits. We sell packs of Ecogear ZX40 blades and Sax scent, sms 0432 990 302 to order yours.

Remember you need a drift that is not too fast or not too slow (about 2 knots max), or this does not work, have to have the right wind/tide angles. If the drift is quick move to shallower water, the lures have to be bouncing over the bottom to get bites.

In the right conditions it can catch cricket score numbers of fish big and small, and a large range of estuary and reef species in the broadwater including lots of squid in the cooler months. Smear some Sax scent on the blades every 30 minutes for more aggressive strikes.

If you don't get bites after 5 minutes of drifting, move a few hundred metres and look for bait on the fish finder. Book a private charter with us to get a full rundown on how to use vibes and best spots. We have caught over 25 species on them, and over 100 fish in a day.



SURFACE LURING:

70m Bassday sugapens and MMD splashprawns for surface action in Summer for bream, whiting etc, best Sugapen colours mb16, c137. Again use good quality 6lb braid and a metre of 10lb leader. Medium/fast retrieve for whiting with constant flick of the rod, some pauses for bream, best used in sand flat areas less than a metre deep, clear water, and/or near structure.

MANGROVE JACKS:

For heavy tackle trolling deep divers the Atomic Double deep 85mm are awesome for Mangrove Jack in 4-5m depth. Live Whiting or Mullet is best bait for Jacks at night, use 40lb braid with 4 metre long 50lb leader, running sinker big enough to reach the bottom, and single hook or snell trace with

4/0 or 5/0 Mustad hoodlum hooks, and anchor in areas 4 metres or deeper near structure such as bridge pylons, rocks walls and pontoons. Hold on tight when they hit. It is a waiting game with the Jacks but you will catch them if you persist. Best time is sunset until 2 or 3 hours after dark, December to May, and after hot, humid days.

MULLOWAY:

A good way to target these guys is with soft vibes fished in deep holes around tide changes. Drop close to structure or deepest part of holes and a slower lift of about a metre high then drop works well. Keep repeating and drifting through until you get a hit. Around the seaway best time is dusk or dawn coinciding with last hour of run out tide, first hour of run in. Best vibes are Samaki Vibelicious and Zerek fishtraps, use the biggest ones in deep water such as at the seaway and Jumpinpin.

OTHER:

A great way to catch big whiting is to wade along yabby banks on a run in tide and flick unweighted yabbies into very shallow water, using a 1-3kg 7ft rod, light reel, 4lb braid & fluoro leader.

Gulp 2 inch shrimp in Banana prawn colour on 1/6 oz jig head works very well for flathead, just leave it in a rod holder while drifting. The big soft vibes work very well too, especially a slow lift and drop in deep water for big flathead and jewfish.

For bait fishing use as light a sinker as possible to get to the bottom and fluorocarbon leader and Mustad baitholder hooks no.2 or smaller size, 1 metre long leader.

SUMMARY:

Best fishing times are a week leading up to bigger moons especially full moon, and when there's been some rain. Best bites usually when there's tide running and you can drift quite fast (but not too fast). Look for shelter from wind or out of the main tidal run if the drift is too fast. Some of the biggest moons can be tough fishing, as are the neap tides.

The drier the weather the further up the rivers the fish will be. Cast net and yabby pump very useful for gathering fresh bait. After heavy rain and floods the fish will be closer to the river mouth and in deeper holes.

Lure colours depend on water clarity and weather. Generally in clear water, more natural and clear colours work best, chartreuse works well in clear water over muddy bottom. In dirty water flashy colours especially gold, and darker, and bright colours work well. Use scent on your lures to encourage the fish to attack aggressively.

Best fishing times are when there is run, no run = no fun. Best times to fish deeper holes and near estuary mouth are around slack tide for fish such as Mulloway. We often love to fish on the edges and in the edge of channels up rivers, great feeding zone, just watch out for the jetski and tinny rats. Remember find the bait, find the fish. If the sounder screen is clear, keep moving. If you're fishing from the shore, keep moving walking the bank until you find fish. These are just some of our secrets, there is lots more to learn.

Book an exclusive charter for a day of action with us guaranteed to catch fish, and we will show you our techniques and locations to ensure a successful day on the water every time you go fishing. wherever you live.

LINKS:

www.goldcoastrivercharters.com

Call or SMS Clint 0432 990 302

Instant messenger: m.me/bradsmithfishingcharters



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BONUS TIPS

Fishing big tides. They can be tricky to fish with a lot of water spread around at high tide, but let's explore a few options.

The main channels and river mouth run hard and clear when the tide flow is at its peak, they are best fished an hour either side of the tide changes.

When the flow is fast try moving to the edge of the channels away from the main stream. It is here fish will be gathering to comfortably get a feed.

Another option is heading far up rivers to areas that don't normally get much rain, this is where some baitfish and jelly prawns will be found, and in turn predators following them. The run out fishes better with less water around, compacting fish schools more.

Lastly try pumping yabbies just after low tide, and flick them and live worms unweighted as the run in tide water quickly covers the yabby banks. Whiting, flathead, and bream will be right in the shallows waiting to access the banks to forage.

Surface lures such as MMD splashprawns, and Bassday Sugapens will work well too in the clear, shallow water. The big sandbanks between Southport and Grand Hotel are all great spots that attract plenty of fish.

DROUGHT

With the prolonged drought conditions in many areas you may find heading far upstream in rivers productive when looking for fish including mangrove jacks and flathead.

Bait fish will often head to the extreme upper end of the saltwater to find shelter in the more discoloured water. Predatory fish know this and follow to prey on them.

We can in turn do the same, and fish the most upstream deeper holes with great success, for fish such as mulloway, trevally, bass, flathead, bream, and whiting.

Try using natural and pale colour lures in the clearer water but don't be afraid to try something different in the deepest holes, and in the early morning, and on cloudy days.

Get out early before the boat traffic on weekends, and during run in tides, as once the sun is up over the clear water the fishing action slows.

MANGROVE JACKS

To successfully target mangrove jacks requires strong, good quality tackle. You might get lucky once in a while on light gear, but most of the time a good old fashioned smoking is the end result.

Trolling for mangrove jacks is far from easy, it is effective however. You'll need baitcast reels that can handle their brute power, such as Shimano Curados and Quantum Smokes.

Rods in the 6-10 kg and 6 ft length will do the job coupled with the above reels, and quality braid no less than 30 lb breaking strength will be needed to stop the bigger models.

For live baiting for jacks, spinning reels up to 8000 size and leader up to and above 80lb are sometimes needed to land those 60cm and above fish. A nearly locked drag and some urgent pumping and winding just might prevent a violent and quick bust up. Be ready, they hit when you least expect it.

Catching mangrove jack on lures as many know is the holy grail for estuary anglers.

There are a few ways of targeting them on lures, including casting soft plastics, surface lures and hard bodies as close to structure as possible. If you're not losing lures you're not getting close enough.

This can take time to master so one relatively simple way to first get a jack on board without too many donut sessions is by trolling for them.

In our local Gold Coast and Tweed waters there are some of the biggest jacks around, which makes them hard to stop! Nerang river, Tweed river, Coomera river, as well as the creeks and Sovereign island walls all play host to monsters over 60cm in length.

Trolling works well for a number of reasons. Firstly you're covering lots of ground which improves your chances of encountering a jack. Secondly during daytime the jacks can be holding deep along rock walls, deep diving lures gets you in the strike zone.

Also by trolling the momentum of the boat moving gives you a headstart in turning their head on hooking up. It can pay to just leave the rod in the holder when they strike and driving the boat to the middle of the river to stop them snagging you.

If you hold the rod while trolling, be sure to hold on tight with both hands, a violent hit from a big jack can rip the rod out of your hands and into the water.

Persistence is important if you want success, sometimes trolling up and down through the same area finally gets a territorial strike from an angry jack.

Even if you're just travelling between spots or passing through 6 knot zones, put a lure or two out and sooner or later you'll get lucky.

Water depth of 4-6m produces well with this method, look for rocky structure on the fish finder, and water temperature of 26 degrees or above is ideal.

In the downstream areas of main rivers and during bigger moon phases focus your trolling around the tide changes. Trolling against the tide works well too, keeping the lure in their face longer and agitating them.

The bycatch is cool with this form of fishing, with big cod, flathead, gt's, or even a mulloway a possibility.

We run jack charters all through summer, get in touch to book your adventure. It's never guaranteed to catch them, but when it happens there is nothing like it. Lots of high fiving and trembling hands on the boat.

The easiest way to catch them on the Gold Coast is by using live baits such as poddy mullet or even better, whiting. Winter whiting are plentiful in the gold coast broadwater and easily caught on yabbies, worms, thin strips of squid, or lures. I catch tons of them on blade vibes and they have no size limit.

Keep your whiting alive, they are quite hardy in a bucket with a battery operated aerator. You want to be anchored just before sunset, in an area with some tidal flow and near structure, using a running sinker trace with 4/0 snelled circle hooks, and a sinker just large enough to hold bottom.

Push the front hook through the upper lip of the whiting, and the other into the anal hole then out the side. They seem to stay alive longer this way rather than through their back near their sensitive lateral line.

Baitrunner reels are a good option, this gives the jacks a chance to kill and begin to move off with the bait. React quickly when they do, they can brick you in seconds. If you are fishing in an area with heavy, snaggy structure wind be very quick to react.

Light line is not an option, you'll possibly need 40 lb braid, with 50 lb leader to stop the bigger jacks. Even then you'll still get smoked, especially in the Nernang river where some of the biggest jacks are.

A few more Jack tips:

*Bigger tides try more upstream. Smaller tides more downstream. *Try to be where there is reasonable tidal flow but not too much.

*Fish around the tide changes during big tides when there is not too much run.

*Use quality strong hooks, or jacks will happily straighten them.

*Hot and stormy days with a rising barometer can provide good action

*Move a few times during the evening, try two or three spots

- *Keep things quiet on the boat, don't make noise with the anchor chain, and keep lights to a minimum. Do not shine torches into or near the water!
- *Make up enough traces for the night so you can quickly replace them when you lose them on snags or fish.
- *Put out two or three rods in strong rod holders, with different baits on each one.
- *Hold on tight if you choose to hold the rod and engage the reel, or they will rip it out of your hands and into the water.
- *Be patient, their violent strikes can come at any time when least expected.
- *Pontoons, moored boats, bridge pylons, rocky walls, corners on entrances to canals and marinas all hold jacks.

The local Gold Coast and Tweed rivers, creeks and lakes all hold monster size jacks, get out there and have a go.

NORTHERLY WINDS

Northerly winds and barometer drops. These can make fishing tough but a change of focus can result in big rewards.

While fishing for flathead can slow down, try chasing mangrove jacks and big whiting. The hot weather really gets the jacks going.

The best way to target them is in the evening and into the night on lures, or live baits and dead baits. They can be caught through the day however, if you put in the hours and find your own special spots that produce.

Some good areas are around structure such as rock walls, pontoons, boats, wrecks, mangroves, trees, and where there is good tidal flow in rivers and creeks. Even the smallest creeks hold jacks, as do lakes.

Casting and trolling large soft plastics, soft vibes, hard bodies, and surface lures all work well. You have to get in close to the structure though so practice your casting! Red lures imitating baby jacks, white lures imitating mullet or whiting, and natural colours in clear water will give you a good chance.

Our local Tweed, Coomera and Nerang rivers are all home to big fish. Don't go too light on gear or you will get busted up in seconds. Using a bimini twist is a good idea as a shock absorber, and upgrade your hooks, Jacks have no trouble straightening cheap ones.

Whiting are ravenously feeding to fatten up for spawning, get out there with surface lures and a non stop walk the dog retrieve for best results. Bassday Sugapens and MMD splash prawns will both catch heaps of good fish for us this summer.

If you'd like some pointers book a trip with us and we'll run you through some effective techniques.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Attention to detail is vital to success in fishing. Let's go through a few small things that make a big difference.

Always check your leader after each fish, flathead can easily cut and rough up leaders. After landing a fish run your fingers along the leader to ensure it's smooth.

If not, cut and retie the lure on. You don't want to be losing that once in a lifetime fish next to the net because of a leader parting.

Plus you'll also lose an expensive lure, and on top of that the poor fish is swimming away with a lure and hooks in its mouth.

Always rinse your lures off under the tap after fishing or they'll rust and become blunt and weak. If a treble loses a hook, replace it.

Also don't hook your lures onto your rod runners, hook them either on the side of the runners or at the base of the rod.

This keeps the runners smooth, the last thing you want is losing a dream fish because a crack in the ceramic cuts the line.

With hardbodies, always check they are swimming straight out of the packet, and tune them with long nose plyers by gently bending the tow point the opposite way that it's swimming.

AFTER RAIN

At the moment it's best to focus your efforts near where dirty water meets clean in creeks and rivers that had big rain. It's also worth trying in places that weren't affected by catchments. For example lakes and canals away from the main river streams. It can also pay to fish rivers on a run in tide to find the saltier water that estuary species prefer to feed in.

The seaway and broadwater is a good option this weekend because of the influx of cleaner ocean water.

Try using yabbies which work really well in dirty water, as do other baits and lures with some smell such as Gulps. Use lures that are bright coloured or have dark/ bright contrast to stand out in the water and catch the fish's eye. Gold and shiny colours often stand out.

SURFACE FISHING FOR WHITING

Firstly the Bassday Sugapen has been released in a new 58mm size and new colours like this one pictured below. It has a very prawn like look to it, and only slightly lighter in weight which mean it will cast well. In short it looks a winner!

The best way to fish these lures is find shallow, clear water no deeper than 0.5m, put in long casts, then hold the rod low and a medium speed retrieve with no pauses. Just a quick and constant flick of the rod as you wind.

A perfect place to try this is over the top of yabby banks at high tide, and it's best to cut all motors to reduce noise. There are many such spots at the Gold Coast and Tweed.

Ideally a light surface wind and some cloud cover is the ideal scenario for a successful, adrenalin filled session.

Another quality finesse popper style surface lure is the MMD Fishing splash prawn made locally by Mick Molnar.

This quality product is making a mark on the estuary scene and we can't wait to make full use of it.

UV LURES

UV active lures are making an impact on recent times on the estuary fishing scene and on our Gold Coast fishing charters. It is quite surprising how well they work at times.

We've also recently experimented with UV enabled scent on our vibe lures, to great effect. The bite is more aggressive and sustained, when fish miss the hooks

they often return three or four times until getting hooked.

It's common knowledge to use lure colours to suit the water and weather conditions, for example using natural colours in clear water and sunny days.

UV active lures add an extra element to whatever contrast catches the attention of predatory estuary fish. In short they work!

A perfect example is Zerek's range of Tango Shad lures that are UV active. Check them out, they will add another weapon to your fishing arsenal.

DRY WEATHER

The old saying goes, drought by land, drought by sea. Nowhere is this more true than in rivers.

There has been a lack of significant rainfall for a long time now, typical of this sunburnt country of ours that experiences extreme droughts and floods.

We are finding the water is very clear which can make fishing tough, so what do we do? Firstly if you head out on the water and are seeing crystal clear where you can easily see the bottom, it's likely you'll struggle to catch fish of much size, especially ambush predators.

We have covered this topic before but here are some options and ideas, whether you are land based or have a boat: fish deeper water such as Jumpinpin mouth and the seaway, fish a run out tide where there is dirtier water running out of creeks, fish early morning and at night, fish with light gear and small sinkers and lures, fish the windward side of waterways that have been roughed up.

Use natural looking colour and transparent lures nothing too flashy, and try around the edges of sand banks and weed beds with surface lures, and in the shadows of bridges, boats, pontoons, rock walls and natural structure such as trees and mangroves.

Also fish in the trail of jetskis and wakeboats that have stirred up the muddy areas. Cloudy days are better too. If wading the flats be very stealthy and quiet.

Fingers crossed for some decent downfalls from storms over the summer, as El nino will make regular rain scarce.

SPRING FISHING

Spring has sprung so what to target now? The bigger flathead have thinned out in number in our upper estuary reaches, they are moving closer to the river mouths in preparation for their spawning event. Try to release the bigger breeding females over 60cms in length. A good way to target these fish is with soft vibes in deeper water, by drifting and "teabagging" or casting up current then bouncing the lure along the bottom, lifting slowly and dropping to get the lure vibrating. Zerek fish traps Atomic semi hardz are an excellent choice for this style of fishing. It will help to locate schools of bait fish on your sounder, often there will be flathead under them ready to ambush strays.

We still have some cool mornings at the moment, so you will find some big flathead sitting in shallow water feeding and warming up. A few methods will work here in attracting a strike, including trolling shallow diving lures over the top of and along the edge of weedbeds and sandbanks, stealthfully casting and slowly retrieving large glide or swim bait style lures in very shallow water, and using surface lures such as MMD Splash Prawns and Bassday Sugapens. Casting vibes and blades into semi shallow areas and hopping them along will also be effective.

One of our favourite styles of fishing will soon be available again on our charters, and that is surface luring for whiting. It has got to be one of the most visually exciting and addictive techniques. To see three or four 35cm plus whiting climbing over each other vying for a surface lure in very shallow and clear water is up there on the adrenalin scale. Smithy will resume this seasonal option in October at his Tweed whiting superbanks which are amongst the best in Australia, and it is a good idea to book ahead for this popular activity. The trip also offers hard fighting trevally, tarpon, bream, and flathead as bycatches. We have several new lures and methods which will add an extra element to the fun this summer.

TROLLING MINNOW LURES

The rating written on minnow lure packaging usually portrays the depth they achieve when casting and retrieving.

If you troll the lures with the tide and set them back around 15 to 20 metres behind the boat, you can add a metre or in some cases double their recommended diving depth range.

Using a good quality braid with around .06mm diameter and a very short 6lb fluorocarbon leader no longer than 50cm in length will allow you to get the lure down even further.

Our favourite trolling lures for flathead, bream and whiting are Smithy's lil mates, Zerek Tango shads, Pontoon 21 crackjacks, Savage gear 3D shrimp xdr, Lively Lures micro mullets, and OSP Dunk if you want to get a small down really deep. (5 metres) Any of these lures are selected by us to use daily based on their own features in the prevailing conditions.

DREDGERS

Do not take bananas on a boat! Seriously they are bad luck haha.

Another tip is look for dredgers in estuaries. Especially this time of the year when the river water is super clear, any discoloured water created by dredgers working is going to attract fish. Firstly the food dug up is a feeding opportunity for them, and secondly the dirty water creates an instant ambush zone for fish such as flathead.

Just imagine a bait fish being swept along with the tide. One minute you are cruising along with enough visibility to take evasive action and escape getting eaten, the next minute you are entering dirty water with low visibility, getting inhaled by a hungry flathead buried in the mud.

In this dirty water it pays to use lure colours that will stand out against the contrast of the the sky and water colour, if something isn't working change lures until you get a strike.

PERSISTENCE

Like a lot of things in life, fishing is about persistence. When things aren't going your way, it's easier to give up and go home.

Everyone has bad days and sometimes the fishing is slow no matter what you do. But if you stay calm and focus on cracking the code every time you head out fishing, you'll make your own luck.

Sometimes a change of tactic is required, other times a change of location. Just because a tactic worked the previous day, does not mean it will work again the next.

We've had sessions at Tweed river where it felt like you could do no wrong, drifting along a 2km stretch of water produced seemingly countless big whiting and flathead caught and released. The next day the thinking was to repeat the process, only to discover not a single bite in the vicinity.

A good tip is think of the whole river as a hotspot, fish can be feeding almost anywhere. Changing location doesn't necessarily mean racing at full speed 5kms away either. Stay composed, take your time, and search for bait schools on the fish finder. The predatory fish might only be hundreds of metres away from where you are not getting any action.

It pays to have an array of tactics at your disposal too depending on the season. Some estuary tactics we employ on our charters include drifting shallow flats with vibes and soft plastics, teabagging in deeper areas with lures, trolling sandflats with hardbodies, surface fishing casting with poppers and walk the dog lures to name a few.

Keep learning new techniques and work hard at it, and buy decent gear, cheap junk is false economy.

GO SLOW

We often notice boats racing up and down the rivers constantly searching for fish. Number one you'll burn excessive fuel and two you're probably driving over fish to find fish.

Slow down, look closely at your surroundings and be observant. Look for signs of life such as birds diving, bait schools getting chased, changes in the water flow.

If you're fishing a new area, pick a 1km section and just stay and focus on that area the whole day and get to know it. You should know all the features of the river floor before moving on somewhere else. After a while you will look out at the river as if there is no water there and "see" all the contours and depth changes.

Do that for every 1km section of your local waterway and before too long you will have your own hotspots to fall back on every time you go fishing.

A good start is to book an exclusive charter with us to show you various lure techniques guaranteed to catch fish every time you go. We fish the calm waters of the Tweed river, and Gold Coast broadwater.

DIRTY WATER

At this time of year when the water in rivers is at times very clear, we go looking for relatively dirtier water.

With our preferred fishing style of targeting fish such as flathead by twerking and teabagging blades, gulps and vibes, and trolling hard body lures, we find the baitfish seek refuge in more discoloured water, and the predators follow. Super clear water where you can easily see the bottom results in catches of smaller resident fish, with an exception being tailor surface feeding.

Sometimes fishing a run out tide will provide the desired conditions, or venturing far upstream in the estuaries. Cloudy days can help too at this time of year too, or a windy day making the water surface choppy. Some of the slowest days are in glassed out and sunny conditions.

Lure choice plays an important factor in success too, natural and pale colours will often catch more and bigger fish in winter, unless it is cloudy, choppy, or there is some dirty water from a creek run off, in which case try the more striking and darker colours.

If you find nothing is working well on drifts, try long troll runs to find "nests" of feeding fish then stop and focus on that area. Bigger fish are often feeding nearby smaller fish so don't leave fish to find fish straight away. The thumper flathead could be dominating the best feeding area metres away from the little rats. Finally remember to choose lures that resemble what the fish are feeding on.

NEAP TIDES

Neap tides-they can be slow fishing in areas where flow usually enables fish to feed aggressively, by being able to sit in the current and get food brought to them on a plate.

Other times there can be a small difference between high and low tide. In this situation a change of tactic is required. One such tactic is fishing on top of shallow areas that stay covered for longer thus enabling fish such as flathead to feed for longer. This water can be super shallow and produce big fish. A shallow bank with mangroves nearby can cause flathead, bream, and whiting to go on a feeding frenzy by actively rounding up bait fish or prawns and cornering them. You will notice this action with boils and splashes on the surface.

A number of methods work well in targeting them including long trolling runs with shallow diving lures such as Pontoon 21 crackjacks, surface luring with Suga pens for example, and casting lightly weighted soft plastics or vibes ahead of you into the shallows then hopping the lure back into deeper water and enticing the fish to chase. This time of year with the clear water around, natural and transparent lure colours work best.

WINTER

During the winter months the water temperatures in our rivers naturally starts to drop. This can be a good time to locate and fish up on top of very shallow sandbanks around the top of the tide. Flathead of all sizes will often move out of the deeper water onto these shallow flats to feed as the shallow water warms up quicker by the sun.

It is very common for trophy size flathead to be caught in water that is only around 30 cm deep as we say in the industry a flathead is happy to lay and wait if there is enough water to cover their backs.

ASSIST HOOKS

Assist hooks. Stinger or assist hooks are very useful in estuary fishing situations. Firstly on surface lures such as Sugapens, they can really ping whiting or bream that bite short or miss hit the lure.

They have a better hook up rate and lose less fish. On lures such as metal blades, again they have a better hook up rate, they don't inhibit the lure action, plus they are more snag resistant than trebles, and if a fish is hooked on one of them, the other hook will tend to swing around and pin them as well, resulting in less lost fish at the net. Make sure you buy decent quality, strong assists to avoid them snapping on bigger catches.

FINESSE FISHING

Finesse fishing. There is more pressure on fish these days, therefore it pays to go stealthy when chasing estuary species.

Starting with line, you can still catch big fish on light braid. Use a good quality braid that has a thin diameter for it's breaking strain, tied to a metre of fluorocarbon leader.

Whether you're using bait or lures it will make a difference to your catch rate, especially trolling and casting soft plastics and vibes. 6lb braid and 10lb leader is enough to handle most fish in the rivers.

Other things that will tip the odds in your favour are using good quality, proven lures, and as light a weight as possible to reach the bottom.

Also it is amazing what size and numbers of fish you can catch on tiny 4cm long lures. Elephants eat peanuts!

SCENTS

While using lures such as blades and vibes, it doesn't hurt to rub on some scent such as S Factor.

Keep a tube in your pocket and every 30 minutes at least apply more. We find it does make a difference, at the very least if a fish hits and misses they are more likely to return for a more aggressive second bite.

The scent will let off a faint berley trail too while you're drifting, further helping your cause in getting fish to find your lure.

If you use a vibe with a good strong but fine vibration, even better, improving your catch numbers, sizes and hook up rate.

TAILOR

We mentioned last week that big bream will start to enter our rivers over the next few months.

Nice quality tailor will also enter the rivers at the same time so keep an eye out for any bird or surface activity as this is a major sign of where to find these lure crunching fish.

Trolling minnow lures and casting small metal spinners is the way to approach these hard fighting critters early morning. Use the cheaper lures to troll as they are not too fussy when feeding, and will chop off expensive lures too often.

WINDY DAYS

Easier and tempting to stay in bed, sleep in, get up, have a coffee, then watch a fishing show on tv that makes you want to go fishing.

Sound familiar? You only live once so get out there and get fishing. Windy days provide some really good fishing. Obviously offshore is out of the question it's too strong, but in Gold Coast estuaries estuaries fish can be very active. The wind can provide surface chop so the fish have the cover to be

less wary, and it can stir up some dirty water off the banks, and move the food around, again providing cover for fish to feed.

You can anchor which is not often that effective. Trolling works well on windy days. I've been out in gale force wind and smashed flathead for hours on end trolling Lively Lures micro mullets. Try troll with the tide for best results, and if there is a head wind at the same time even better, slows you down and keeps you in the strike zone longer when passing through a patch of fish. Also if drifting look for cover, during the cyclone up North a few months ago we found a high sheltered bank at the Tweed and had a fantastic session on solid flathead and big sand whiting.

FLATHEAD

When chasing flathead it helps to have a number of techniques ready to use. Trolling hardbodies can really take big numbers of flatties at times.

If you find you're getting many smaller fish, try move a few metres left or right on your next run through the area, the bigger fish are often not far away and dominating the best feeding position. Other times when the drift is steady and the wind is not opposing the tide, have some blades, soft vibes, and gulps available. The blades and vibes can be lightly jigged close to the bottom.

While you're drifting throw out a 2 inch Gump shrimp on 1/6oz jighead, make sure it just reaches the bottom but not too far out that it's dragging, and place the rod in a holder and let the drift and boat movement do the work. Many times this has caught the biggest flathead of the day for us!

MULLOWAY

Mulloway are a prized catch by recreational fishers, but many fruitless hours can be spent chasing them.

One method that works well is using soft vibes and metal blades fished deep and slow. Try around tide changes in deeper holes and places like the seaway pipe. The last half hour of a run out tide is prime time. It helps to have good braid for less resistance in the water and fluorocarbon leader. Drop the lure while slow drifting, with the bigger soft vibes a slow metre high lift then slow drop works well, with blades a shorter, sharper action is best.

Every 15 minutes or so rub some S factor or similar scent on your lure. It's persistence that pays, so if you mark them and bait on the sounder, keep at it! Sooner or later you'll come up solidly hooked.

