Early and late are peak times

David Poulton | December 2011 » Area Articles / New South Wales / Mid North Coast / Port Macquarie /

It’s simply the best time of year for an early morning or late afternoon fishing session. With water temps high, fish are active and baitfish should be abundant, making it a prime time to target a variety of species.

If you’re heading offshore then it’s pelagic time. Setting off north to the bait ground is a must to collect live bait, and slimy mackerel should be around.

Key species to target will be tuna and marlin. The Port Macquarie Fisheries FAD will be a good starting point and can be found at S31° 24.567’, E153° 04.725’.

Mahi mahi and kingfish should also be around the fad.

Those fishing closer to home can still find terraglin, pearl perch and snapper on the wider reefs. Live bait will again prove invaluable, but with the right equipment soft plastics will be highly successful.

Beach fishing at this time of year can be very rewarding early morning or in the evening with mulloway, whiting and bream on offer. Live sandworms will be the best bait for all three.

Upsizing the hook to a 4/0 to 5/0 for mulloway is essential and you’ll find a decent bream will also take this hook.

Best spots will need to be scouted out before a session. North Beach at Port will be a good starting point and Lighthouse Beach, just north of Lake Cathie, and Dunbogan Beach could hold some gutters.

ESTUARY ACTION

Estuary action will be hot this month, with big flathead on the cards. Rain in November gave the river a kick along so some big lizards will be lurking in the lower reaches.

Live poddy mullet will prove deadly on all fish but make sure you release those big girls to breed and replenish our system and keep the smaller, more tender and tasty males.

Large soft plastics will also prove irresistible to flathead, with anything from 3” swim baits to 7” jerk shads working a treat on 1/4oz to 1/2oz jig heads in deep water and 1/8oz to 1/4oz in the shallows. Match the hook size to the size of the plastic being used.

Bream have been plentiful in the Hastings and Camden Haven rivers, with fish possibly moving further up the systems.

This time of year I always like to head to Kendall and fish the snags and rocky banks around Ross Glenn for bream. It can be a cracker surface-bite area with plenty of cicada action.

When they seem to shut down on the surface, all you need to do is toss shallow-running hardbodies. Anything that runs down 20cm to 1m is prime.

Last summer at Ross Glenn I caught around 20 legal fish in a 20m stretch of river in around 50 casts. They were there, hungry and willing to hang on to a hardbody.

If, for some reason, they seem off the ball, try unweighted soft plastics like Berkley Shrimp, Atomic Prongs and Ecogear Aquas.

Bait will prove highly successful after dark, with the coal walls hot for flathead, bream and school mulloway. If you get some fresh prawns or worms and quality whitebait you’ll bag some good fish.

Garfish will also be good targets this month, with the mouth of Limeburners Creek and the Maria River hot locations to anchor up and berley for these tasty treats. A quill float, a blackfish hook and peeled prawns will do the job.

BASS

This is a great time to float the kayak or canoe and get into some bass in the upper reaches of the Maria and Hastings Rivers.

To access the Maria River you’ll need to drive back to the Pacific Highway across the Wilson River at Telegraph Point and then onto Haydens Wharf Road. Surface fishing is always fun up the Maria but deep-diving hardbodies can also prove successful when the fish seem quiet.

You won’t go up the Maria and catch a truckload of bass, but you should get some quality fish.
A run in the Canoe on the Hastings can prove more prolific, with an easy run from Ellenborough to Long Flat well worth the effort. The larger pools further downstream around Hartys Plains and Brombin will give any bass enthusiast a memorable time on the water.

Images

Jose Chavez from the US works the mangroves in his Hobie for bream.

Madeline Poulton with her first solo capture, a bream caught on fresh prawns.

Working the flats can be a great way to snare Summer fish, with whiting and flathead the primary targets.