Flathead feeding aggressively
Brent Kirk | November 2014 » Area Articles / New South Wales / Mid North Coast / South West Rocks /

The Macleay River and Clybucca Creek are alive with both blue swimmer and mud crabs at the moment and they are in very good condition. Just remember that crabbing laws will change slightly from 3 November. You will be allowed two crab traps instead of one and only four witches hats instead of five. The bag limit on blue swimmer crabs has also been cut down from 20 to 10 which is still a considerable amount of crabs per person.

Flathead numbers are good in the river. Kinchela through to Frederickton is providing the most consistent fishing, with plenty of fish from 40-55cm being caught. These fish are the perfect eating size and are feeding aggressively on 5” soft plastics and mullet strips bounced along the bottom while drifting close to the banks of the river. Whiting are being found in the same areas and are now starting to feed on surface lures up on the shallower sand flats.

Bass are spread out through the whole river system as well as into the smaller creeks upriver. These fish are now actively feeding on surface lures at most times of the day, with walk-the-dog lures and cicada imitations being the most successful. Big fish in the 50cm range are being consistently caught as far upstream as Bellbrook while the whole system is full of fish in the mid to high 40cm range. These are quality fish on anybody's scale and it is awesome to have so many inhabiting our river system.

School mulloway and the odd trevally are the main feature of the first few kilometres of the river. Soft plastics fished right along the junction of the rock walls and the sand are proving deadly on these species. You need to be tight to the rocks for the best results, just be prepared to lose a few rigs fishing this method as sometimes you will venture too close to the rocks.

Bait fishers are getting amongst some solid bream along the walls, mainly by floating un-weighted mullet or tuna strips, as the run of the water slows up around a tide change.

Throughout the Macleay valley rock fishermen have been getting amongst a lot of salmon due to a very late run that started mid-way through August. There were very few salmon through winter but they are making up for it now. Mulloway are around the salmon schools, along with the odd tailor.

Drummer are still frequenting the washes along the front of the gaol at South West Rocks. Some solid kingfish are lurking about from the gaol through to the lighthouse and out around Fishrock and Blackrock. Snapper have been around Fishrock and Blackrock too but most fish are coming out of the reefs around the 30-50cm mark. The average snapper size has been around 2-3kg but what they are lacking in size they are making up in numbers.

Octo style jigs as well as micro jigs are working a treat on these mid-depth reefs as you can still get a relatively light jig down into the zone. With this form of fishing, as with many others, it is important to fish the lightest weight you can but always remember you still need enough weight to make sure you are making it down to where the fish are. Pearl perch are around in the deeper stuff when the current permits you to fish this region.

Summer is just around the corner, and with it will come a whole range of pelagic species. Bait stocks are plentiful at the moment and it will only be a matter of time before the whispers of black marlin, tuna and mackerel will start to circulate around town!
These flathead were caught on soft plastics while drifting close to the bank.

Brendan O’Dell caught this 50cm bass while fishing the new freeway bridge at Freddo.

Another stellar snapper caught by the crafty Grant Pearson. This one went 6.3kg.