Anglers spoiled for freshwater options

Jason Ehrlich  November 2014 » Area Articles / Queensland / Freshwater / Freshwater QLD /

It seems that the freshwater scene has fired up just about everywhere. The bass have been biting, golden perch are going crazy, Murray cod are whacking lures and the barra are on the move.

That's not to mention the other species like sooty grunter, saratoga and silver perch, which don't always get the mention they deserve but are just as willing to get in on the action.

When the fishing improves like this, it is a great opportunity to target the fish on lures. Casting and trolling are both effective although one can outperform the other. It all depends on the mood of the fish on the day. Fishing is so unpredictable and that is why we need to have a selection of lures to throw at them. Even the way in which a lure is worked has to be added into the equation when trying to get the fish to bite.

Tail-spinners
Bass fishermen will have noted the rebirth of the tail-spinner over the past 6 months. These lures were used with great success on the early bass tournament scene but over the years their popularity dwindled. The introduction of fancy looking Japanese models along with their effectiveness has excited anglers enough to start filling their tackle trays with them again. They are working so well it is as if the fish have never seen them before.

Since the popularity of the tail-spinner has grown, I decided to make my own model. After 7 different shapes and weights I settled on the most effective one, which I called a JETS (Jason Ehrlich Tail-spinner). The lure is the perfect size to get the bass excited and has great hook exposure to give better hook ups when the fish nail it. They come with blades I have selected to give the best frequency of vibration and work at speeds slower than soft plastics. All are made in my shed using components purchased from Australian businesses and they have quality Owner trebles.

Last month we fished the Somerset Dam Basstastic round. My son Blake smashed it in the juniors' section, catching all of his fish on JETS and I just managed to sneak into first place in the seniors to take out the competition using the same lure. It was satisfying to see quite a few anglers in the top 10 places had used my tail-spinners to help put their bags of bass together. Not only did the lures catch bass but heaps of golden perch as well. That's not the thing you want in a bass competition but on any other day it is a lot of fun.

You can check JETS out on my FaceBook page or go to the Hot Bite Lures page. I'm selling direct to the public at this stage so if you're interested I can be contacted via my email at --e-mail address hidden-- .

How to use Tail-spinners
These lures are going to get a fair mention in the fishing media due to their popularity. They are a metal fish shaped lure with a treble underneath and a spinning blade on the rear. The weight of the metal makes the lure plummet to the bottom and as the blade is pulled along it spins. The blade doesn't just spin when the lure is sinking but also when the lure is lifted or retrieved. If it's moving, chances are it is attracting fish.

The most popular retrieve is to cast over fish and let the lure sink until it hits the bottom. The line goes slack or changes speed due to the weight of the lure as soon as it touches down. From this position, I take up the slack in the line and draw the rod up from parallel to the water to a vertical position. Some anglers like to lift the lure even higher in the water column by raising their arm above their head as they draw the rod up. The height of the lift really should depend on how high the fish are sitting through the water column. We have had a lot of success on the big bass using a sideways draw to move the lure 1-2m keeping it closer to the bottom where the bigger bass often hang out. After the draw, let the lure fall or swing back down to the bottom and repeat the process all the way back to the boat.

Tail-spinners are as simple as that to use, but it doesn't stop there. While the slow draw and drop technique does the job most of the time, there are other ways to get the fish interested. They can be retrieved and dropped back to the bottom, trolled, wound fast through the fish and stopped (burn and kill) or even jigged. There have been quite a few times when we have managed to catch those fussy fish sitting below the boat on a vertical presentation. Winding up through them can work but they also seem to like the lure jigged and dead stucked (paused just above the bottom). Try working the tail-spinner just as you would an ice jig. You may be surprised at the response.

Until next month, buckled rods from the Colonel!

South East Queensland

Cressbrook

Closest Towns: Toowoomba, Crows Nest

Cressbrook bass went nuts last month. These fish have now dispersed but it goes to show that when you find a good school you can catch
good quality and numbers.

We had a few sessions at Cressbrook on the way to Somerset. After fishing a couple of hours in the morning we were able to land between 20-30 fish to over 40cm. There has even been the occasional 50cm fish taken.

The hot spot was the first point as you follow the bank out into the basin from the campground. This spot will be worth a look this month but it is likely the fish will be holding elsewhere. There is a good chance the biggest concentrations of schooling bass will be within sight of the boat ramps. Look around the points and where the drop off drops from 10m to deeper water.

Tail-spinners and soft plastics have been the best lures to use. If schools are found, try casting both to see what the bass prefer. If you are struggling to find fish, try hopping lures down the bank. Cast a blade or tail-spinner up into 5m of water and hop it back down the contour into over 10m. This method has been picking up the scattered fish.

Due to the bass being more scattered, trolling lures out in the deep water should put quite a few in the boat. Deep diving lures without rattles perform well.

The entry fee at the boom gate has been removed but the 8knot speed limit is still in place. Hours for boating and day use of the recreation area are 6am-8pm. For all your supplies, expert advice and to check on the boating restrictions, call in at Fish’n’Bits in Alderley Street, Toowoomba, or give them a ring on (07) 4636 6850. The boys at the store all compete in bass tournaments and really know their stuff.

**Somerset**

**Closest Towns: Esk, Kilcoy**

The fishing has been great considering the amount of pressure the fish are getting. Big bass were the target last month. These fish will be starting to thin down as they reabsorb their roe but that doesn't mean they won't put on the same performance when hooked.

Schooling bass have been found all over the lake and may tend to break up a little more next month. For now, try searching around The Spit, Red Rock, Pelican Point, Bay 13, wide of Queen Street, the flats south of Kirkleigh and the flats and drop offs between Kirkleigh and the timber. Most of these fish will be holding in around 10m of water and you need to spend the time locating them on the sounder to have a good chance of catching them. Even when located they can be fussy buggers. Some days they will chew and others they can be near impossible to tempt. I have found the best way to keep them biting is to keep the boat moving. Bass tend to school up right below the boat and when they do this they get harder to tempt. By continuously moving, the fish don't have a chance to school up below you.

Bass fishermen will do well casting lures like tail-spinners, blades, lipless crankbaits and soft plastics. Mix it up and try the different lures to see what the fish want.

Trolling will become more effective this month. Deep diving lures able to reach 8-10m are ideal. A couple of my favourites are the Blitz Baga and 50mm Poltergeist Crazy Deep. Trolled lures should be pulled around the flats and drop offs and will produce both golden perch and bass. Further north up in the timber, golden perch will be the main target. Try trolling the river channel and in between the deep trees.

Somerset now has a 6knot zone marked by a buoy line at the start of the timber to the north of Kirkleigh. There is also a new boat ramp at the top end of the dam. The new ramp is part of the Queensland Government’s plan to grow tourism by providing recreational opportunities. This area is well suited to kayaks and canoes, although boats can also be launched from the concrete ramp. The new access point is located off Westvale Road.

**Moogerah**

**Closest Towns: Boonah, Aratula**

The bass fishing has continued to impress at Lake Moogerah. Some of the best action is coming from the back end of the dam in the timber. The bass here will take tail-spinners, blades and soft plastics. Gold colours have been working well for anglers over the past month.

It will also pay to have a look for fish around the spit area straight out from the boat ramp closest to the dam wall and also across the flats out from The Palms.

Moogerah now has a speed limit inside the timbered area, where the speed limit is now 6knots. This will stop the skiers doing a slalom run through the trees right past us while we peacefully try to catch a fish and hopefully prevent any serious accidents.

**Maroon**

**Closest Towns: Boonah, Beaudesert**

Maroon fired up over the last couple of months. There were some cracking bass well over 40cm caught and even the occasional 50cm fish. These are quality fish for Maroon and hopefully we’ll see a lot more bass of this calibre.

Try fishing tight to the weed beds around the lake. Lures like deeper diving suspending jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, blades and plastics are all worth tossing. One of my favourite lures for fishing close to weed is the beetle spin rigged soft plastic. A 3’paddle-tail rigged on a 1/4oz jighead with the blade frame attached is perfect for rolling through the holes and down the contours in the weed beds. If the lure gets fouled with weed, the blade stops working. A few sharp rips usually frees the lure and the vibration will let you know it is weed free and working.
Surface fishing in the morning and afternoon will definitely be worth a shot. The topwater action at this time of year can be very impressive.

Darling Downs Granite Belt Region

Cooby

Closest Towns: Highfields, Toowoomba

The golden perch activity at Cooby will start to pick up this month. The fish can be caught all over the dam but will tend to congregate in certain areas. Boat fishermen will do well straight out from the boat ramp in the middle of the dam and along the opposite bank heading back up Cooby Creek. The Middle of the Cooby Creek arm fishes well at times. The gullies running into the main creek form a high hump out in the middle of the dam. This is always worth sounding to see if there are fish holding on it. Another location worth a look is the steep rocky bank on the opposite side of the dam closer to the roped off area near the dam wall.

The golden perch usually cruise around in 6-10m of water and will favour a particular depth. A few will also be found in the shallows where they can be caught casting spinnerbaits around the edges. There is always a chance of scoring a Murray cod when luring as well.

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The deeper schooling goldens will be suckers for live shrimp and saltwater yabbies fished straight below the boat. Jigging lures also scores plenty of fish. Small blades like the Ecogear ZX range are perfect for jigging along the bottom. Ice jigs and even soft plastics will take fish at times. Lipless crankbaits score quite a few fish when worked very slowly in the deeper water. They are ideal when other lures fail to get a bite and should be wound off the bottom slowly for up to 8 winds and allowed to sink again. Slow is the key when the goldens are hard to entice. Some days the lure can be wound so slow that it doesn't even vibrate.

Cooby is an electric motor only dam and is well suited to kayaks and canoes. The concrete boat ramp is on a shallow angle when the dam is full and can be slippery in places but a big electric powered boat can still be launched with care. Outboard motors can be left on the boat but must not be used. Live shrimp and saltwater yabbies can be purchased from Highfields Bait and Tackle on the New England Highway in Highfields. Call in and see Doug and check out the great range of fishing gear, kayaks and accessories he has on display.

Leslie

Closest Town: Warwick

Most of the golden perch and Murray cod have been coming from the deeper water. Try to target the drop offs and the old creek beds and you'll be in with a good shot. Excellent numbers of golden perch have been taken on trolled hardbodies, cast blades and lipless baits.

Bait fishermen will do well on live or frozen shrimp and frozen saltwater yabbies. Again, fishing the deeper water around the drop off or over the top of submerged rocky structure will produce better numbers.

Early and late in the day it may be worth prospecting the edges by throwing some lipless crankbaits or spinnerbaits. You should focus on where the rocky formations run down into the water. Golden perch will be first to jump on but don't be surprised if you hook a Murray cod.

Cod can be targeted on the deeper structure by hopping lipless vibes. The bigger profiled lures are likely to attract the cod but you will have to sort through lots of golden perch between the cod bites.

For any tips and gear for fishing Leslie Dam or the Warwick area, call in and see the guys at Warwick Outdoor and Sports in Palmerin Street, Warwick. The store stocks a great range of bait and freshwater gear, which is well suited to catching our Australian natives.

Coolmunda

Closest Town: Inglewood

Coolmunda is going off with heaps of golden perch and quite a few cod taking lures and baits. Lure fishermen are picking up fish along the drop off to the river and creek channel. Live shrimp are one of the best baits followed closely by saltwater yabbies.

Lure fishermen can work the drop offs by trolling hardbodies or casting sinking lipless vibes. Up in the timbered areas, hardbodies, lipless crankbaits and spinnerbaits will all score fish when cast around the structure. Last month, my brother Kerry had a great session up in the timber catching several cod to 20lb and heaps of golden perch all on his own Kezza Lures Mud Mouse. These lures are great for working the snags as they rarely get hung up. The lures flip on their back with the hooks facing up just as the lure runs over the structure. Mud Mouse lures are great on the cod due to the serious amount of vibration they put out. If you are keen to give one a try, head to Fish'n'Bits in Toowoomba or see Doug at Highfields Bait and Tackle.

Wide Bay and Burnett Region

Boondooma

Closest Towns: Proston, Kingaroy

As the fish start to scatter a little more this month, lure trollers will start to whack both bass and golden perch. Deep and medium diving lures will perform well when fished in the deep water close to the drop offs in the first and second basin of the lake.
Schooling bass will still be found and will be keen to pounce on a tail-spinner, lipless crankbait or soft plastic. In the timbered arms of the Boyne and Stuart rivers, the bass will be keen to eat spinnerbaits cast around the edges in the morning. As the day wears on, work the drop offs and then the deeper trees.

Boondooma is a great place to camp right near the water and sit by the fire while enjoying the view. You could also stay in more style and comfort by booking into one of the cabins overlooking the dam. The kiosk at the main office does hot food and other basic items. For campsites, cabins and bunkhouse rooms call Corey and Niki on (07) 4168 9694.

Bjelke

Closest Towns: Murgon, Goomeri

Bass and golden perch will both fire right up this month. Lure casters can whack the smaller bass around the steeper banks in the first and second basin of the lake. Casting 1/4oz blade baits, lipless crankbaits and spinnerbaits to the edges and winding or hopping down the contour will get the bites. A few bass and golden perch will also be caught on lures cast in the timber. Take extra care when navigating in the timber as the level is falling and there are plenty of submerged hazards.

The golden perch trolling will be insane. There are some huge 3kg plus goldens in Bjelke and plenty of smaller models around 1kg. These fish will line the drop offs all the way up the dam. Trolling close to the drop in 6-9m of water will see your lures in the right zone. A couple of proven golden lures for this time of year are the Smak 16 and the Golden Child.

For help catching Bjelke and Boondooma fish, call into your local Bass 2 Barra store. You can see Matthew at Kingaroy or Dylan in Dalby and the boys will have you all geared up and ready for action in no time. Bass 2 Barra stores stock an awesome range of gear suited to chasing our freshwater fish and the boys have all the knowledge to guide you on how to use it.

Isis Balancing Storage

Closest Town: Bundaberg

There has been plenty of bass action close to the weed beds. The bass are chewing all day long provided you fish lures close to the weed. Soft plastics have been effective but this month it is likely the reaction lures will outperform them. Spinnerbaits, beetle spin rigged plastics and blades will all be great options.

There will be fish all over but the middle and back arms usually fish better than the arm in front of the boat ramp. Morning and afternoon are prime times. When the light is lower, the fish are prepared to roam more. For this reason, the low light period is the time to try your luck with topwater lures. When fishing the surface at Isis, it is hard to beat the Cultiva Zip’n’Ziggy.

The boys at Bundaberg’s Salty’s Tackleworld fish the dam on a regular basis. Being so passionate about their bass fishing, they are the ones to talk to if you are heading to the lake for a fish. Salty’s stock a great range of lures for both fresh and saltwater fishing and the Bundaberg area has plenty to offer.

Monduran

Closest Town: Gin Gin

The barra have been tough for some time at Monduran. Anglers putting in the hard yards have been finding patches of active fish but they are few and far between. The action has been steady now for a while and must surely be due to fire up. As anglers we tend to blame the elements for the shut down nature of the barra but it’s not just the changing weather and conditions like water temperature that influence their feeding. Every dam goes through good and bad times and Monduran is overdue to fire up again.

Fishing the edges of the lake inside Bird Bay or upstream of White Rock has been most productive. The fish have been sitting together around the bushy trees and taking hardbodied lures. If you can see them on your sounder, give the area a thorough working over or rest it and come back to see if they will fire up.

Monduran is a massive lake with so many potential barra looking haunts. Unfortunately there is not enough barra in the lake for them to reside on every one. If you are planning on fishing the lake for the first time or after not having been there for a while, do your homework. Using a guide will give you the best start as these guys spend more time on the lake than anyone else. If you can’t afford that option, visit the tackle store at Gin Gin, Foxies, and get the latest report on where they have been coming from.

The tackle store in Gin Gin, Foxies, stocks a range of effective barra lures. The store will mail order and you can check it out online at www.barratacle.com.au. Be sure to call in and get directions to some of the best barra fishing in the area or pick up one of the detailed maps.

Accommodation can be booked through Lake Monduran Kiosk and Tackle Shop. They look after all the cabins, houses, powered and unpowered campsites, as well as house boats and boat hire. You can also make bookings for Guide Lines fishing charters through the kiosk, on (07) 4157 3881. I usually stay at the Gin Gin Hotel, which is about 20 minutes from the boat ramp. The rooms are very affordable and pretty basic but you can get a great feed and cold beer. To make a booking call (07) 4157 2106.

Jamie Bein runs Lake Monduran Barra Charters and fishes that dam more than anyone I know. His regular visits ensure he has a good understanding of what’s going on. Contact Jamie on his mobile, 0407 434 446 or through his website at
Capricorn Region

Awoonga

Closest Towns: Benaraby, Gladstone

The action in the dam died down a bit last month after a really hot period last month. The barra are still there and showing on the sounder in good numbers but just aren't fired up. As with all kinds of impoundment fishing all it takes is the smallest thing to get them chewing their heads off again.

The Iveragh arm of the lake has been one of the better fish producing areas. Fish deep diving suspending lures around the standing trees and you will be in with a good chance of hooking a fish. The Jackall Hank Tune Squirrel is one of the most popular lures for these fish but there are plenty of other which will do the job. Provided the lure dives to around 3m on a cast and is close to suspending, you are in with a chance. I love to use RMG Scorpion 90s weighed with stick on lead to give them the right amount of buoyancy. These lures have a really strong action and I find barra under 1m in length love this.

If you are keen to try and tackle some fish in the dam, give Lyn and Mark from Awoonga Gateway a call on (07) 4975 0033. At Awoonga Gateway, you'll find clean, modern cabins and your hosts will be full of useful advice to help you try to land that barra of a lifetime. Make sure you tell Mark I sent you and pump him for the secret spot.

Whitsunday Region

Proserpine

Closest Towns: Proserpine, Airlie Beach

Since winter, the barra have been chewing well. Big fish have been coming from the northwestern corner of the lake in good numbers. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon or even at night, barra can be caught around the shallows. Pay particular attention to the points and bays. Soft plastics, hardbodies and surface lures will all take fish.

During the day, the shallows have been going quiet and it is best to head out to the deep trees that line the creek channels. In this area, prepare to hook some monster barra and have your angling skills tested. There are plenty of 1m+ fish in the deep trees so hook upgrades and 50lb braid outfits are recommended.

As the northerly winds become more prominent this month, the fish may push further south through the timber. As they spread out, it may be harder to find them, but once located, they should still be prepared to chew.

Trolling in the basin has produced the occasional big barra well over a metre. The area straight out from the dam wall buoy line will start to hold better numbers of big girls from this month on. Most anglers choose to troll for these big fish, which can be caught on both deep and shallow divers. Look for the bait schools out in the middle of the dam and the unmistakable arches of big barra shouldn't be too far away. The barra spend a lot of their time holding deep and can be caught on deeper diving lures like the RMG Scorpion Crazy Deep. When they choose to feed, they rise in the water column. It is not uncommon to catch them closer to the surface at night.

Lure casters can have a crack at the deeper schooling barra. A Hydrowave is certainly a big asset and a proven device for getting the barra and baitfish more excited. The Hydrowave emits baitfish or fish feeding sounds under the water, which attracts the bait and predators. Once the barra lift in the water column they can be caught on soft plastics, blades and lipless vibration baits.

If you are heading out to the dam, make sure you call in at Proserpine Bait and Tackle. The store is on the highway through Proserpine and stocks all the barra gear you could possibly need. The guys will be able to send you in the right direction and help with nailing the lake’s big fish. The storeowner Lindsay Dobe runs charters on the lake and bookings can be made through the store on (07) 4945 4641.

Images
The flats and drop offs will be areas to look for bass schools this month. This Somerset fish was taken by Paul Vincent on a JETS tail-spinner.

Fishing the edges and structure inside the timber at Coolmunda will give you a good chance of scoring a cod. Kerry Ehrlich had a great session with numbers of cod and golden perch caught on his Mud Mouse hardbodied lures.

Proserpine Dam will fish well around the edges during the early morning and late afternoon. Try hardbodies or soft plastics like this Powerbait Split Belly.
Golden perch numbers when lure fishing will increase dramatically this month. Trollers and casters will see more fish hitting their decks.

There are some quality bass to be caught at Cressbrook. The schools can be difficult to find but should bite as soon as you find them. Make the most of the action, as they don't handle the pressure very well. John Bryant nailed 5 in 5 casts when we found

Hot Bite Lures JETS tail-spinners caught heaps of bass and golden perch at Somerset Dam to help us take out the junior and senior section of last month's Basstastic round.