Murray cod trolling
Rod Mackenzie | December 2014 » Feature Articles / Victoria /

For the uninitiated, there are many questions surrounding the most productive methods to target big Murray cod. Answers will vary from place to place but along the Murray River it’s hard to look past trolling lures as a consistent producer of fish.

The basic requirements to successful trolling begin with an understanding of the fish, its habits and habitat. Murray cod have a distinct pecking order that sees the larger more dominant fish hold the most productive areas of cover. An ambush predator, cod require cover to blanket their assaults on any potential prey so deep sections of river with plenty of rock or timber are prime areas to begin prospecting.

It is important to remember when trolling that the ground you are fishing is continually changing. In order to fish it to its full potential, you have to stay in touch with your lure, continually revising your running depth to ensure the lure is in the strike zone at all times. In any section of river, this may mean a number of lure changes or variations in distance the lure is towed behind the boat. Current also becomes a major factor effecting lure depth, action, and speed depending on size, buoyancy and trolling direction.

Large lures are consistent with high buoyancy rates, and achieve their best results and attain a much stronger running action when worked into the current. It’s the bib that dictates depth, lure action and speed. Forcing large bibbed lures against the current provides maximum lure action while at the same time allowing you to troll at much slower speeds. Smaller lures achieve greater depth and lose little action when trolled with the current. Minimal loss of action and depth are important factors to consider when making a lure choice. A simple system to use when selecting a lure is depth followed by size and action, then last of all colour. Some anglers select colour first, oblivious to the fact that flashiest colour in the world will draw little interest if it’s not in the fish’s strike zone.

When trolling, we have found that running the lure approximately one metre above the bottom structure to be the most productive depth. When water clarity is good this can be less important as the fish will easily see and rise to the lure but in most instances especially along the Murray River a metre or so off the bottom is best.

Trolling speed is a slow walk but a variation of faster runs can sometimes trigger a response. Once you have cast the lure back and found depth you should hit the occasional piece of bottom structure. It is imperative to drop the rod back the instant your lure makes contact so as to create enough slack line so the lure backs out and rises over the snag. It’s amazing how often the strike from a fish comes as the lure begins to swim free of the snag. We like to fish our drags set in fighting mode so the hooks are set when the cod strikes the lure.

Of course you will not ride over every snag so be sure and have a tackle back on board to retrieve any snagged lures.

If the trolling run you have selected has good depth and ample bottom structure work it back and forth several times before moving on. Just as importantly, if you land a fish continue to work the area as that first strike can stimulate other fish in close proximity.

Trolling is and always will be one of the most productive ways to target Murray cod. With a little practise and a bit of patience it’s only a matter of time before you understand the basics of trolling. The rest you will learn as you go.

Images
Christie ‘Chop’ Barnes and Tim Polis with a stonking cod caught on the troll in the Murray River. This was Christie’s biggest fish and she had only been trolling a couple of times before.

Trolling is the most effective way to target large cod in the Murray River. Marty Cooper caught this fish on about the 4th pass of a bank he was working.

Early mornings are a great time to be on the water. Troll both close and wide of the bank as you can never be sure where a big cod is hiding.

Make sure you have a big enough net to land your fish. Trolling turns up some pretty big cod every season.
When trolling, look for deep water with good bottom structure like this large rock bar.

A selection of good trolling lures for the beginner might include Number 3 StumpJumpers, 120mm Codzillas, 110 Cod-Dog and a few larger models like the 170 King Mong from Muldoon Lures.