Don’t pack the rods away just yet
Paul Lennon | May 2015 - Area Articles / New South Wales / Mid North Coast / Port Stephens /

Last month, I talked about it being the crossover time of year when the tail end of the season for some species overlaps with the start of the season for others. Now that we are into May, we will see many of the fish that were still in numbers last month suddenly become a lot harder to catch as both the air and water temperatures begin to drop.

This doesn’t, however, make May a bad month to be fishing in Port Stephens. In fact, it’s very good time, with snapper, luderick, drummer, bream, tailor and salmon all starting to spark up.

Inside the estuary, luderick have started to pour into the system and are taking up residency along both the Nelson Bay and Anchorage breakwalls, as well as Little Beach Jetty and the Torpedo Tubes at Tomaree. While weed is pretty scarce around the bay, with most anglers sourcing it from various other locations, you will be able to find cabbage off the ocean rocks around Fingal Bay and Boat Harbour. Just remember when collecting it to go on the low tide and make sure there isn’t too much swell.

Bream are also rapidly flowing into the port again, with both the breakwalls and the Boulders on the inside of Yacaaba Headland the best land based spots to get stuck into a few.

If you can get out in a boat, the bream fishing is even better, with the rock walls around Soldiers Point and Tea Gardens all producing stacks, especially for those throwing hardbodies and plastics.

May is typically a good month for mulloway in the deep water around Middle Island at Soldiers Point, and also around Oyster Cove and the bridges at Karuah.

While the flathead fishing is slowing down now, if you fish upstream around the mouths of Tilligerry Creek and Karuah River, you should still be able to rustle up a few for a while yet.

Off the rocks, it’s coming into drummer time and the best areas to target them in my mind is from Fingal through to Rocky Point, baiting up with large peeled prawns or cunjevoi.

Spinning up a tailor will also be good option from the rocks from May onwards, with areas such as Box Beach, Fingal Head and Sunny Corner all consistently good. The key to fishing for tailor is low light periods around dawn and dusk using ganged pilchards or a range of lures such as metals and surface offerings.

Before the water temperature drops off too much, there will still be a few longtail tuna around and the odd cobia, with the rock ledge at Tomaree by far the best place for getting connected to either species.

Offshore should see plenty of snapper caught, with the shallows reefs around the islands right up to Edith Breakers all worth fishing with plastics, or anchoring and sending some lightly weighted baits down a berley trail.

Fishing the wash from a boat is another great way to pick up a feed this time of year, with a mixed bag of bream, drummer and squire all on offer when tossing an unweighted peeled prawn into the whitewater.

Out wide, there will still be a few marlin around and it’s not unusual to get a good bite of stripes on the shelf right through May. The current should also slow down from now on, which will make fishing for kings at Almark Mountain far more consistent for those dropping live baits or jigging.

When you are out at Almark, be sure to have a bottom bash while you’re there, as you will rarely miss out on taking home a top feed, with longfin perch, snapper, morwong, as well as the odd bar cod and gemfish all possibilities.

Images
Plenty of drummer are starting to get around as the water cools.

The author with a solid tailor spun up on first light.

Luderick will be around in great numbers over the next few months.