You can at Pelican

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This Central Coast offers beach and rock anglers the best of both worlds.

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The Central Coast offers plenty of scope when it comes to rock and beach fishing. Few places, however, provide the best of both worlds wrapped up in a single package.

Pelican Point, near Norah Head, certainly does. Here you can make one cast from solid rock and the next from beach sand and both casts may result in fish.

Exactly what makes Pelican Point such a rock and beach hot spot can be put down to a few main factors.

It’s the first major stop-off point at the end of the mighty Tuggerah (North Entrance) Beach. This long stretch of sand is the region’s premier fishing beach and most famous for the big jewies regularly encountered.

The ends of beaches are always top spots so the end of this beach is the top of the spots.

Secondly, the semi-exposed reef system here creates a perfect fish haven, especially from late Summer through to early Winter, when baitfish congregate here and inturn attract larger predators.

The overall rock and beach structure of the place is also a perfect environment for resident fish like drummer and groper.

GEAR FOR PELICAN

The single most appropriate rod and reel combination for Pelican Point is a typical east coast beach outfit. This generally consists of a 3.6-metre one- or two-piece rod such as a Pacific Composites MT7144, MT6144 or FSU4144.

Matching sidecast reels like the Alvey 600A5 or medium sized threadlines like Shimano’s TSS4, Daiwa BG60 or Okuma EFS 60 spooled up with 6 or 7 kilo line complete the combo. Anything from bream to drummer to jewfish can be caught with this sort of gear.

More specific tackle could be divided into categories for lightweight bait fishing, spinning and heavyweight purposes.

A light three-metre rod with a sensitive tip section can be matched to a smaller Alvey sidecast or 4000-size threadline reel. The Alvey could be spooled up with 4kg or 5kg mono, as can the threadline, or GSP line like 8lb Berkley Fireline.

This outfit is perfect when drifting a float for blackfish or casting lightly weighted baits for bream, whiting or smaller drummer. It can also be used to cast small metal lures from 15g to 21g for tailor, should the need arise.

Because tailor and salmon are quite common around Pelican Point it can pay to bring along a specific spinning outfit to maximise results and increase the fun. My favourite over the past year has been a 7’6” Nitro Magnum Butt rod matched to a TiCA Libra 3500 with 8lb Fireline. To be honest, there’s no way I can praise the Nitro rod enough and with a big tailor or sambo leaping around in the surf, nothing could be better in the hand than this outfit – total angling pleasure!

Of course there are times when a longer rod makes more sense. Something around three metres with a stiff butt section and a sturdy, yet ‘springy’ sort of tip will really pelt out a metal lure when matched to a mid-sized threadline spooled up with 10lb Fireline.

The reels I use for the job include a Shimano TSS-4, Okuma EFS-40 and a Fin Nor Ahab 12. The Penn Spinfisher reels are another range I recommend.

Basically, you want something tough and simple with a decent drag system to handle big salmon and a possible jewie or kingfish hook up. Overhead gear will also do the job and sometimes I’ll take my 2.6-metre Wilson Live Fibre rod and ABU6000C reel to Pelican. This is fun to use, but I must say that overhead reels and beach sand don’t go together too well – some may disagree but the choice is yours.
There are heaps of lures you could try at Pello but to my way of thinking two types stand alone in practicality and performance: Simple metal slices or slugs around from 21g to 40g, and floating poppers.

Distance casting towards the main finger of reef here will certainly help when it comes to hooking tailor and salmon because these fish often feed out wide. Nothing beats heavy metal for reaching fish at places like this.

On the other hand, Pelican Point is a snaggly place and it’s very easy to go through half a dozen metal lures in a spin session if you’re not careful, particularly when casting from the more exposed eastern-facing ledge.

This is where floating poppers take over. They generally don’t cast as far as metal lures but can easily be retrieved over the shallow reef with little or no chance of snagging up on kelp or cunje.

The best thing, though, is that tailor love poppers and it’s fun to see a big chopper smashing a popper on the surface.

Other types of lure that will catch fish at Pello are metal spoons like the good old ABU Toby, Wonder Wobblers and Spanyid Maniacs. Salmon in particular love the old ABU Toby but they’ll also interest tailor and flathead.

Various types of soft plastics can be worked closer to the shore where some good-sized flathead are occasionally hooked.

Jewfish, groper, big drummer and the odd shark, cobia or kingfish are possible here but heavy tackle is required if you want a good chance of landing these critters.

Rods built on tough blanks like the Pacific Composites FSU5120, FSU5144 and MT8144 coupled with a big sidecast or threadline reels spooled with 15kg to 24kg line will put you in the picture.

This is one type of fishing where I firmly believe that good old mono line is the way to go rather than braid. The abrasion resistance and stretch of thick mono can handle the rigours of a pounding surf, shallow reef and a powerful fish much better than GSP lines, which can break at the wrong time in this sort of scenario.

THE FISH

Tailor are the first fish that comes to mind whenever I think of Pelican Point. While a few tailor are on the cards year round, the best time is from February to the end of May.

The biggest tailor tend to be encountered in March and April and by big I mean between 2kg and 6kg with the odd monster up to a whopping 10kg.

Realistically, though, most fish will be between 1kg and 3kg at that time of year and smaller choppers are likely during other months.

A decade ago tailor would outnumber salmon about 10 to one but these days the tailor stocks have declined and the sambos increased. Now it’s about 50:50 and through Winter, Spring and early Summer you are far more likely to catch salmon than tailor at Pello.

That’s not such a bad thing when the sambo sizes start at a kilo, an average fish is closer to 2kg and there are sprinkling of 3kg and 4kg specimens ready to pounce on a bait or lure.

Both species are most active around high tide, especially when there is a bit of swell around to create some whitewater. Combine this with some cloud cover early in the morning or of an evening and the chances of success are very good.

Of course, you can catch them through the night on whole pilchards or strips of fresh mullet, pike or tailor. Most of the really big tailor fall to live mullet or pike aimed at jewfish but you need a bit of luck or a wire trace to avoid a bite-off.

Bream can be thick in March, April and early May and bite best on a rising tide closer to the rocks.

I like to use fresh mullet or tailor when fishing for bream from the sand although I’ll swap to plain white bread squeezed over a small hook when standing on the rocks. Bread always works better if you throw in a few handfuls of mashed-up bread berley every 15 minutes or so.

You can also expect to tangle with a few blackfish, drummer, mullet or trevally when berleying up with bread here.

True rock-fishing species like drummer, blackfish and groper are quite common around the rocks and shallow reef. Pello is one of those places where you’ve always got a chance of tangling with these fish from the sand as long as you’re fishing close to the rocks.

I know of a few 4kg and 5kg drummer that have taken squid baits fished from the beach at night and one fellow I know even beached a 6kg blue groper from the sand while soaking a worm bait for whiting.

Winter is perhaps the best time to target drummer, blackfish and groper. The drummer and blackfish bite best when there is some foamy whitewater around the rocks but calm conditions are better for groper fishing as flat seas make it much easier and safer to gather crabs for groper bait.

NIGHT JEWIES
Jewfish are the main nocturnal target at Pelican Point and adjacent beaches. You can chase local jewies year round, with numbers of fish up to 10kg quite common over the Summer and bigger, but fewer, jewfish in the middle of Winter.

Top baits for the jewies include squid, big chunks of tailor, mullet, salmon or pike. Some jewie specialists like whole fresh heads of mullet, tailor or blackfish. I've had better results on squid, beachworms or tailor flesh.

The truth is that any one of these baits will interest a jewfish as long as the bait is fresh or had been freshly frozen and preferably caught by yourself rather than purchased from a bait shop.

Best times to target jewfish are around the full or new moon except for the night of the full moon, which is quite often fruitless unless there is thick cloud obscuring the bright moon.

A rising tide and a bit of foamy water complete the picture. Don't be surprised if you hook a monster tailor, kingfish, cobia or one of several shark species here while chasing jewies.

The only time you may not catch anything except a crappy sand crab or baby ray is when the seas are dead flat.

Regardless of exactly where you cast a line at Pello, be sure to always keep an eye on the waves.

Don't expect miracles at Pelican Point but expect to catch fish.

Facts

SAFETY

As far as rock fishing spots go, Pelican Point is reasonably safe. There are, however, some things to be aware of.

The whole point is very low to the water so it’s best to stand back on the sand and take a few minutes to check the waves, making sure they aren't building up too much and crashing over the main ledge.

If it looks too rough you can simply fish from the safer beach on either side of the rocks – one of the great aspects of this place.

The small cut-out or pothole towards the southern part of the main ledge is one of the more productive spots to cast a line, particularly for drummer, blackfish and tailor. It’s also slippery so consider wearing cleated rock fishing sandals here.

GETTING THERE

A bit under two hours’ drive from the heart of Sydney will put you in the Norah Head area if you take the Toukley turn-off on the freeway or travel north from the Gosford area.

Fifteen minutes north of The Entrance along Wilfred Barrett Drive or 10 minutes south of Budgewoi also gets you there. From the Soldiers beach carpark at Norah Head, simply walk along the beach. It’s not far, but I wouldn’t recommend you carry too much over the soft Soldiers Beach sand.

Alternatively, there is an access road off Wilfred Barrett Drive just south of Norah Head. Be aware that the gates to this access road and the Soldiers beach carpark are closed exactly one hour after sunset and opened an hour before sunrise.

If you intend on fishing into the night you’re better off parking just outside the gate near the Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Clubhouse.

MAP KEY

A Soldiers Beach corner. It can be a bit shallow here, although a deeper gutter may form from time to time. Bream are the most likely species here although whiting and flathead are reasonably common through the warmer months. If you’re not getting any bites, try casting closer to the shallow rocks or reef.
B This area is quite shallow and snaggy but is well worth fishing during a strong southerly. Suspend a bread, green cabbage or cunje bait under a small float about a metre down and let it drift between the rocks and sand or just cast unweighted baits and very slowly retrieve them to avoid getting snagged.

C This more exposed area is best fished during calm seas for blackfish, bream, drummer or groper.

D This small pot hole is quite productive but don’t attempt to fish here unless the seas are calm around low tide. Drummer and blackfish can be caught close in or you can cast poppers out wide over the shallow reef for tailor or a possible kingfish. Metal lures are very likely to end up on the bottom here!

E This low, wave lashed rock is quite safe because waves are broken over the shallow main reef, but not if the seas are really big around high tide. A top place to cast metal lures or poppers out as far as you can and bring them back parallel to the washy water next to the reef. Lightly weighted baits aimed at bream or drummer can be cast out but you may get snagged if you leave them out there for more than five minutes.

F A slightly more sheltered alternative where you can drift a float for blackfish on a rising tide, cast weighted baits to bream or spin for tailor or salmon.

G This sheltered beach corner is great when the seas are up and there is a bit of foamy water around. Bream, drummer or blackfish are common here during such conditions but if the seas are calm you may catch only the odd flathead or bream.

H There is a small patch of rock here that may become exposed at low tide. Cast towards the rock for bream on a rising tide and be aware of it at night to avoid getting snagged.

I Here the beach starts to become more exposed. Jewfish, tailor, salmon, bream and flathead are all on the cards, particularly on a rising tide.

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