Time to lure up some mulloway

Dan Selby | April 2017 » Area Articles / New South Wales / Sydney / The Hawkesbury /

Some good rainfall over the last month or so, coupled with cooler air temperatures, has sent things into a flurry on the mighty Hawkesbury and its tributaries.

Flathead are starting to concentrate back down towards Wisemans Ferry from the upper tidal reaches of Windsor, which they found to be very bountiful over the summer months. They will be following the bulk of the prawns back down on the new moon, and this is a great time to target them on the run-out tides this month.

Live, fresh or frozen prawns will all account for flathead when they are in good numbers like this, but a more productive and ‘clean’ way to target them is with lures. Soft plastics on an appropriate jighead are the standout, but a soft vibe, bibless minnow or blade cast around the sand bars, back eddies and drop-offs will allow you to cover ground and catch bigger fish and better numbers.

Bream are also a drawcard at this time of year, as they too start to school back up and head downstream. They can be quite ravenous at this time of year, often grabbing bigger lures and whole live baits aimed at mulloway. Trophy bream of better than 40cm are a common capture throughout the cooler months of the year, and I always look forward to our encounters with these great looking fish.

Fresh baits fished in a berley trail along the many rock walls and the few reefs like Bar Point will put runs on the board for those anglers wanting a more relaxed approach. However, lure fishing is my preferred way to tangle with the wily bream. I recommend casting to the rock walls with curl-tail grubs and creature baits like the Pro Lure Live Yabbie on light jigheads to suit the conditions. Leaders don't have to be too light, as the terrain is quite unforgiving. My minimum is 6lb, but usually run 8lb. You won't lose too many fish this way, especially if your casting is up to scratch.

Mulloway are on the top of most anglers’ wish lists when they venture to the Hawkesbury, and for good reason – it produces some monsters! When you work out the system’s idiosyncrasies and gain an understanding of this waterway as a whole, it’s quite common to encounter decent-sized mulloway on a regular basis. Only time on the water will help you gain this valuable knowledge and put the pieces of the puzzle together.

Live baits of tailor, pike, yakka and squid will give you the best chance of catching a better fish. These baits need to be presented well on a tide change early or late in the day. Use the lightest line you can get away with to encourage bites. You can worry about landing the fish once you have hooked it!

Lure fishing is starting to kick into gear, catching several good school mulloway to 1.1m. We’re also seeing a lot of soapy-size fish being caught alongside bream and flathead. Stickbaits and paddle tails from 3-6” are working just as well on light jigheads cast around heavy structure at the key times of the tide.

Bass and estuary perch are firing in the upper tidal reaches. Small soft plastic grubs, paddle-tails and minnows are the standout for finding the active schools. T-Tails in bloodworm, pumpkin seed, motor oil and pearl white on light jigheads of around 1/8oz are my favourite option when I'm on the search for perch in the upper tidal reaches.

Finding back eddies along weed beds and rock walls is the key for these fish. A sounder helps but it’s not essential; you can visually see most prominent eddies that are worth a cast or two to see if anyone is home.

There will still be a bit of surface action available for those anglers who like to pop the top or roll out a delicate fly presentation alongside a big boulder or fallen tree. Early and late in the day are best for this, and the minimal ski and wake boat activity is a massive advantage at this time of year.

Images
A 5” Samaki Boom bait was the undoing of this healthy looking fish. Big paddle tails like this are very effective on mulloway.
Bass are a great target for fly fishers. Surface poppers will work this month before we have to switch to intermediate and sinking lines and flies as we approach winter.

Some good kingfish action can still be had this month. Kurt dragged this 95cm fish out of some nasty structure on a recent charter with Sydney Sportfishing Adventures.