

Doc Lures Australian Lure Fishing Podcast

Episode 252: Lake Kununurra Barramundi

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Dick Pasfield

North Western Fishing Writer

Dick has been barramundi fishing in Lake Kununurra and the Ord River System for decades and has spent a lot of time before and after stocking figuring out how the barra work in this system. When he's not fishing, Dick is writing about fishing and has authored 95 articles so far for popular fishing magazines..



Dick's Kununurra Barra Fishing Tips

- Lake Kununurra is a "hybrid lake". Built to facilitate a gravity feed irrigation system downstream, it's not a river and it's not a lake and it doesn't fish like either one of them. The system doesn't have bays like most east coast lakes, has constant gentle through flow of water and relatively stable water levels.
- Barramundi fishing in this system, peaks in the early and late wet season, although barra can be caught all year round with some perseverance.
- Finding fish in Lake Kununurra is easy. Getting them to bite is less so. There is ample standup and laydown timber in the system, and fish also love the weed beds that fringe the old river channel. But with no real predators in the system, Dick finds that large barramundi are often over gravelly areas not associated with structure at all. Target the fish on the edges

of the school as they tend to be more active, while the fish in the thick of the school are often not feeding.

- Dick's preferred strategy is to find two schools of fish and work between the two putting in plenty of time and effort on one and eventually moving to the other if a bite is not forthcoming. He advocates plenty of perseverance, more so than is required on river fish.
- Don't overlook trolling as a valid fishing technique. Dragging a lure behind a boat ensures it is perfectly depth controlled and allows you to cover plenty of water. Dick prefers to use his main motor, claiming the electric "has knobs on it".
- Dick has kept meticulous catch records over a long period of time. His data shows that fish can be caught at any time but new moons fish poorest, waxing and waning moons better and full moons fish best. Likewise, daytime fishes poorest, dawn and dusk are more productive and nighttime is far and away the best.
- Barra in Kununurra are large, but as the system retains flow they tend not to become obese like many impoundment barra. Instead they stay lean and strong, putting up a powerful fight.
- If the barra are shut down, try fishing slow and quiet, switching off your sounder and using a sandbag on a rope to hold station, rather than an anchor or electric motor. Dick often finds that having a sleep while anchored over a school late at night and then getting up to fish around 2am can be a very effective strategy as the fish have become used to your subtle presence of the boat.
- Dick likes lures that have seen plenty of action and feels the motley appearance of lures that are missing paint might mimic the scruffy look of bait that have been boofed and missed by barra. Contrasty lures of dark bars over white or luminous lure bodies are often effective, especially at night on the full moon. Dick reckons the aim is to try and mimic a baitfish that's trying to sneak around without attracting the attention of a barra.

Dick's Barra Fishing Tackle

- Dick uses a 5-10kg line class rod spin rod and a 4000 size reel loaded with 50lb braid and a 100lb leader to prevent chaffing on the barra's jaw or on structure.
- His second outfit is a 5-8kg rod and 3000 size reel loaded with 30lb braid line and 100lb leader.
- The outfit he chooses depends on the lures he's using and the structure he's fishing.

Dick's Barra Lure Selection

- For casting, Dick likes the 125mm Halco Scorpion with a 5m diving lip and he'll use this lure in pretty much any type of structure, anywhere he finds barra. This lure is pretty buoyant, so long pauses are not possible, but Dick will fish it with plenty of twitches to create extra action.
- The Rapala X-Rap Magnum is a great lure for trolling in Lake Kununurra and Dick will drag it well behind the boat at the slowest speed that will make the lure work, again using plenty of rod tip movement to impart action.
- The Tilsan Barra 80mm is a "silent" timber lure that Dick favours when the fish are being difficult to tempt. He'll switch the stock hooks out for heavier duty ones and will add some adhesive lead weights or glue half split shot to the underside of the lure to make it suspend. In use, Dick will work the lure down to depth and leave it stationary in the gentle current for 30-60 seconds before imparting a twitch that will typically result in a strike.