

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast Episode 279



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Ben O'Brien

Fishing Journalist And Sponsored Angler

Ben is a Sydney based sponsored angler and fishing journalist. A trained Marine Biologist, Ben focuses his fishing on the many species around the greater Sydney area, with occasional forays elsewhere. He regularly targets Australian bass in the Shoalhaven River and other systems south of Sydney.



Ben's Shoalhaven Bass Fishing Tips

- Bass are migratory and move downstream to spawn over winter, returning to the upper river system in Spring. The Shoalhaven is a fairly large system and it's important to have an understanding of the fish's movements to avoid fishing where they're not!
- At the time of this interview the system had experienced a fair bit of rain and the water was flowing fast and was pretty dirty. Ben reckons it still fishes well if you know how to find and target bass.
- Use Google Earth to look for river bends, back eddies, deeper holes and so on before you leave home. Land based fishing is good in this area, if fishing from a boat or kayak you'll want to look for gaps in the vegetation. The areas below rapids often fish well despite fast flows and dirty water – fish sit in the slower water below and dart up to hit items above.

- A rising barometer and overcast conditions make for the best bass fishing, but they can be caught at any time if you persevere.
- If the fish are shut down you may need to finesse them with small curl tailed jigs on the lightest jig head you can get away with for the conditions.

Ben's Bass Fishing Tackle

- Ben uses a 3-5kg spin rod with a 1000 to 2500 size reel and 8-10 lb braid. A 10-12 lb fluorocarbon leader completes the outfit.

Ben's Shoalhaven Bass Fishing Lures

- The Rapala Shadow Rap is a great suspending jerkbait that dives to around 2m on the gear Ben uses and hangs motionless in the water when the retrieve is paused. When he needs to work the lure at maximum depth he'll crank it hard for the first metre or so, causing the lure to dive fast, then he'll slow roll the lure back, sometimes with pauses or twitches in the retrieve to mix it up. To work the lure shallower, simply be less aggressive with the initial cranking after the lure hits the water.
- A 1/8 to 1/6 oz jig head with a beetle spin blade and a 2.5 to 3" soft plastic tail is a good combination for Shoalhaven bass and can be effective for catching fish right through the day. Ben likes the Keitech Easy Shiner, which has a large paddletail and creates maximum vibration when combined with the beetle spinner. Cast these out, let them sink to the required depth and then slow roll them back, sometimes with the occasional pause. These lures work best in the slower flowing, deeper parts of the river.
- The Tiemco Soft Shell Cicada can be fished around dawn and dusk even when the river is flooding. On overcast days the surface bite window is extended and the cicada can be fished for a little longer – at times when the roar of cicadas is deafening it can even be fished through the day if cast under overhanging vegetation. Let the lure sit after it hits the water surface until the ripples dissipate, then twitch it couple of times. If it's not hit immediately, slow roll it back across the surface and start again.
- An Ecogear ZX 40 or Rapala Rap-V vibe is a good option when the fish are schooled up down deeper through the middle of the day. It can be dropped vertically in front of the fish and worked with short rod lifts or can be cast and retrieved, letting it sink to bottom and then ripping it back through weed beds in short, sharp hops.