

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast Episode 288



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Dean Jackson

Mangrove Jack Enthusiast, SCF Australia Founder

Dean has put in many hard yards figuring out mangrove jack on the Sunshine Coast and is now in the enviable position of having a pretty consistent record on the species. When he's not putting in the time to unravel the secrets of mangrove jack he's promoting the virtues of sustainable fishing and citizen science as the future of the sport through his SCF Australia citizen science fishing events.



Dean's Sunshine Coast Mangrove Jack Tips

- Jacks aren't like bream, bass and some other species – cricket score catches are extremely rare. Dean spent 5 hard years before landing his first Sunshine Coast mangrove jack. These days he is quite consistent but still reckons a jack every 3 trips is a pretty good average. It's important to learn to enjoy the journey and to take every encounter with a jack as a win, regardless of whether the fish is landed, or even hooked.
- Mangrove jack are not always associated with deep, gnarly cover, when they are feeding they often come a little way out of cover and into surprisingly shallow water.
- Given the chance, Dean prefers the last couple of hours of the runout tide for jack fishing, but he finds that other factors rarely make much difference. Jacks often bite well at low light periods but also bite right through the day, regardless of moon, weather or other factors.

- Spend some time really getting to know your local waterways by exploring them at low tide to identify rock bars, ledges, snags and other structure that might hold fish once the tide comes in.
- It's critical to maintain focus. If the jack fishing is slow, don't be tempted to head off in search of other species or you'll never figure out the jacks. Treat every cast like it will get hit close to structure and be prepared to wind fish out of structure on a locked drag, only back off the drag once you have them away from the structure.
- Don't assume that just because you caught a jack on a snag today that fish will be there tomorrow. Likewise, don't assume that because there were no jacks on a snag today that there won't be tomorrow. Jacks are mobile and move around the system looking for ambush points.

Dean's Mangrove Jack Fishing Tackle

- It's important to make long, accurate casts and to have a strong, smooth drag system. Dean prefers high quality baitcast reels, 30lb braid and 30lb fluorocarbon leader. He finds that Power-Pro braid is thicker than more modern lines and has greater abrasion resistance, which is important for jack fishing.

Dean's Top Mangrove Jack Lures

- The Lucky Craft Pointer XD (100mm) is the perfect suspending hard body for fishing snags and rock bars up to 1.5m in depth. Dean's strategy is to cast the lure as close as possible to the edge or structure and crank fast for a few turns to get the lure down. He then pauses for a second before working the lure with two short jerks of the rod (100mm) and winding up the slack with 5-6winds before pausing the lure for another couple of seconds. Usually the fish will have taken it by this time, but if not, impart another 6-12 faster cranks and then crank back at full speed before firing out another cast. The Pointer is relatively snag resistant, making it perfect for working over rock bars or through snags.
- The Jackal Squirrel SP (79mm) is a great lure if the rock bars are deeper than 1.5m or if the edges are steeper because it reaches working depth faster than the pointer. It's fished in much the same way as the pointer.
- The Lucky Craft G-Splash is an 80mm surface popper that Dean ties on the leader with a locked blood knot so it runs straight (the suspending hard bodies he uses a loop knot). This lure fishes best during low light periods and is cast as far from the boat as possible and landed as close to the bank or structure as you can manage. Once the lure splashes down,

let it sit for a couple of seconds, then work it with a series of 5-6 short pops that each only move the lure forward a few centimetres.