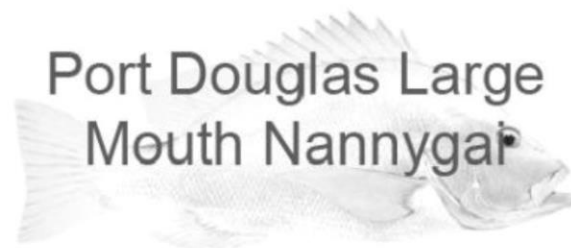


Australian Lure Fishing Podcast Episode 319



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Damon Gruzdev

FNQ Fishing Guide

Damon has been fishing the Port Douglas area for nearly a quarter of a century, so he knows a thing or two about helping people find and catch quality fish in that area. As a guide he helps clients catch all manner of reef species, not to mention pelagics and Daintree barra.



Damon's Large Mouth Nannygai Fishing Tips

- Large Mouth Nannygai (Scarlet Sea Perch) are a species that's closely associated with relatively flat, low profile rubble and shale structure that only rises maybe half a metre from the bottom and with wrecks and other structure that are isolated from other structure.
- Wonky holes are undersea freshwater springs associated with the beds of ancient rivers. They can be difficult to find at times but are prevalent in Far North Queensland and typically host their own little ecosystems of sponges, corals and so on – usually with plenty of nannygai and fingermark in attendance.
- A key to targeting the species is to keep your lure within one or two metres of the bottom. Fingermark bream are often found on the same structure as nannygai and can be taken with the same lures and techniques, but tend to sit higher above bottom than nannygai.
- You can find smaller Nannygai inshore as little as one mile from Port Douglas, with better specimens typically found from about 5 mile out to the outer edge of the reef. Quality fish can be taken in as little as 6-7m of water. Out to 70m deep or more.

- Daytime fishing around the full moon has been the most successful for Damon, with fish coming year-round but the prime months being June to December.
- Wind is your enemy. Often, you're drifting over small patches of structure and if there's wind and current it can be impossible to get the lure to the right area.
- Ocean currents around Port Douglas are unpredictable both in terms of strength and direction. They don't seem to be influenced by local wind/weather patterns or by tides. They're strongest in the shipping channel and offshore, so if they're a problem it's worth trying inshore or switching your attention to pelagic species.
- Carry and use a release weight. Nannygai from 8m or water or more are one of the most susceptible species to the effects of barotrauma – and fingermark even more so. Large gold spot cod are a common catch from wonky holes and also release better with the assistance of a release weight. Venting the swim bladder with a knife can improve survival rates too.
- Fish that come boatside with obvious signs of severe barotrauma have a very low survival rate, so consider putting them on ice as nannygai are a great eating fish.

Damon's Nannygai Fishing Tackle

- Damon likes a rod of around 7ft for fishing the soft plastics he favours for targeting nannygai and fingermark. A 5000-6000 sized reel, 30-50lb braid and 40-60lb fluorocarbon completes the outfit and will handle most fish although the occasional one might be unstoppable around wrecks.

Damon's Favourite Nannygai Lures

- All lures are fished in essentially the same way: cast up current and allow to sink to bottom. Hop the lure with 1-2m jumps, allowing it to sink to bottom again between hops and staying in contact with the lure. Once it has drifted past the boat, crank the lure in and cast up current again.
- A Berkley Gulp 6" Jerk Shad is Damon's #1 lure and he's found it will sometimes outperform similar plastics by ten to one as a result of the inbuilt scent. Weight varies from 1/2 oz to 2oz, with a 1oz 4/0 jig hook being pretty standard under typical conditions when fishing in 30m or so of water. It's important not to overweight the lure, but if nannygai are the target it's even more important to use enough weight that it actually gets to the bottom.
- A 6" Berkley Curly Tail Grub is great when conditions are good and there is minimal current. The curly tail gives the lures more action with minimal movement.

- Ockta Jigs and various flutter jigs work well when kept close to bottom. However mackerel are often in plague proportions around Port Douglas and can snip off a lot of lures, making these styles a little expensive.
- Soft vibes are deadly on nannygai and fingermark, but are only suited to inshore areas where the water is fairly shallow and currents are minimal. Note the previous comment about lure losses to mackerel!