

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 365](#)



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Ben “Westo” Weston

FN Queensland Sportfishing Guide

Westo is a Far North Queensland based angler and former fishing writer who rarely fishes anywhere other than Hinchinbrook these days. He's recently established "Westo's Sportfishing Charters", a guided fishing service specialising in barra and jack fishing in the Hinchinbrook area, but also taking clients offshore to enjoy the spectacular reef fishing on offer in those parts.



Westo's Hinchinbrook Mangrove Jack Fishing Tips

- Don't feel like you have to fish deep to catch quality mangrove jack, they're often found in very shallow water as long as there's bait present. Westo focusses his efforts on water 1m or less in the Seymour, parts of the Herbert, Sunday Creek and more. This gives anglers a very visual jack fishing experience.
- The habits of jacks in terms of where they congregate don't seem to change much between summer and winter. The shallow water around sand islands and flats, small tributaries off major systems and other areas where the water is around one metre deep at the bottom of the tide are perfect.
- Water movement is important for mangrove jack fishing. You don't necessarily need a lot of it, but it certainly sparks the bite. Fishing the neapish tides or towards the bottom of larger

tides when the flow starts to slow down is good. Fishing windward shores is uncomfortable for anglers, but can be effective.

- Mangrove jack move around these systems, but it can be hard to predict their movements. The best way is to just keep casting at likely structure until you find fish. Usually there will be an aggregation of fish and once you find one you'll get more.
- Jack fishing tends to be best in summer, especially when the weather is hot and humid. They can be caught year-round though and days with less than a metre of tidal movement fish best, particularly on the first push in following the bottom of the tide. Water clarity is also better on the smaller tides, although gin clear water can make for spooky fish.
- Extracting jacks from snags on light tackle such as the 4lb outfit that Westo uses with his spin flick gear takes some nerves and isn't always successful. Westo finds you can fish 4lb braid on a reasonably heavy drag and put a lot of pressure on the fish at the moment of the strike to try and keep the fish headed forwards and out of the snag. If this fails, keep the line tight, track your line back and work into the snag. Fishing in shallow water you can usually reach in and extract the fish.

Westo's Jack Luring Tackle

- A 4lb outfit consisting of an ACM custom 7' medium to light spin rod with a 2500 size Shimano Ci4 and 4lb Fins Windtamer braid is great for flicking lightly weighted, weedless plastics when coupled with a 40lb mono leader!
- A 6' custom ACM baitcast rod on a fast action, light to medium blank is perfect when coupled with a Shimano Curado, Chronarch or similar. This is loaded with 20lb braid and 40lb mono leader and is used for crankbaits and other lure styles.

Westo's Top Mangrove Jack Lures

- 3" ZMan Diesel MinnowZ in natural colours, white or occasionally nuclear chicken colour. Westo fishes these on TT Chin LockZ hooks with light Snakelockz heads using his light tackle combo. They're perfect for skipping deep into mangroves when there's a window of 6 to 10 inches between overhanging mangrove branches and then cranking them briskly out. You're looking for a reaction bite, so don't twitch or pause, just crank it out.
- Old Dog GM80 hard bodies are deadly on Mangrove Jack, again natural colours or gold seem to work well. These can be cast into metre deep water with denser timber, especially when there are laydowns that start from the bank. Once again, a fairly brisk retrieve with no pauses works best on jacks. Adding an occasional pause will work better if barra are your target.

- The Sebile Coolie Minnow LL may be difficult to find these days, but if you can get them are lethal barra lures. This lure is fished in the same places and in the same ways as the Old Dog GM80.