

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 435](#)



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Lee Rayner

Fishing Personality, TV Host

Over many years, Lee has left his mark on many styles of fishing for just as many different species. A very versatile angler, Lee is well known for his television productions, from "Tuna Bluefin Tactics", "Snapper Fishing Tactics" and "Whiting Fishing Tactics" back in 2008 to his long running fishing show "Fishing Edge", which takes him all over Australia fishing for every imaginable species.



Lee's Melbourne Estuary Perch Fishing Tips

- Estuary perch are the barra of the south and can be fished for in much the same way as barra, just with lighter gear.
- Lee finds that most people fish with very small lures for perch, but sizing your lures up to 80-90mm is an effective way of finding the better quality perch. You'll catch less fish, but they'll tend to be larger specimens.
- Estuary perch are highly mobile and move surprisingly long distances on the tide and will hold up in certain areas.
- During the cooler months they often school in open water lower in the estuary systems where spawning occurs. In summer they'll often be taken "snag bashing" in the upper reaches – and often when you find them they'll be on the same snag trip after trip. They'll thrive in anything from freshwater right through to seawater.

- Estuary perch can be found in anything from clear, deep water to the skinniest mangrove creeks and will take so many different styles of lures, so it's not a bad plan to focus on using a handful of lures until you have them perfected.
- Mangrove lined creeks are a favourite with perch, but tea-tree lined creeks are even more popular with the fish. Tea Tree gets chock full of shrimp and creates lots of shade that the fish love.
- Lee prefers to fish around the top of the tide. Be sure not to just put in one or two casts on a snag as you'll find fish will be on one set of snags on one part of the tide and another set of snags on a different tide.
- Trolling can be a great way to find fish. Because schools can move up and down the system it's often the case that there are large areas with no fish and small areas where the fish are concentrated, so cover the water trolling or with sidescan, then when the fish are located, stop and make some casts.
- Time of year changes where to look for perch. In winter, fish lower down in the estuaries and fish might be on weedbeds or schooling in open water. In summer they are upstream on the snags. Never overlook weedbeds and grassy areas, especially on the runout tides where baitfish and prawns take shelter.
- A high barometer helps and there's usually a prime feeding period just before a thunderstorm. Really big tides also seem to help get the perch on the chew, especially in the tiny little creeks where a big low tide can strand fish in the remaining water around snags and structure.
- If you're having a tough day, stay persistent. Sometimes it can take hours to find fish and what seems like it's shaping up to be a fishless day can suddenly become a red letter day. Keep fishing, especially if there is a tide change not far away.
- Estuary perch are a slow growing and long-lived species, so it's important that bag limits are strictly observed and ideally the vast majority of fish are released unharmed.

Lee's Estuary Perch Tackle

- A 2500 size Shimano Band 4 reel loaded with 8-10lb braid and a 12 lb leader on a 2-4kg spin stick is a good combination. Lee reckons he would probably get more bites if he went lighter, but wants the stopping power for when a more serious estuary perch takes his lure.
- For bigger hard bodied lures Lee likes to switch to light baitcast gear, especially around snags.

Lee's Top Estuary Perch Lures

- A Rapala Jack Deep is a great little hard body diving lure that perch love to hit when they're in the mood. The Lucky Craft Bevy Shad is another good option. These lures are good for trolling and run at around 6-10ft deep depending on conditions and tackle. They are also great to work through snags – cast in, wind up the slack and then give one good sweep of the rod to get the lure down to depth, pause for a count of three and then twitch. Often you'll find it gets hit at this point, but if not, the aim is to keep it working and twitching in the snag as long as possible. Since these lures suspend, it's quite possible to let them sit motionless and you'll usually find the fish hit them the instant you start to move them again. Once the lure is 6 feet from the snag, slow roll it back – it's not unusual for the lure to still get hit even when it's out of the snag. It's important to fish the base and back of the snag and to get the lure as deep into the snag as possible.
- The OSP Bent Minnow 70mm is a deadly topwater lure for so many species, including perch. Fish them around the shallow edges, mudbanks, weedbeds and flats – especially if you see fish chasing bait. The retrieve is actually quite fast with this lure because you're looking for the reaction bite. The bites on these lures are savage.
- A prawn-style soft plastic and/or a paddletail lure up to 90mm. These can be fished in deep water on a jig head, unweighted over weedbeds or through snags. Prawn lures are great because they switch on the feeding instinct. The DOA prawn might be old-school, but it is still deadly. Fish don't nip at them because they know if they nip a real prawn it will get away, they tend to hit these lures aggressively.