

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 510](#)



Five Winter Fishing Spots Near Warrnambool



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Former tournament angler, Mark Gercovich is a prolific fishing writer who has penned numerous articles for Victorian Fishing Monthly, Fishing World, Freshwater Fishing Australia, Kaydo Fishing World, Hooked Up Magazine and others. He's lived and fished in Southwest Victoria for a lifetime and knows the area extremely well.



About Fishing Warrnambool In Winter

Warrnambool is the largest town in Southwest Victoria and is neatly nestled between two great fishing rivers, centrally located on the rugged coastline and surrounded by lakes and estuaries. Yes, it can get quite cool and windy, but the fishing opportunities in winter can be exceptional if you pick the weather windows and get after the trout, tuna, and bream when few other anglers choose to stay home.

Warrnambool Fishing Spot #1: Hopkins And Merri Rivers

Species: Brown Trout

- These river systems run low and clear through the warmer months, plus get choked with weed growth, making the trout fishing tough. Winter is different though; fast flowing water gets the fish and taking lures and fish from 2-7 pounds are not uncommon.
- Fisheries have determined that trout don't recruit naturally in these systems, hence there is no annual closure of the trout fishing. Plus, the stocking rates have been increased
- There are not a lot of access to these systems during summer that doesn't involve long walks through snake infested land. In winter the shallow margins fill up and the trout move in – and these areas are often much easier to access.
- Don't be put off by dirty, muddy, brown water. Those conditions are perfect for Warrnambool trout.
- The Merri River is navigable and can be traversed up to Bromfield St Weir in a small boat or a kayak. The freshwater reaches of the Hopkins aren't as accessible, but there are a handful of access points where a kayak can be slid into the water. Trout and quality estuary perch are on offer, especially through autumn, but winter is good too.
- Use Google Earth to find places where road bridges cross the river or come close enough to it to afford access.
- The places to find are areas where the fish can hold just out of the current, such as rocks, stumps, lava flows and so on. Trout will stay out of the main flow and will dart out to nail prey that is getting washed down with the current.
- Dirty water makes it worth targeting trout right through the day, while clear water in summer usually limits the productive trout fishing to low light periods.

Trout Lures For The Hopkins And Merri Rivers

- 95-100mm hard body lures such as the Daiwa Realis or Presso are great for these systems when the water is quite dirty. Gold and silver colours that create flash seem to be effective when fished for a reaction bite.
- Don't be afraid to go anywhere from 8-12lb leader for the trout in these systems, especially as there are some bass, estuary perch and yellowbelly in the Hopkins River especially that can test tackle.

Warrnambool Fishing Spot #2: Inshore/Offshore

Species: Southern Bluefin Tuna

- Winter has been traditionally the time to target southern bluefin tuna off Warrnambool Port Fairy and Portland. School fish of 8-12kg or 14-20 kg are common, with larger fish of 30-100kg also around at times.

- The Southern Ocean is unforgiving, so be very careful to pick the weather conditions and make sure your boat up to the task. Or go out with a charter operator! Easterly winds and south-easterly winds generally fish poorly.
- Winter tuna can come very close to the Warrnambool coastline in winter, making small boat fishing for them quite possible.
- During winter you'll often see fish busting up with birds, seals and dolphins working. In summer the fish tend to stay deeper and it comes down to keeping an eagle eye out for nervous water caused by bait schools.
- Trolling is effective unless you find schools busting up, then it can be fun to switch to stickbaits and make casts into the school.

Tuna Lures For Warrnambool Offshore

- Small hard bodies such as the Rapala XRap in white or skirted lures such as the Richter Jelly Babes are perfect for trolling up some southern bluefin tuna. Diving lures will pick fish up from a little deeper than skirted lures.

Warrnambool Fishing Spot #3: Killarney Beach

Species: Australian Salmon

- Most of the beaches around Warrnambool fish pretty well for Australian salmon over the winter months. Usually finding them is just a case of going for a drive or a walk and looking down from the dunes for black patches in shallow water close to shore.
- Killarney Beach is one of Mark's favourites for salmon. It's a bit hit and miss at times, but when the salmon are on they can be targeted with light gear as there is no swell to contend with and the fish often come close to shore.
- Spin rods of 8-10' are perfect for salmon fishing on Killarney Beach, but if you want a challenge you can have some fun trying to stop them on bream gear or can target them on flies from the beach.
- A 12lb line and 8-10lb leader is enough for salmon fishing, just be sure and use a small low profile knot to join the line and the leader as it needs to go through guides t high speed!
- Often you'll be fishing in as little as 1-2m of water, so start cranking your lure as soon as it hits the water.

Killarney Beach Salmon Fishing Lures

- Any kind of metal slice in the 30-60g range, such as a Halco Twisty, is a good option for salmon fishing at Killarney Beach, just be sure to upgrade the hooks if they need it – a lot of metals on the market have hooks that are too thick, hard and blunt to pin Aussie salmon.

Warrnambool Fishing Spot #4: Hopkins Estuary

Species: Estuary Perch with a bycatch of bream and the occasional mulloway

- The estuary perch fishing in the Hopkins Estuary can be very good early in the winter, before the water gets too cold and dirty. Large fish will have moved down from the freshwater to spawn in the estuary and offer some great fishing opportunities.
- The lower reaches of the estuary often holds good mixed schools of perch and bream in 4m of water that show up clearly on the sounder and can be target with a range of lures.
- The schools will sometimes hang in one area for a while and other times they'll move around and you'll need to spend some time looking for them.
- Often in the cooler months the fish can be located easily enough but getting them to bite can be a bit of a challenge. Early in the season while the water is clearer the fish will often bite better, and frequently will bite all day.
- Expect the odd stray mulloway to show up in the catch when you're targeting the schooled-up bream and perch.
- An electric motor is essential equipment for this style of fishing as the fish are sensitive to boat noise.
- Launching at the Deakin ramp and exploring the ski lane is not a bad plan.

Tuna Lures For Warrnambool Offshore

- Small metal blades such in the 35-40mm size range, such as the Ecogear ZX are effective in natural colours.
- Daiwa Bait Junkie or Zman paddletails soft plastics in 2.5-3" sizes rigged on relatively heavy jig heads and allowed to sink into the mud with just the occasional hop and wiggle is effective.

Warrnambool Fishing Spot #5: Lake Purrumbete

Species: Brown, Rainbow, Chetah and Tiger Trout, plus Chinook Salmon

- There are multiple trout lakes around Warrnambool that can fish pretty well through the winter months, but Lake Purrumbete, about an hour's drive west is a favourite. This

system is stocked with five salmonid species: brown, rainbow, chetah and tiger trout, plus chinook salmon keep the fishery interesting. Redfin are also there in good numbers.

- It's possible to troll the deep-water using downriggers or paravanes, but Mark prefers to fish the shallow, weedy margins of the lake.
- Keep a close eye on the weather, it can be cold and the lake is a large body of water that gets chopped up by strong winds. Low light periods work best but on cloudy days the bite can extend a little further into the day.
- Sometimes during winter you'll find balls of minnow milling around and targeting trout can be like pelagic fishing. Keep an eye peeled for rippling bait on the surface.
- A good strategy is to look at which direction the wind has been blowing over the past few days and fish the areas that have been exposed to the full force of the wind. Of course, if the wind is blowing too hard it may be better and safer to fish in sheltered areas instead.
- It's worth fishing heavier leaders of 8-12lb as there are some very large trout in this system and they will quickly bury you in heavy weed.

Lake Purrumbete Trout Fishing Lures

- When the sun is high, 2.5 to 3" Daiwa Bait Junky soft plastics are great for Purrumbete salmonids. Work them down the outside of the weed beds with the smallest jig heads you can get away with.
- During low light periods hard body lures in the 80-100mm sizes work well, with the Daiwa Presso and bent minnow style lures worked across the surface offering some exciting fishing.

Conclusion

Southwest Victoria definitely experiences some cool, wet and often windy weather over the winter months. In fact, some of the best fishing happens in winter for those who know where to look and how to go about it.