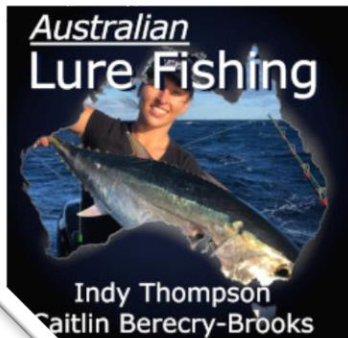


Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 608](#)



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Indy Thompson

Bluewater Specialist and Tuna Champions Project Manager

Indy is a marine scientist, passionate fisho and project manager for Tuna Champions, a program dedicated to promoting sustainability in recreational tuna fishing. With those credentials she's well qualified to share a few tips with us about how we can go about hooking and landing some quality SBT! So enjoy the conversation and make a few notes as ALF Host Caitlin Berecny-Brooks extracts some great info from Indy.



Indy's Tuna Fishing Tips

- For Indy, fishing on Tasmania's east coast is about fishing the tide changes. Often, she'll be fishing grounds as shallow as 8m and quite close inshore.
- Finding baitfish is key, but the tuna on Tassie's southeast coast are often tight up against the rocks, even the 100-150kg models. As they move further north to St Helens they associate with reef structures and it's not uncommon for fish to escape by reefing the angler.
- Southern Bluefin Tuna are endothermic, meaning they can regulate their internal temperatures. This enables them to survive in a wide range of water temperatures. It's typically the baitfish (which are more susceptible to water temps) that determine where and when the SBT will turn up.

- Bluefina tuna fishing used to be seasonal but now seems to be becoming a year-round fishery. This is thought to be due to the recovery of the SBT since the 1970's when they were on the brink of extinction. Their appearance in Tasmania and Victoria at times and in places where they weren't previously found may be a return to where stocks historically used to be.
- SBT seem to swim in schools of similar sized fish, so it's uncommon to find both schoolies and barrels in the same place at the same time. Larger fish often seem to be associated with dolphins.

Indy's Recommended Tackle

- Indy's preference is for heavy tackle than light gear because a short fight is better for the fish and she'd personally prefer to be in physical pain for the shortest possible time!
- A Tiagra or Tallica 50 with 130lb backing and 60kg topshot allows the fish to be played out quickly, tagged and released – plus it minimises the chances of getting reefed and losing the fish.
- A 120-150lb wind on leader is at the business end of the tackle.

Luke's Lures For Land-based Fishing Around Mackay

- Niiyama Fishead Trolling Lures are handmade and hand-painted with tinsel skirt. Indy like to run these well back in the spread.
- Pakula Lumo's are also a go-to lure that has to be in the spread.
- The Meridian Flying Fish is a good option for the long rigger.
- A Halco King Brown Deep Diver retrofitted to single hooks is deadly in Tasmania. A single hook improves the survivability of a bluefin tuna from 60% to 85%.

Handling Tuna For The Table Or Release

- Preparation is the key to increasing the survival of tuna that will be released. Having a knotless landing net on board is crucial for good handling of school fish.
- Supporting the weight of the fish, not holding it vertically, avoiding touching the gills and gill plates, laying it flat, keeping it wet and minimising the time out of the water are vital.
- The highest survival rates occur when the fish is released without removing it from water.

- For large fish, heavy duty lip grips are great and using a heavy leader improves control, especially if the boat is kept in gear. A wet towel placed over the eyes of the fish will calm it down and allow the tag to be placed correctly.
- Caring properly for fish that will be kept vastly increases the quality of the flesh. Ike Jime brain spiking is most easily done by finding the soft spot between the eyes of the fish. Be sure to push the spike in far enough that it's about level with the eye socket. Don't use a knife for this..... a serious injury is highly likely.
- Once the fish has been brain spiked it's important to make a small incision behind the pectoral fin. Don't cut deeper than 2cm though or the blood will run back into the flesh and give exactly the opposite result than you're after.
- A lot of people don't bother pipping the fish. This involves running a thin wire through the spinal cord to sever it. This stops the muscles from twitching and producing heat, which causes the flesh to start cooking and turn brown. It also releases the pressure in the meat and tenderises it.
- The next step is gutting and gilling the fish quickly to help reduce the internal temperature. At this point the fish should be chilled in an ice slurry to get it as cold as possible, as fast as possible. Use a 1:1 ice to seawater mix and don't be in too big a hurry – keeping the fish in ice slurry for 2 days before slicing it up gives the best quality meat possible.