

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 615](#)



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Mitch McMaster

Fish Care Victoria, "On The Cast" Podcast Host

Mitch's fishing journey started in the Wimmera area, before he went on to become a marine biologist and Operations Manager for Fish Care Victoria. He's passionate about waterways, fish and fishing and gets involved with Estuary Watch and Coastcare programs. Mitch co-hosts the "On The Cast" fishing podcast.



Mitch's Wimmera River Yellowbelly Fishing Tips

- The Wimmera River has a good population of super aggressive yellowbelly that take lures well and fight hard. Find water that's 18-21°C and you're in the hunt – the start of spring and the start of autumn are the best times to target yellas. If you have a number of weeks with air temperatures between 20-25 then things are looking good.
- Upsizing lures tends to filter out the redfin and selectively target yellowbelly.
- For the land-based angler, fish with lures that you know the diving depth is 1.5m or so. If the water is really clear but you can't see the bottom you're probably fishing in deep enough water.
- Weed or timber, particularly if it's around the deep outside bends of rivers will usually hold yellowbelly, but clay banks that hold yabbies are also a yellowbelly magnet. The combination of weed and hard rock seems to be a good fish attractor.

- The Wimmera is one of very few landlocked rivers in Australia. Start by looking online to find out where fish have been stocked, which are usually around Dimboola or Horsham. During spring these fish will start moving through the river system and dispersing.
- Often good numbers of yellowbelly aggregate downstream of the small weirs that are dotted through the system. The area around Glenorchy is the terminal point for yellowbelly movement as there are no fishways on the weirs.
- Over the past decade the dry conditions have resulted in fish being restricted to deep holes, but more recent rains have reconnected the holes. It doesn't seem to matter too much whether the river is flowing, it's more important that the flow has been consistent for some time.
- Mitch likes when the water is very clear, but the fishing can still be really good even when the water is a bit dirty.
- Focussing in the early morning on weedbeds and then moving to deeper water with hard structure and shade as the sun gets up is a successful strategy.
- Mitch finds the full moon period fishes best at dawn and dusk but the fish are more shut down during the day. Around the new moon seems to be a better proposition for daylight fishing. Around 10-14 hours before a rapidly rising or rapidly falling barometer with a storm approaching is a great bite period. That said, Mitch has had some great sessions on yellas on bright, clear sunny days when the weather was stable.
- Golden perch migrate downstream during significant floods and can get downstream past weirs, so they end up at the bottom end of the system at Lake Hindmarsh. In periods of lower flow they tend to move back upstream. When the flows stabilise the fishing tends to be very good.
- Due to the mouth structure, yellowbelly tend to feed a little up off the bottom. They'll take surprisingly large lures with aggression at times – and usually the bigger fish will eat bigger lures. Don't be surprised if a small yella smashes a large lure though.
- Mitch currently has a 2020 Hobie Mirage Outback current model Hull shape with a Humminbird Helix G4N 7" sounder for hands-free fishing. He likes to slowly move through the river system parallel with the bank and making casts at 45 degrees ahead of the kayak as much as possible.

Mitch's Wimmera River Yellowbelly Tackle

- Mitch likes to throw larger sized lures regardless of the species he's chasing and prefers to use baitcast tackle. A fast action, parabolic rod like the Daiwa TD Zero, 722 MLXB, 722 MXB and 610 versions is perfect. The Daiwa Steez ATWS, Steez CTSV and Zillions

- A 20lb braided line and a longish length of fluorocarbon leader (2-3 rod lengths).. In clear water he'll use 12-16lb, in dirty water he'll use a heavier leader of 20-25 lb just in case a mega cod comes along.
- A spin setup is also good for when you want to throw light lures like beetlespins and small plastics.
- Decoy EX clips in the 60lb size make changing lures very quick, although they're not the best when you're running spinnerbaits that have the standard "R" shaped wire – better to tie a knot for those!

Mitch's Best Yellowbelly Lures For The Wimmera

- A 1/4 to 3/8 oz spinnerbait is ideal for fishing the Wimmera system, particularly if you're casting to individual hard structure or target. They can be sunk next to or amongst structure and allowed to sink before simply being slow rolled back out. It can pay to play around with blade configurations to accommodate the feeding style of the fish on the day.
- A hard body or crankbait such as the #2 Stumpjumper with the curvy bib or a Daiwa Steez RPM Crankbait are good. But there are plenty of other suitable lures on the market. These are great search baits for when you really want to cover some water. Cast them every metre and work over every inch of the water, not just the structure.
- The Daiwa Steez Cover Chatterbait is a super snag-resistant lure that can be fished through any structure you like. Mitch rigs these with a 4" paddletail and finds they are very handy for hitting structure, much like the spinnerbaits.
- Mitch gave the Jackall Squirrel 79mm suspending hardbody an honourable mention – these are perfect for casting well beyond the tip of sunken trees and then working slowly past the tips with plenty of pauses. These lures can also be worked at a medium roll or even a fast burn. Backwards facing single hooks are great for reducing the snaginess of the Jackall Squirrel and other snaggy lure styles.
- He also has a habit of throwing expensive swimbaits just about anywhere, including around the Wimmera system for yellowbelly.