



NSW Guide
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FREE!

Go Fishing



Featured Location:
Coffs Region
NSW Mid-North Coast
Hot Spots!

Foreword from NSW DPI



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Throwing a line in at a new spot always makes for a great fishing adventure, whether it's on a family holiday or just somewhere new close to home. No matter your fishing expertise, NSW boasts a wide range of fish species and great places to catch them, including in our many inland rivers, impoundments and streams to the productive estuaries, lakes, beaches and rocky headlands on the NSW coast. There are also many inshore and offshore fishing opportunities from your boat or if using one of the many experienced charter fishing services available.

There are many reasons to go fishing, including to unwind and relax, spend time with family and friends, enjoy nature and of course to catch a tasty meal of fresh fish. Over a million people in NSW enjoy this fantastic lifestyle and the great news is that you are never too old or young to take up fishing so get out there and give it a go! Getting into fishing is easy. If you don't know where to start, just head into your local tackle store where the friendly staff can provide tips on tackle, bait and techniques plus point you to a safe, convenient spot to throw a line in.

NSW DPI has developed these *Go Fishing* guides as a snapshot of popular NSW fishing locations in both fresh and saltwater to help improve your recreational fishing experiences. For more information on other locations, fish species, size and bag limits and permitted gear not listed in these guides, visit the NSW DPI website or download the **FishSmart App** from the App store on your Android or iPhone.

Overview



Famed as an outstanding fishing destination offering an almost limitless array of angling options and targets, the NSW Mid North Coast is high on the list of hardcore sportfishermen and family fishos alike.

Coffs Harbour, a popular tourist destination famed for its iconic “Big Banana” and great beaches, is the central hub for what’s become known as the “Coffs Coast”, an expanse of highly fishy territory extending from Woolli in the north down to Nambucca in the south.

The Coffs Coast is also home to the oldest marine park in NSW, the Solitary Islands Marine Park (SIMP), which encompasses 71,000 ha and extends along 100 km of coast from Coffs Harbour up to Sandon River in the north.

Like all NSW marine parks, SIMP consists of special rules and zones. If you’re planning a fishing trip to this region with family or friends, it’s important to familiarise yourself with the rules before heading out and wetting a line. Penalties can apply for fishing in the wrong area.

Download DPI’s free “**FishSmart**” app onto your smart phone or tablet. The Fishsmart app includes all NSW marine park maps so you can tell where you are in real time plus features local weather and tides, bag and size limit information and much more. You can also download a SIMP guide and map from www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/solitaryislandsmarinepark.

The Coffs Coast offers plenty of great fishing and spearfishing options for locals and visitors alike. Depending on the season, you can target Australian bass in the upper reaches of most of the local creeks and rivers and then work your way downstream for a chance at mangrove jack plus all the other popular estuary species. Then you’ve got mulloway off the rocks and beaches, snapper, kingfish and Spanish mackerel on the inshore reefs, tasty deep-water species including bar cod and hapuka out on the continental shelf line and pelagic speedsters in the form of blue marlin, wahoo and yellowfin tuna in the bluewater. Taken all together, it’s not hard to see that Coffs really does offer it all!

Given it’s such a popular tourist destination, the Coffs region provides plenty of accommodation options to suit visiting anglers and their families with plenty to see and do when you’re not out on the water.

With year-round access and a diverse array of fishing options from the rivers to the ocean, Coffs is a great place for fishers of all skill levels to visit. Hopefully the info in this *Coffs Coast Go Fishing guide* will help you plan your trip to this amazing location!

Woolpoolga

Emerald Beach

Coffs Harbour

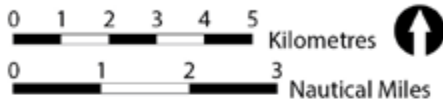
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Department of
Primary Industries



Solitary Islands Marine Park Marine Park Zoning Map



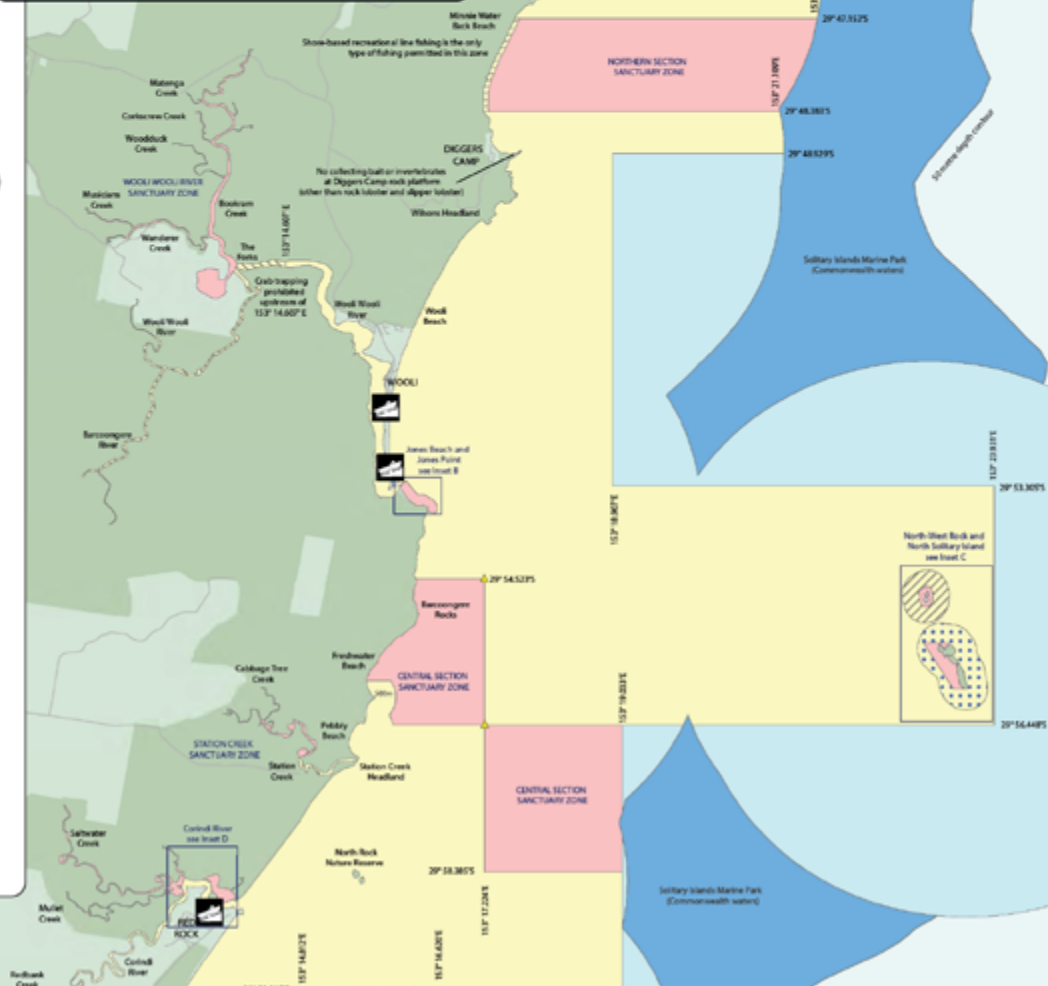
Map projection: Unprojected Geographic. Horizontal Datum: Geodetic Datum of Australia (GDA94)
Produced May 2018.

- Sanctuary Zone
- Habitat Protection Zone
- Habitat Protection Zone (Prohibition on Commercial Fish Trapping)
- Habitat Protection Zone (Prohibition on Crab Trapping)
- General Use Zone
- Special Purpose Zone
- National Park Zone (Commonwealth Waters)
- Multiple Use Zone (Commonwealth Waters)
- Special Purpose Zone (Commonwealth Waters)
- Public Moorings*
* Refer to SIMP user guide for conditions of use
- Zone Markers (Selected areas only)
- Zone Marker Buoys
- Boat Ramp

For further information and regulations on the Solitary Islands Marine Park please visit:
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/solitary-islands-marine-park



Or alternatively download the FishSmart App to your phone or tablet.



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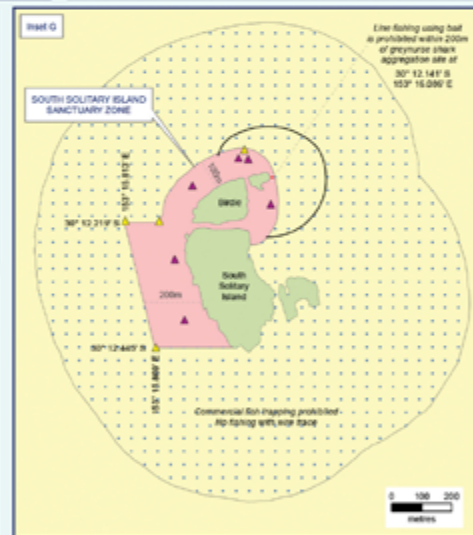
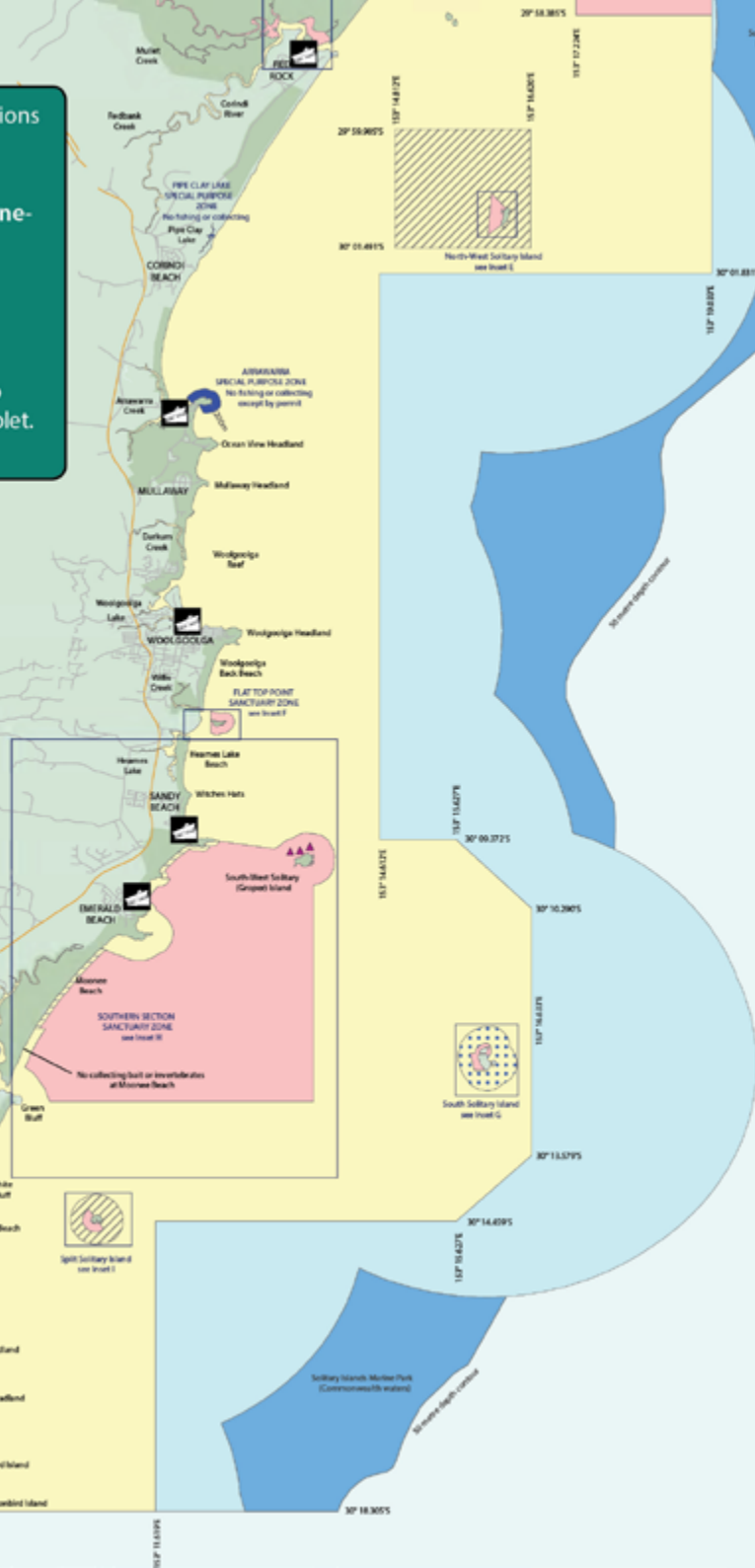
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/solitary-islands-marine-park



Or alternatively download the FishSmart App to your phone or tablet.

Fishing Hotspots!

- Change Shoal
30°18.848'S / 153°11.409'E
- Jeffrey Shoal
30°20.932'S / 153°8.250'E
- Whitmore Shoal
30°22.100'S / 153°7.895'E
- Sawtel Shoal
30°14.912'S / 151°11.965'E



Key target species



Snapper

PEAK SEASON: Year around, April – October generally offer the best fishing.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with pilchards and strips of fresh tuna or similar; lure fishing with soft plastics, jigs and vibes.

TACKLE: 4-6 kg spin outfits, 4-8 kg braid or equivalent mono and a leader of 8-15 kg. When bait fishing, use a 2/0 – 7/0 non-offset circle hook with a running ball sinker directly to it. Allow the bait to drift naturally in the current. The use of berley is advised when targeting snapper around the many reefs along the Coffs coast. Snapper can be targeted on deeper reefs and gravel beds using a traditional paternoster rig baited with squid, fresh tuna or pilchards. Lure fishing for snapper is very successful. Octopus and slow jigs in the 60-200 gram size or jigheads in the 7-27 gram size with 8-14 cm plastics will entice snapper from the shallows out to 70 m depth range.

HOT SPOTS: Jeffrey Shoal, Changte Shoal, Sawtell Shoal, Whitmore Shoal & Arrawarra.

BAG & SIZE LIMIT: 10 per day 30 cm and over.



Spanish Mackerel

PEAK SEASON: February – May.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with live or fresh chin weighted yellowtail, pike, tailor or mackerel tuna on a single strand wire trace. Trolling high speed diving hard-bodies and vibes, casting surface stickbaits or poppers.

TACKLE: 6-15 kg spin or overhead outfits, 15-24 kg braid or equivalent mono with a leader 30kg-50 kg and a short length of 15-37 kg single strand wire attached to the leader with a rolling swivel. When using bait, a single strand wire rig with a 5/0 – 8/0 non-offset circle on the top with a trailing size 2 – 2/0 treble is preferred. The same outfits can be used for trolling hard-bodied lures around the numerous islands, headlands and shoals – use a short trace of single strand wire to prevent the mackerel's sharp teeth taking your lure! An exciting way to target these speedsters is with topwater lures like stickbaits and poppers in the 15–30 cm size. A spin outfit of an 8000-20000 size reel loaded with 20-40 kg braid with 40-60 kg fluorocarbon leader on a dedicated casting rod is best suited for this type of fishing.

HOT SPOTS: South Solitary Island, North West Rock, Sawtell Shoal and Changte Shoal.

BAG & SIZE LIMIT: 5 per day 75cm and over.





Pearl Perch



PEAK SEASON: Year round

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with squid, tuna, yellowtail or pilchards. Lure fishing with metal "slow" jigs.

TACKLE: 6-10 kg spin or overhead outfits with 15-20 kg braid or mono equivalent and a leader of 15-30 kg. A traditional two hook paternoster rig with 5/0-7/0 non-offset circle hooks baited with two different baits is preferred. Try spicing up your rig by adding small plastic squids or flashy material to each hook. This is known as a flasher rig and can be bought already made from most tackle stores. Slow jigs are very effective for pearl perch and are best fished ultra-slow near the bottom on a dedicated light jig outfit with a spin or overhead reel loaded with 10-15 kg braid and leader of 10-20 kg fluorocarbon.

HOT SPOTS: The Patch, reef and gravel beds in 50m+ of water.

SIZE & BAG LIMIT: 5 per day 30cm and over.



Sand Whiting



PEAK SEASON: November to April

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with live saltwater yabbies or marine worms; lure fishing with small blades, surface poppers and small stickbaits.

TACKLE: 1-3 kg 2.1m graphite spin outfits with 2-3 kg braid and 2-5 kg mono or fluorocarbon leader. When bait fishing, use a size 1-1/0 non-offset circle or long shank hook, making sure it matches the bait size and shape. Try a running sinker rig with a metre of 2-5 kg trace. Cast small blades, surface poppers and stickbaits around sandflats and shallow weed-beds for some exciting action on hard fighting whiting!

A GUN TIP: Keep your retrieve brisk and consistent.

HOT SPOTS: Nambucca River, Bellinger River, Bonville Creek and Corindi River.

SIZE & BAG LIMIT: 20 per day 27cm and over.



Other species



The Coffs Coast is a mixing point for tropical and temperature species. It offers an extraordinary diversity of fishing options. All the usual suspects – bream, flathead, luderick and whiting – are available in the many estuaries, rivers and creeks but you can also target more tropical species such as mangrove jack as well. A NSW jack is always a prized capture and the Coffs region is well known for producing quality fish each season. If you like offshore fishing, Coffs is well known for its fantastic snapper but the reefs and shoals also produce tasty bycatch in the form of venus tuskfish. When the warm currents hit their peak in late summer and autumn, you can expect some excellent mackerel fishing with good chances at tangling with longtail tuna and quality cobia as well.

FACT BOX



Mangrove

Mangrove jack (*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*) are a very popular sportfish that inhabit estuaries and offshore reef systems from Northern Queensland all the way south to the Central Coast, NSW. They are a slow growing species that can reach lengths of up to 1m. However, inside the estuaries they are more regularly found around the 30-60cm mark. Once they reach the 50-60cm mark they tend to migrate to offshore reefs and islands.

Mangrove jack are renowned for their swift attacks, violent hook ups, savage fights and their ability to find structure within a matter of seconds. They are arguably one of the best fighting fish along the east coast of Australia, which is why so many anglers dedicate hours and days targeting them.

While their range is much further south than Coffs Harbour, the Mid-North Coast is the southernmost region where you can expect to encounter them on a regular basis. In order to catch a jack, preparation and persistence is key.

Techniques

The two most common techniques when targeting mangrove jack is either casting lures or fishing with baits.

Baits in this region are generally more productive than lures especially when

fishing after dark. The best baits are either herring or poddy mullet. The most effective way to get a bite from a jack is to cast your bait around snags and rock walls either unweighted or under a float. The key is keeping your bait around the structure for as long as possible. The longer your bait stays near the structure the more likely you are to tempt a resident jack to bite.

The benefit of throwing lures is that you are able to cover a lot of ground, especially when fishing from a boat. Casting hard bodied deep divers, weedless rigged soft plastics or surface lures are all equally effective. When fishing lures, casting accuracy is one of the most important things that will determine your success.

When throwing divers and soft plastics cast your lure hard against the structure, give a couple of twitches and rips, then begin a slow retrieve. The odd pause can often entice a bite, especially when using suspending lures. Mix up your retrieves and find what works for you. Some anglers prefer a more erratic twitching method while others prefer a slow rolled lures. Don't be afraid to put multiple casts around the one area while trying to work different angles...sometimes a jack won't be tempted until the 10th cast.

Jack



Tackle

Live baiting: 4000 size spin reel, 7ft 8-10kg rod, 30lb braid, 50lb fluorocarbon leader.

Lures: Bait cast reel, 6ft 6-8 kg rod, 30lb braid, 40 lb leader.

Lures

Soft plastic fish, shads and paddle tails in a 80-150 mm size and natural baitfish colours.

Hardbody divers in 80-150 mm size, shallow and mid diving depth with gold and silvers proving most effective.

Surface lures in 70-130 mm size, poppers, stick baits and fizzers.

Locations

Every estuary system from South West Rocks north has good populations of mangrove jack. However, it is much easier to target jacks in the smaller estuary systems as they fish tend to congregate around areas where there is decent structure. Stand out locations around Coffs Harbour include: Bonville Creek, Boambee Creek, Deep Creek, Moonee Creek, Woolgoolga Creek and Corindi Creek.

Key tips

- Focus your efforts around tide changes.
- Always fish around solid structure.
- Use good quality gear.
- Upgrade trebles and split rings on lures.
- Don't stop casting!



Check out the app: **FishSmart**

NSW DPI has created an app that provides recreational fishers with 24/7 access to essential information they need to know to fish in NSW, such as:

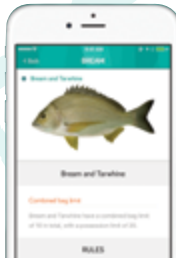
- a pictorial guide of common recreational species, bag & size limits, closed seasons and fishing gear rules
- real-time maps to locate nearest FADs (Fish Aggregation Devices), artificial reefs, Recreational Fishing Havens and Marine Park Zones
- local weather, tide, moon phase and barometric pressure to help choose best time to fish
- guides on spearfishing, fishing safely, trout fishing, regional fishing
- DPI contact for reporting illegal fishing, fish kills, pest species etc. and local Fisheries Offices
- DPI Facebook news.



Search for a fish, weather info and gallery



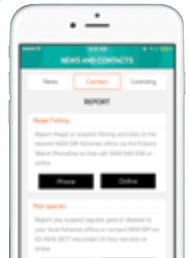
See your location in relation to FADs, Marine Park Zones, RFHs & more



Check the bag and size limits for popular species



Check the rules for different gear types



Contact Fisheries – Report illegal fishing & more