



Go Fishing

FEATURED LOCATION:

PORT MACQUARIE

NSW MID-NORTH COAST
HOTSPOT!

dpi.nsw.gov.au





Cover Image: Hayley Bonnici with a Dolphinfish. All images: Chris Cleaver. Fish illustrations: Pat Tully.

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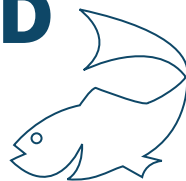
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FOREWORD

FROM NSW DPI



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 as well as 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, permitted gear and other information not listed in these guides, visit the **NSW DPI website** or download the **FishSmart app** to your mobile device.



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OVERVIEW

Port Macquarie is a vibrant town on the NSW Mid-North Coast, about 4 hours' drive from Sydney. Located at the mouth of the Hastings River, Port Mac is a popular fishing destination surrounded by lush forests and picturesque hinterland.

The Hastings River is one of the 30 Recreational Fishing Havens along the NSW coastline and is renowned for some great fishing, whether just a casual day on the water with the family or a serious outing looking for that fish of a lifetime!

The river dominates the landscape and offers a variety of fishing options from Australian bass in the upper tributaries of the Maria River and Limeburners Creek to bream, mullet, whiting, luderick, mulloway, trevally and even the odd mangrove jack through its salty reaches.

Along the coast, stunning white sand beaches and rocky outcrops offer more great fishing from bream, whiting, dart, tailor, and mulloway in the foamy beach gutters with luderick, drummer, longtail tuna, mackerel and cobia from the rocky headlands and river break walls.

If a blue water experience is what you are after, the area offers many options including an artificial reef deployed by NSW DPI in 2016 with funds supported by the Recreational Fishing Trusts. The reef is comprised of 20 concrete modules

in a depth of 46m of water. In the cooler months snapper, teraglin, tusk fish and pearl perch are on the menu and during the warmer months marlin, dolphinfish, cobia and mackerel can be targeted fishing the artificial structure.

The area also offers up some great guided charter services. See the following link for more information <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/charter/go-charter-fishing-in-nsw>.

When you're not wetting a line, there are a variety of activities to enjoy including swimming, surfing, hiking, snorkelling, mountain bike riding, kayaking and more. The town is home to several cultural attractions, such as the Port Macquarie Museum, the Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Sea Acres Rainforest Centre, and the Koala Hospital.

Port Macquarie is renowned for its excellent dining with a range of restaurants, cafes, and bars, serving up everything from fresh seafood to locally grown produce.

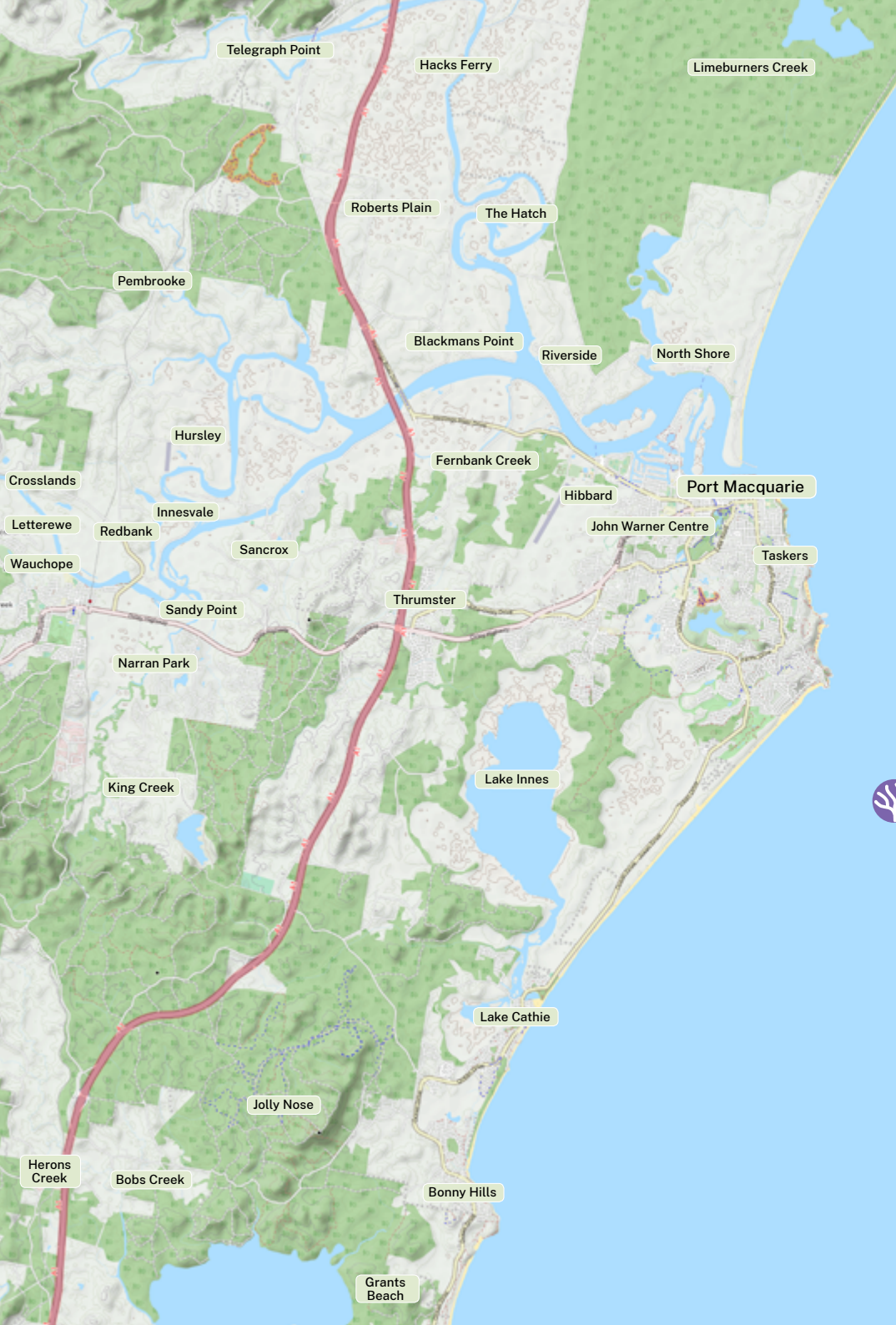
Whether you're seeking a fishy holiday, relaxation, or a bit of both, Port Macquarie has accommodation options from beachside caravan and camping sites, hotels, and motels right up to ocean view holiday houses.


This Port Macquarie *Go Fishing* guide is part of a series of guides to popular locations in NSW. Be sure to keep an eye out for current and future editions in DPI's *Go Fishing* guides.





PORT MACQUARIE FISHING LOCATIONS


Map 1



 31°24.580 S / 153°00.098 E

 31°25.044 S / 152°58.950 E


 31°24.567 S / 153°04.725 E


 31°25.955 S / 152°57.531 E

 31°26.953 S / 152°58.368 E

 31°27.251 S / 152°58.301 E

 31°30.038 S / 152°56.837 E

 31°29.908 S / 153°00.789 E

 31°32.206 S / 153°01.912 E

For more information on other locations, fish species, size and bag limits, permitted gear and other information not listed in these guides, visit the [NSW DPI website](http://www.nsw.dpi.gov.au) or download the **FishSmart app** to your mobile device.

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NOTE: This fishing map is only to be used as a general reference overview.

See www.dpi.nsw.gov.au for details on fishing regulations.


Not for navigation.

See www.rms.nsw.gov.au for info on boating safety and regulations.

Not for navigation.







-  Fish Aggregating Device (FAD)
-  Artificial reef
-  Reef
-  Flathead
-  Snapper

0 1km 2km 4km


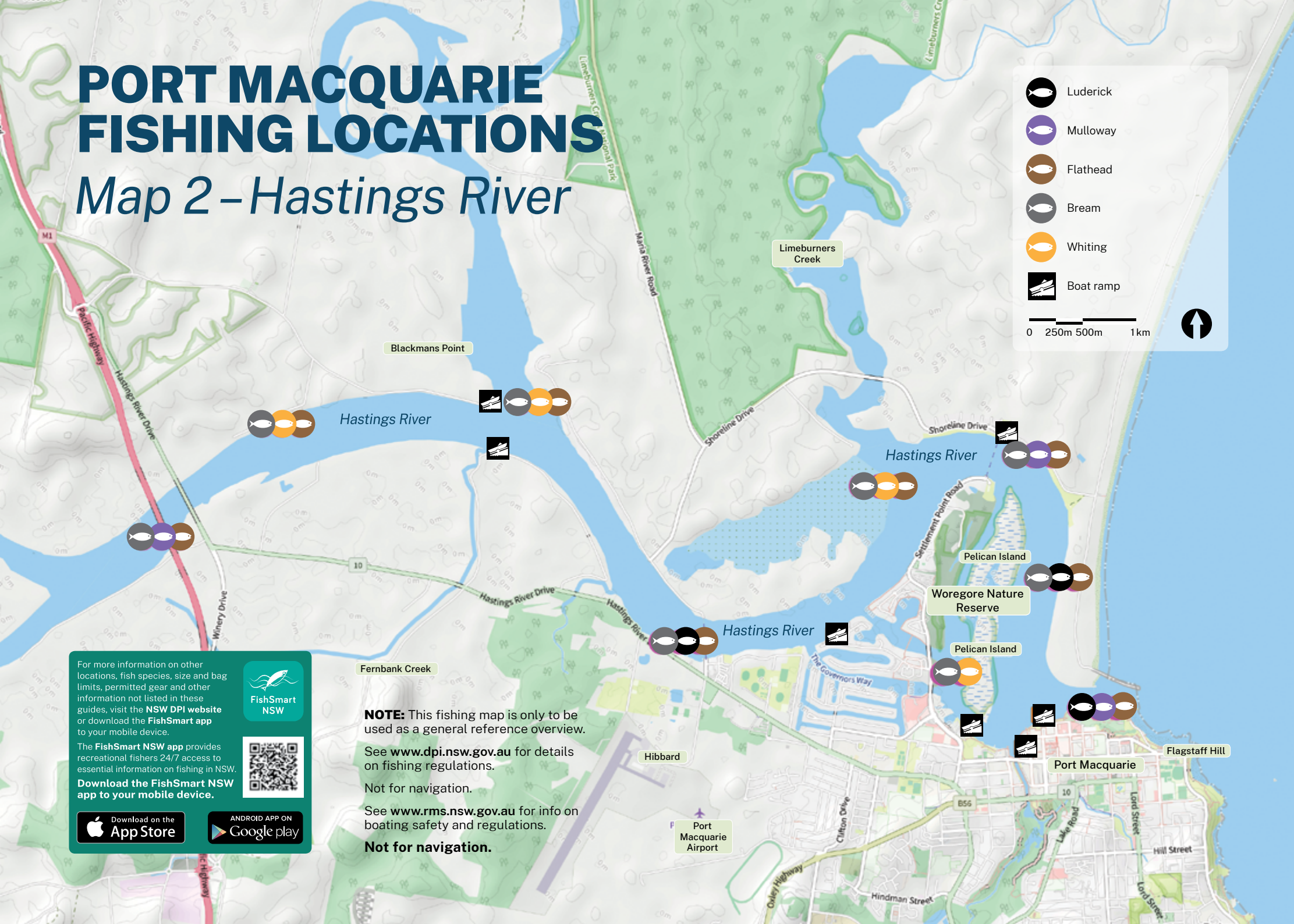


PORT MACQUARIE FISHING LOCATIONS

Map 2 - Hastings River

-  Luderick
-  Mulloway
-  Flathead
-  Bream
-  Whiting
-  Boat ramp

0 250m 500m 1km

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KEY TARGET SPECIES



Luderick



PEAK SEASON: Year round.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with cabbage and green weed and occasionally as by-catch targeting bream and whiting with marine worms.

There are also a growing number of anglers targeting luderick with fly fishing outfits and weed flies.

TACKLE: 3-4kg spin outfits generally using longer 3m slow action rods. Standard luderick rigs incorporate a stem float weighted by a split shot terminating in a 6-8 sneck hook baited with strands of green cabbage or weed. Some anglers are also having success using artificial weed flies in place of actual weed.

HOT SPOTS: Hastings River Breakwalls, Bridge pylons.

Dusky Flathead



PEAK SEASON: October – April.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with whitebait, fresh prawns, live prawns or live poddy mullet; lurecasting with soft plastics, vibes and deep diving hard-bodies.

TACKLE: 2-5kg spin outfits, 3-6kg braid or mono line and 5-8kg leader. For bait fishing, use 1/0 to 4/0 non-offset circle hooks on a running sinker rig. If you're using soft plastics, use jig heads of 7-21grams on 2/0 or 5/0 heavier gauge hooks as there is every chance a mulloway might be encountered as well as the flatties. Stick with tails in the 6-12cm size. Curl or paddle tails work well, as do shads. Start with natural colours like grey, silver, "black & gold" or greens but don't be afraid of using something bright during

the last of the run out tide the water can become discoloured. An effective retrieve technique is to let your plastic hit the bottom then "rip" the rod firmly and allow the lure to swim back to the bottom. Be prepared for the bite as it sinks. Vibes can be substituted for soft plastics, especially when drifting water with significant depth changes. Diving hard-bodies can be effective around drop-offs and flats.

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HOT SPOTS: Drop-offs, flats systems, creek mouths and oyster leases.

Whiting



PEAK SEASON: November to April.

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

TACKLE: 1-3kg 2.1m graphite spin outfits with 2-3kg braid and 2-5kg 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 2-5kg trace. Cast small blades, surface poppers and stickbaits around sandflats and shallow weed-beds at high tide for some exciting action on hard fighting whiting!

A GUN TIP: Keep your surface lure retrieve brisk and consistent.

HOT SPOTS: Beach gutters, sand flats and weedbeds.

Pearl Perch



PEAK SEASON: Year round

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

TACKLE: 6-10kg spin or overhead outfits with 15-20kg braid or mono equivalent and a leader of 15-30kg. A traditional 2 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 some small plastic skirts or flashy material to each hook. These are known as flasher rigs and can be bought already made from most tackle stores. Slow pitch 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 10-15kg braid teamed with a leader of 10-20kg fluorocarbon.

HOT SPOTS: 50 metre plus reef and gravel beds.

OTHER SPECIES



Port Macquarie offers a range of fishing options. For instance, the crystal-clear freshwater headwaters produce some amazing **Australian bass** fishing. As these headwaters join the main tributaries all the usual estuary species like **flounder**, **mullet**, **garfish** and **mulloway** are on the cards. Hastings River breakwalls have been known to produce **mulloway**, **longtail tuna** and **cobia** when conditions are right. The ocean beaches can be very productive for **whiting**, **bream**, **tailor**, **mulloway** and **dart**. Inshore and offshore reefs have all the usual fair with **teraglin**, **mulloway**, **cobia**, **kingfish**, **pearl perch** as well as warmer water visitors in summer such as **marlin**, **dolphinfish** and **mackerel**. Port Macquarie really does have a lot to offer anglers of all skill levels and interests. Check it out for yourself!

FACT BOX

Snapper



Snapper fishing with lures, most notably soft plastics, has become a favourite way to target this highly popular species. Port Macquarie is a great place to try it.

Hooking a big snapper over rugged terrain is one of modern sportfishing's greatest challenges. Landing them is another story...

Snapper, aka "reds" or "knobbies", are one of our most popular sportfish. Spectacular looking fish, they're known for their fighting abilities and great eating qualities.

Where to fish

It is the million-dollar question. Everyone wants to know that secret spot for big snapper. However, how you fish is just as important as where. When it comes to spots to try around Port Macquarie, check out the map on page 4 for GPS locations to get you started.

Apart from reproduction, the key factors influencing snapper behaviour involve food and habitat. Like most fish if snapper have access to a food source, they generally won't stray far from their preferred habitat. Generally speaking, snapper rely on current or tides to bring food to their preferred habitat. If suitable food is scarce, the fish will move to find it.

This is where a good depth sounder becomes an invaluable tool for identifying fish holding terrain, fish and bait. And a GPS unit provides

the ability to waypoint the area for future fishing trips.

If you're keen to lift your snapper fishing game, take the time to find areas of hard terrain holding good bait. Species including pike, yellowtail, slimy mackerel, squid and prawns are favoured by snapper.

Productive locations don't need to involve pinnacles or bommies rising dramatically from the sea floor. Hard ground rising only a few metres from the bottom combined with bait and other fish-holding features like kelp beds is generally preferred by snapper – and switched-on snapper anglers!



Gear

Big snapper certainly can test your gear. If you want success with these fish, everything needs to be up to the task. Quality, well maintained threadline reels in the 3000-5000 size are popular with most snapper fishers using soft plastics. A good smooth drag is essential. Match your reel to a 2.1-2.3m graphite rod in the 3-6kg or 4-8kg range. The reel needs to be spooled with quality 7-10kg braid topped with a rod length of 10-15kg fluorocarbon leader.

A variety of jig head weights from 7g-30g with a strong hook will cover all the bases from wash fishing right out to 100m of water.

Proven lures include plastics of all shapes and size. Prawns, grubs, wrigglers, and jerk shad styles in 100mm-180mm seem to consistently catch fish.

Make sure you have a range of colours on hand as the fish often have preferences on any given day.

A very handy tip is to use a sea anchor (aka drogue) to control your drift in current or wind. At times, deploying a sea anchor can be the difference between catching fish or not catching fish.

Technique

Lure fishing with soft plastics for snapper is pretty basic. Yes, you need to be in the right place at the right time with the fish eager to bite but the actual process is fairly simple.

The key thing to remember is that the fish will more often than not eat the lure while it's sinking to the bottom or is being wafted around while the rod is in the rod holder on the boat. Fishing this way is actually very productive—simply cast your lure ahead of the drift, give some

slack and put the outfit in the rod holder. You only want the line to come tight when the plastic is about two thirds of the way to the bottom.

Then the movement of the boat will provide action to the plastic while it continually moves down the water column to near the bottom when it is directly under the boat. Most bites will be just as the slack takes up or directly under the boat.

As mentioned above, the presence of bait (food) is especially important when it comes to snapper fishing. Like many predatory species, they will shadow schools of baitfish such as yellowtail, pike, pilchards, slimy mackerel and squid.

In popular areas such as Port Macquarie, it can pay to be as stealthy as possible when targeting snapper, especially in shallow water.

When setting up to fish lures over a reef area, it's a good idea to run a "dummy drift" away from the area you want to fish. Once you've got a picture of how the current and conditions will affect your drift, position your boat over the prime ground. Generally speaking, a couple of drifts is enough to work out if the fish are around. If you get no bites or don't see any fish on the sounder after two or three drifts, move on to the next spot. You can always revisit the location later in the day, with tide changes often being especially productive.

For the best chances of success, keep moving around, trying different areas and depths. Mix up the plastics you use as well until you get a trademark rod buckling snapper run. Once that happens, you're well on the way to working out the techniques and locations for regular success on these fantastic sportfish!

Few fish are more rewarding from an inshore reef than a big knobby headed snapper.

A HEALTHY FISHING FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Help us build a positive future for recreational fishing in NSW.

By fishing responsibly, you can safeguard fish stocks and protect the places we love to fish. When you hold a current recreational fishing licence, your fee contribution is used for improving local facilities like fishing platforms and enhancing fishing experiences with artificial reefs and FADs.



Live for Fishing. Fish for Life. Learn more at
WWW.DPI.NSW.GOV.AU/FISHFORLIFE

