Prime Time and Snapper Shine
David Green | August 2008 • Area Articles / Queensland / Southern QLD / Gold Coast /

The end of winter is prime snapper time at the Gold Coast.

OFFSHORE

August is the main month of the year where snapper spawn. A lot of solid snapper move into the 24, 36 and 42 fathom reefs and these brightly marked fish are a good target species this month. So far it has been an excellent snapper season with most anglers regularly catching their bag limits. Plenty of good sized nobbies have also been caught, with a few over the 7kg mark.

The 36 fathom line has been fishing quite well through the early season and August generally sees an increase in the size of snapper encountered. The snapper bag limit has been in place for a few years now, which may a contributing factor to the last two good seasons.

To target big snapper try float lining in a berley trail on the pinnacles at the outer edge of the 36 fathom line. Pilchards are the standard bait, but the bigger fish often fall to larger baits such as whole or butterfly rigged mullet and slimies. A lot of good fish are also falling to soft plastics such as the 7” Gulp Jerkshads. Soft plastics are a lot easier to fish over the shallower reefs than out wider, and are also very effective on cobia, mulloway and pearl perch.

On the 50 fathom line there should be plenty of kingies, samson, amberjack and pearl perch this month. The high ridges east of Jumpinpin are particularly productive, and live baits, deep metal jigs and the new style octopus jigs are all effective. The current is at a minimum this month, and it is generally pretty easy to get to the bottom.

There have been quite a few marlin encounters this winter on the 36 fathom line recently, with both blacks and stripies eating baits intended for snapper. This generally ends in a bust off, but trolling live slimies or lures could be worth a go if conditions are good. The presence of gannets has been indicating big schools of slimies on the Cotton Reef, Sullies and the 36 fathom line.

A classic example of a marlin bust off happened recently when I was snapper fishing with a mate. My mate lost a nice striped marlin about 70kg when it ate a small fish he was bringing up off the bottom. With 15kg leader he didn’t stand a chance, but the jump next to the boat was quite spectacular.

There should also be a few cobia on the close reefs this month. They are generally in numbers at the same time as the whales. However, lately the cobia have been erratic, but when you find them they have been in good numbers.

Mitchell Calcutt was jigging a soft plastic from his barra rod from my tinny a week back and hooked something far more powerful than the snapper or jewie he was expecting. On a small Daiwa 3000 Certate and 10kg braid the fish went close to emptying the reel. I was pretty sure he would bust up, but after about an hour he had a 37kg beast of a cobia at the boat which is a very impressive fish on a plastic on a rod more suited to flathead.

GOLD COAST ESTUARY AND RIVERS

The flathead season should be in full swing this month with the sizes and numbers of fish increasing in preparation for spawning. Soft plastics over the flats are a tried and true method, but this season so far trolling has produced a stack of fish for us. The pink and silver micro mullet has been the stand out lure, but when the turbid water.

There should also be a few jewies in the estuary this month, particularly around the Seaway and Jumpinpin entrances. Live baits and big soft plastics are generally pretty reliable and effective when working deep structure with eddies and areas where the current slows down a bit. Expect to also catch some really big flathead in the same areas this month. The flatties should increase in numbers in September.

Bream have been behaving strangely this winter, with big schools hanging on the beaches and not many being caught in the entrances. August is the last good month for deepwater bream. Luderick will also be very active this month and school up near the Seaway walls, along Short Island and also along the rock walls of Wavebreak Island. Not too many anglers target these great fish in recent times, but a bit of green weed and some chopped weed and sand berley should stir them to bite. Catching luderick is a bit of a lost art.

There should be some nice tailor on the run-in tides near the entrances, and spinning metal lures in the washes should be productive. With a bit of luck we may see some Australian salmon also venture into Queensland waters this winter. Pilchards on ganged hooks are another alternative bait.

August can also be a quite good month for mangrove jacks, and in years gone by I’ve caught some beauties in the Nerang River at this time of year by trolling deep running hardbodied lures over rock bars. Soft plastics should also be worth a try this month. As conditions warm up the jacks become more active. The Nerang also produces school jewfish and flathead in late winter.

Overall, August is a good month on the offshore grounds and estuaries, and with a bit of luck the weather should be quite stable. Light westerlies are generally productive, but strong north westerlies will shut the fishing down quite quickly. Tight lines!
A substantial winter jewie caught on a Squidgy.

One of the massive cobias that are on offer on the close reefs this month.