



## Flathead

If there was ever a perfect fish for anglers of all levels to target, Flathead would probably be it. They inhabit virtually all of Australia's coastline, and can be found upstream in brackish and tidal rivers, right out to offshore sand and rubble patches. They are the perfect ambush predator, low in profile; they bury themselves in the mud or sand and blend into their environment, lying in wait for prey items to pass by. Once this happens, they are capable of explosive bursts of speed over short distances enabling them to strike aggressively at baitfish, prawns and just about any other smaller creature that will fit in their cavernous mouth.

Knowing that Flathead are an ambush predator gives us some insight into where they will be found. They will be commonly found on the edges of mud and sand flats, weed beds, mangroves and rubble beds as well as drains and deep holes that carry water from a falling tide. As long as there is a spot for them to pounce on unsuspecting prey and a good number of these smaller

food items nearby, you can bet your bottom dollar that Flathead will occupy the area. The prime times to target Flathead when they are more active are the last stages of a run out tide, when the baitfish are forced out from the shallow water into deeper water, past the Flathead lying in wait. On the opposite stage of the tide, as it runs in, is also a good time, as the fish will also follow baitfish and prawns up onto the shallow margins.

### **Gearing up for Flathead**

A quality hi-modulus graphite spin rod along the lines of 7 feet in length and rated 2-5kg allows long casts with light lures and will let the angler detect subtle bumps and bites on a lure much easier, and also mean that after 500 casts a day nobody's arms are sore.

Having a rod with a good solid butt section allows the angler to use slightly larger than normal lures and weights, to target bigger fish or fish deeper/fast moving water. At the same time there's no point using a 'broomstick' – if you fish a rod that's too heavy in the tip section you will lose casting ability and also pull the hook out of lightly pinned fish.

A nice light bit of flick in the tip section will work wonders in this regard, with the rest of the rod's action remaining nice and 'crisp'.

The pick of the bunch when it comes to reel choices would be a good quality spin reel in

the 2000/2500/3000 size range, with 2500 being optimal. Any spin reel will do but there are a few key features needed for this style of fishing.

Having a silky-smooth low inertia drag prevents any extra stress or jolting movements when the fish take a run and will result in far fewer lost fish.

A cold forged, tapered metal spool will greatly help when it comes to both casting distance and even, tangle-free line lay.

Braided PE lines are a must when lure fishing, as they have a much finer diameter than monofilament line allowing lures to sink quicker, work deeper and also add to your casting distance. These braids have almost zero stretch, giving increased lure control, better bite detection and quicker hook sets.

Using a heavier leader than your main line is necessary, as Flathead have sharp, rasping teeth which can damage light lines very easily. As a general rule, using a fluorocarbon leader in the 8-20lb range will help protect against bite offs, and being fluorocarbon, will be next to invisible under water.

### **Bait fishing for flathead**

To increase your chances when bait fishing, always fish your baits on the bottom, this will present your bait in the area where these fish

inhabit. The more natural that you can make the bait look in the water the higher the success rate you will achieve, so using as small a sinker as possible to get your bait down will present the bait the best way. As the sea bottom is often cloudy the fish will respond to the scent of the bait as well as its appearance.

Depending on the size of the fish you are targeting and the area in which you are fishing will influence the terminal tackle and bait selection for targeting Flathead with a simple ball or bean sinker to suit conditions running straight down to a wide gap or octopus style hook is often the most effective. Using this style of hook leaves plenty of point exposed to ensure a solid hook up. Other hook patterns can be trialed to suit bait size or type.

#### **Flathead on lures**

There are lots of different types of lures to target Flathead with, and depending on the situation, some will fish better than others.

Lure fishing for Flathead from the shore is generally the domain of soft plastics and vibes. By using a vibe or heavily weighted soft plastic, you can cast a long way, which is necessary from the shore and also helps you to cover more water. The action of a vibe will attract fish from far away, as most vibes have a strong 'shimmy' when they are lifted off the

bottom. Fishing vibes is fairly simple; a long cast to your selected area, letting the lure sink to the bottom. Make sure that you let all your lures sink on a tight line, as this will help detect any subtle taps or bites as the lure falls through the water column.

Once the lure has settled on the bottom for a few seconds, wind up any slack line and give the rod one or two short, quick rips. This will bring the lure up off the bottom kicking like a small wounded baitfish, and also throw up a small cloud of sand or mud, which will trigger a Flathead to bite. Most bites come as the lure sinks to the bottom and will be felt as weight when you go to give the vibe another 'rip'. A good starting point size wise is between 40mm and 80mm.

Most anglers would have caught Flathead on a soft plastic of some sort or another, however, there are good plastics for Flathead, and there are 'good' plastics for Flathead. Soft plastic styles for Flathead vary on the situation, but more often than not, paddletail types are the most effective. Other styles like curltails, stickbaits and creature baits are good, but the reason that paddletails are higher on the list is because of the action they produce.

Good quality paddletails produce a solid 'thump thump' as the tail works from side to side, and this loud vibrating action helps the

fish hone in on it, whereas the more subtle actions of the other types of soft plastic generally won't draw as many fish in. Working a soft plastic for Flathead is much the same as fishing a vibe, with a simple 'hop' 'hop' action and your success will vary on how much contact your lure has with the seabed.

**For any additional information or specifics talk to us in-store.**

**Good Luck & Happy Fishing!**

#### **Compleat Angler Dandenong**

241 – 243 Princes Highway  
Dandenong VIC 3175

**03 9794 9397**

**0418 252 385**

[dandenong@compleatangler.com.au](mailto:dandenong@compleatangler.com.au)  
[www.fishingcamping.com.au](http://www.fishingcamping.com.au)



*This handout is for use as information only, and the suggestions are based on our experiences for fishing this particular location and or species.*