



# Yak Fishin' Yanchep

By Joe Pullella



I got a call a few weeks back from Leon Tsouris, long time all round fishing enthusiast and recent inductee to the kayak fishing fraternity. The forecast for Monday was near on perfect for kayak fishing with variable winds of 8 to 12 knots all day and I needed little convincing when Leon suggested we take the boats out to explore his 'back yard' of Yanchep.

Reports of mixed bags of skippy, pike and tailor caught days before out in 5 metres of water behind a reef break were encouraging and a couple of big break offs meant that an encounter with a sambo could be on the cards.

The questions began flooding into my head. What gear am I taking? What rigs will I tie? What am I going to catch? I have never felt so enthusiastic about catching bread and butter fish in metropolitan waters before. Kayak fishing has been the

challenge I have been looking for some time and just to target common species at this stage is an adventure.

### Rods n Reels

Even the largest of fishing kayaks are restricted on storage capacity and my X Factor is no exception. Fishing gear needs to be selected methodically. All bases should be covered with minimal amount of equipment stored on deck as clutter can create problems out on the water.

The outfits I selected for this day's fishing needed to be versatile enough to cast spoons and poppers for tailor as well as being responsive enough to bait fish for king george whiting and the like if required to.

I opted for a Penn 5'6" Sports rod and a Penn Applause 7000 spinning reel loaded with 14lb Fireline and what an awesome outfit this is! The rod is light enough in the

tip to fish for gardies and strong enough in the butt to stop an 8 to 10kg sambo in its tracks. The Applause 7000 and 14lb gelspun were borrowed from my tailor spinning outfit but suited the task at hand perfectly.

My second outfit was a heavier 10kg outfit that I intended floating a dead bait with on anchor or perhaps drifting a live bait with. I chose a Sabre 655 which I made years ago for shallow water boat work and matched it to a retired Shimano TSM 4 Speedmaster that even after 10 years of heavy beach and rock angling still refuses to die.

Floating a pilchard around reef structure will always get the attention of resident tailor, snapper and samsonfish. Drifting livebaits is also a known kayak fishing technique and doing this behind the surf zone is where I anticipated presenting lip hooked live whiting in pursuit of

mulloway The deeper water around structure is where a live herring fished under a glitter bug can be the undoing of a sambo or yellow tail king.

### Rigs

Again, being mindful of storage and load restrictions, I set out to make good rigs and traces to cater for whatever species we were likely to encounter. The 'Inji Rig' is a rig that was developed decades ago by club anglers who fished the Cape to Cape area.



Bad weather would often force them to fish the Injidup Reef area where they would encounter mixed bags of herring, pike, skippy, salmon and occasional samson or even dhufish. A rig was developed where a pilchard and a blue sardine or white bait were rigged via a 3 way swivel and was fished with a cast and slow retrieve method.

The pilchard would be tied with a short leader of heavier nylon and the sardine on a longer leader of thinner nylon. Theories of what the large and small baitfish represented when towed one behind the other vary from angler to angler but one thing is for sure - it works.

The purpose of the rig was that it would appeal to almost all species feeding on that reef, reassuring the angler that his baits wouldn't go unnoticed by any prize fish snooping around the action.

So Inji Rigs were made using 4 x 4/0 Mustad Tarpons for the pilchards and 3 x size 2 Mustad tarpons for the sardines. The Mustad 7766 or Tarpon as it was once known is the hook of choice by many experienced anglers here in WA. Their strength and reliability and general good holding capabilities are qualities that have made them the No1 choice for anglers

looking to gang their own hooks.

On the heavy outfit I rigged two Gamakatsu Octopus 6/0 in tandem to take a small to medium sized live bait or perhaps a fresh fillet. Depending on current and wind speed, the amount of sinker weight required could easily be changed via a running snap swivel.

With all rigs made and selected tackle and lures stowed in their waterproof boxes, I did my final gear check before calling it a night as we had aimed at hitting the water

at 5.30am the next morning.

The 4.30am alarm sounds and I'm out the door heading north to meet the guys. On this morning there would be four of us heading out to a reef break approximately 3km from where we would launch.

Leon greets me at the meeting spot as planned only to inform me that work commitments wouldn't allow for him to join us on the day but his brother in law Jason would be more than happy to take his spot and come out with us.

Jason, a fairly extreme ex-Queenslander who paddle fishes, had fished this break (alone!) only the day before. Imagine the look on crayfishermen when they see a guy drifting on a 40kg blob of plastic, 3km from shore.

Anyway Jason couldn't see what the fuss was about seeing as that he was fully equipped and wearing Leon's new 'Shark Shield' deterrent on his leg. Although he spent most of his time navigating around the reef break and checking out where the better water was, Jason managed to get into a mixed bag of skippy, pike and cuttlefish as well as getting buried on two occasions by supposed sambos.

### Beach Launch

Well this was a first for me and although I was pretty confident and mentally well rehearsed, poor judgement or timing could result in a flipped kayak and risk of personal or gear damage.

So here it goes ... ready, steady, go... jump on, paddle paddle paddle! What... is that it? I think I'm clear, geez that wasn't so bad!

Within no time I was in 3 metre of green water looking back at the last two guys to launch. If only all beach launches were that easy. Meanwhile, Jason is heading south west all speed ahead so out we went ... and went... and went.

"Hey Jason how far out did you say this spot is?" came a cry from the rear.

"Yeah just out here a bit."

This was definitely the furthest I had taken the X Factor offshore but I felt reassured by the craft's great stability and surprising speed but mainly by the fact that I had three other guys out with me if I needed assistance.

The paddle out to the break took us about 20 minutes which gave my shoulders a good workout and positioned us approximately 2km from shore and around 4km from where we launched.

The reef system was just as I imagined with a main break of about 150 metres surrounded by shallow non-breaking reef with a 5 to 10 metre dropoff behind it



where the reef met sand. Luckily for us the dropoff was littered with cray pots which gave us anchoring options but also would have created feeding patterns in the area with their bait baskets full of oily fish berleying the area.

It wasn't long before the skippy found our sardine baits and they hit them with gusto.

holding any tailor leads us to believe that we fished it on a poor moon phase which was post full.

The paddle back to shore was interesting as the sun now was a lot higher in the sky the sand and weed patches were a lot more noticeable. Comments of, "We gotta fish this bit next time," were said by all.

With a kilometre to go and the lactic acid

zone and follow the last wave of the set just sitting behind it all the way.

This will mean that the force of the wave is not propelling you forward rapidly which may cause the boat to broach or lose its line and consequently wipe out. Once you reach knee high water, it is recommended that you exit the craft, grab the nose and



On any size tackle skippy are great fun and fight right to the end. These fish were smaller than the kilo size specimens Jason got into a few days earlier but even at 600 grams they were great entertainment.

Off course it didn't take long for the herring to get in on the act as they virtually made it impossible for anything else to get a look in. Jason was fishing on anchor about 100m east of me over a bed of ribbon weed.

He was on the lookout for the school of cuttlefish that were pouncing on his hooked skippy on his last trip. This time he came equipped with jigs but as luck would have it, no cuttlefish to be had. A school of pike frequently swimming in small schools beneath his kayak and they as well as skippy, herring and wrasse made up his bag for the day.

Unfortunately the live baits went untouched although I did get a glimpse at a 15kg black tip reef shark breaking the surface ten metres from my yak and also saw a massive eagle ray swimming through a school of wrasse and skippy only metres from my bow. The fact also that the reef wasn't

building up in the arms, the reef system 300m straight out from the launch spot came into view.

OK, how hard can a re-entry be on a 14 foot fishing kayak? Tipping a kayak at launch or re-entry can be a detriment to rods as they tend to be keen on snapping as the huge load is put on them during a wipe out.

Reels can fill with sand and salt water and any loose gear will surely be lost. Again storage setup and having all loose gear attached to the kayak with a lanyard or strap is crucial in preventing gear loss especially in the surf zone.

My X Factor is fairly unique in design as it has a 45 degree hatch opening which allows for safe rod storage particularly for entering or exiting the surf. Once out into deeper water, the hatch can be accessed and the rods brought out on deck and placed in the rod holders.

Re-entering was again an exercise I had only gone through in my mind. The procedure is to stop and observe the wave action and number of waves in the set. Once this is known, sit in behind the break

pull the kayak ashore.

This is basically how it unfolded for me. I waited a few minutes to see what the surf was doing, timed my entry and in I went. Admittedly, I was over anxious to jump ship and avoid a last minute mishap to spoil a classic day.

Every day out fishing in the Kayak is uncovering more benefits to using a paddle craft in my opinion. I can see that it won't be long before that well organised species oriented kayak fishing competitions will be a reality here in WA.

It also won't be long before prize fish like dhufies and snapper are caught by smart anglers who know spots that can only be accessed by a shore launched vessel.

For me, watching the frustrated, abuse hurling shore based guys getting tumbled off the reef at Moore River as I pull in another plump spoon munching tailor has its own special appeal