Beat the crowds – hit the water now

Johnny Nolan | April 2017 » Area Articles / New South Wales / Illawarra / Nowra /

If February and March are anything to go by, April is going to be an absolute cracker! We’ve had some awesome offshore fishing as well as some very impressive inshore and estuary fishing. And not just line fishing – crabbing for both blue swimmers and mudies has been good. The divers are also reporting good numbers of crays in close around the rocks, provided you don’t mind jumping in with the blighters! So let’s get into it!

Offshore

The marlin bite should continue into April with any luck. The action has been fairly sporadic right through the season so far, with warm water one day, cold water the next, current going up, current going down, plenty of bait, no bait... It’s been pretty hard to read really, and a lot of the better action has been either up or down the coast. A couple of those notorious south coast low pressure systems in a row didn’t help much either, especially when the really good water was there. Still, beggars can’t be choosers and sometimes you just have to go when you can, even if it is a bit rough. Of course, you should head out only if you think you and your vessel can handle it.

In around the cliffs and the shallower grounds off Crookhaven and Culburra there have been a few nice-size reds caught on both baits and lures. The wash fishing has been turning up not only snapper but a few nice drummer as well, and inside Jervis Bay there have been salmon and snapper towards Longnose Point and beyond. Some good whiting and flathead are being caught around the beaches, and anglers have also been getting plenty of squid around the usual haunts. The artificial reef out from the Shoalhaven Heads Surf Club should have some nice growth on it by now, and should be holding bait. I have heard that a couple of nice mulloway have come from it, along with some smaller reds. I would be interested to hear if anyone has had any really good catches from it.

Shoalhaven and Crookhaven Rivers

This is where the fishing has been at its best over the past couple of months. Name your species and the river has produced it lately – well, within reason anyway! Big flathead pushing the magic metre mark, mulloway in the 15-20kg class, monster mud crabs, and more luderick than you can poke a stick at.

One thing of note this year in the river has been the massive schools of jellyfish right throughout the system. I’m not sure whether that’s a good thing or a bad thing. I guess not so good if you’re a swimmer or a skier.

Upstream around the Nowra bridge the estuary perch have started to school in numbers, as too have the chopper tailor, which have been making short work of soft plastics and light leaders. You can catch the perch on bait or lures in a number of ways. Surface lure fishing is one of the more exciting ways to target them.

Bream have pushed well upstream to around Crams Rock in big numbers, and the average size is good. Catches of 20 to 30 fish in a session haven’t been uncommon, with surface bites making things very interesting. Here the smaller cup-face poppers such as the Jackson or the Samaki brand are working well, as opposed to the longer walk-the-dog style lures that are working on the perch.

Remember we do have school and Easter holidays mid-April, so the population in our little slice of heaven is once again going to increase for a couple of weeks. If you like peace and tranquillity, you might want to hit the water before the holidays to avoid the crowds.

Images
Chris Neville and Jarrod Humfrey with a pair of wash-caught reds.

Dylan Winzer was happy with this cracking 98cm Shoalhaven River flatty.
Brendon Burgman with a nice Shoalhaven River mulloway.

Jake Atkinson holds up a pair of monster muddies from the Shoalhaven River.
Father and son team Nic and Luki Martyn with Luki’s salmon taken in Jervis Bay.