



**FREE  
NSW  
GUIDE**

# Go Freshwater Fishing

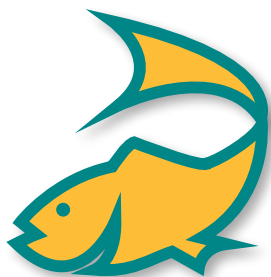
FEATURED LOCATION:

**LAKE  
WINDAMERE**

**TROPHY SIZED  
GOLDENS!**

[dpird.nsw.gov.au](http://dpird.nsw.gov.au)

# Foreword from DPIRD



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COVER IMAGE: Scott Anderson by Chris Cleaver. All other images by Chris Cleaver.  
Fish illustrations: Pat Tully.

16822 06/2024

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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 to 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.

DPIRD 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 **DPIRD website** or download the **FishSmart app** to your mobile device.

The **FishSmart NSW app** provides recreational fishers 24/7 access to essential information on fishing in NSW.

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# Overview

Lake Windamere is situated along the Cudgegong River about 30km south-east of Mudgee in the NSW Central Tablelands. At around 3.5 hours' drive from the fast-paced life of Sydney and taking you through some scenic country dating back to the gold rush days, it is ideal for a short trip away from the city.



*Lake Windamere*



The best access is via Cudgegong Waters Park located just off the Castlereagh Hwy and 13 kilometres south of the dam wall. An entry fee of \$6 applies at the 24 hr boom gate and accommodation is also available. Contact the office to arrange access prior to arrival (02 6358 8462). Cabins, powered and unpowered campsites are available but booking ahead is recommended as during peak times it can be busy. Services include a boat ramp, toilet, showers, BBQs and there is also a small shop with limited food supplies and some fishing tackle.

Windamere boasts a reputation as one of the best, if not the best, stocked NSW impoundment for trophy-sized golden perch. The perch are regularly caught over 60 cm and can reach astonishing weights exceeding 7 kg for this length as they flourish in the lake's ideal water and food supply.

Spring has always been the prime time to target these gargantuan perch after a cold winter. Depending on the season, the shallower margins of the lake boast new weed growth and all manner of bait including smelt, mudeyes, galaxiids and yabbies, which seek food and cover along these edges. On those idyllic calm and clear days common during spring, it is not uncommon to see numbers of large goldens searching the shallow weed edges looking for a yabby or fish meal.

Golden perch aside, the lake is also home to silver perch, Murray cod and some very large eel tailed catfish! The lake has been stocked with rainbow and brown trout, however these are rarely encountered. Local speculation is that the trout migrated to the flowing waters in the Cudgegong River at times of good rainfall.

The lake margins often have many kangaroos, wallabies, goats, water dragons and an amazing array of bird life which will keep you or the family entertained while waiting for a fish to bite. If the fishing is slow or you want a break, take a canoe or kayak up the river arm of the lake and enjoy the feeling of being a million miles from anywhere.

Of an evening you can duck up the highway to Mudgee for a nice pub or restaurant meal or just stoke up a campfire and enjoy the ambience along the lake shores while gazing at the amazing night sky.

This guide to fishing in Lake Windamere is part of a series of *Go Fishing* handbooks produced by DPIRD Fisheries. Keep an eye out for existing and upcoming editions covering a range of fresh and saltwater locations around the State.

**Sydney**

# Lake Windamere fishing locations



**NOTE:** This fishing map is only to be used as a general reference overview. See [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au) for details on fishing regulations.

Not for navigation.

See [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au) for info on boating safety and regulations.

**Caution:** Boating on inland waters demands special care. Information on boating in these areas can be found at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au).

**Warning:** Beware of submerged rocks, trees and shallow areas, particularly at lower water levels.

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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A large golden perch fish is shown lying on a blue mesh net. The fish has a mottled pattern of dark spots on its golden-brown scales. Its head is in the lower-left corner, and its tail is in the upper-right corner. The background is a solid blue color.

## FACT BOX

# Correct handling

The trophy-sized golden perch that inhabit Lake Windamere are a once-in-a-lifetime capture for most anglers. Looking after these great native sportfish is paramount to ensure their survival.

When landing a golden perch use a large knotless net. Once the fish is in the net, leave it in the water until you have your brag mat, camera and other equipment ready. Never lay the fish on a hot deck, always wet the brag mat before laying the fish down to measure.

When handling large golden perch it is recommended to not use lip grips as this can cause damage to the fish's jaw, simply thumb grip the fish's lower jaw.

Always support the weight of the fish with your second hand. When lifting, always lift the fish parallel; never put any pressure on the vertebrae behind the fish's head.

If your camera is immediately available, take a few quick pictures and then place the fish in the water until it is ready to swim away.

# Key target species



## Golden Perch

**PEAK SEASON:** Year-round, September to December renowned for trophy-sized specimens.

**TECHNIQUE:** Casting small lipless crankbaits, soft plastics and hard-bodied lures at standing trees, flooded banks and rocky points; trolling rocky points at a depth contour between 4-7 m with small hard-bodied lures measuring between 50-90 mm.

**TACKLE:** 2-4 kg spin outfits, 2.1 m graphite rod, 2500 size spin reel, 4-5 kg braided mainline with a rod length of 4-5 kg fluorocarbon leader. Small soft plastics with 1/6-1/4 oz jighead and size 1 or 2 hook work well on golden perch.

**HOT SPOTS:** Mystery Bay / Luckys Bay / Goat Gully.



## Murray Cod

**PEAK SEASON:** April – August.

**TECHNIQUE:** Bait fishing with large yabbies and grubs from the bank, especially at night; trolling hard-bodied deep diving lures in the 90-150 mm size range around rocky banks and sunken logs; casting large spinnerbaits and soft plastics (focus on steep rocky banks during summer and shallow grassy areas in the cooler months).

**TACKLE:** Heavy 6-10 kg baitcaster outfits loaded with 15-24 kg braided mainline with a rod length of 15-24 kg fluorocarbon leader. A large knotless landing net, gloves and heavy-duty pliers are important pieces of equipment to have onboard.

**HOT SPOTS:** The Cod Run / Goat Gully.

**CLOSED SEASON:**

September 1 – November 31



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# Other species



## Silver Perch

**Silver perch** were once widespread and abundant throughout most of the Murray Darling Basin system; however, they have declined across most of their natural range over recent decades and are now classed as a “vulnerable species”.



Silver perch are a moderate to large native freshwater fish usually reaching 30–40 cm in size and 0.5–1.5 kg in weight, but have been recorded up to 8 kg. Silver perch fight hard and are a great sportfish and you don't need specialised gear. If casting for silver perch consider using small lures or even flies due to their small mouth size.

They aren't fussy eaters and take a range of baits. Earthworms, aquatic insects, shrimp, small yabbies, bread and even corn are well worth trying.

**HOT SPOTS:** Luckys Bay / Shag Bay / Goat Gully



## Eel-Tailed Catfish

**Catfish** were native to the Cudgegong River prior to the dam's construction and have a reputation for being great fighters. Given the opportunity, they will frequently chase down a lure intended for their bigger comrades that occupy the dam.



Catfish have a lot to offer for anglers, they fight well and are considered a good table fish. Catfish diets consist of yabbies, shrimps, molluscs and other aquatic organisms.

# FACT BOX

## YABBY FISHING

### New fishing rules



Following consultation with recreational fishers, tackle distributors and the broader community, the NSW Government has introduced new rules for the recreational catch of freshwater yabbies in NSW waterways. New fishing methods for yabbies are being introduced to provide sustainable yabby fishing and enhance protection for aquatic wildlife.

Play your part to prevent the inadvertent capture of native wildlife by only using approved nets in all NSW waters, from **30 April 2021**. From this date Yabby traps ("opera house") will no longer be permitted as they have been implicated in the drowning of air breathing fauna such as platypus, turtles and water rats. Research has shown that eco-friendly nets, such as open pyramid lift nets, are just as effective at catching yabbies but do not impact on other aquatic wildlife.

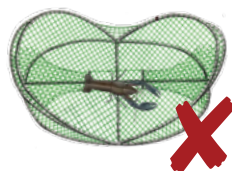
The new rules will benefit air breathing fauna, improve yabby fishing, provide recreational anglers with consistency across borders and simplify business for tackle stores and their customers. This will also make it easier for anglers to comply with interstate and territory yabby fishing laws which are now in alignment. These changes will improve the sustainability of our aquatic resources and improve long term fishing opportunities for recreational anglers.

Open pyramid lift nets can now legally be used in all private waters and most public waters both east and west of the Great Dividing Range. Fishers can also continue to use hoop nets to catch yabbies or a hand hauled yabby net, when used in ground tanks, bore drains or lagoons.

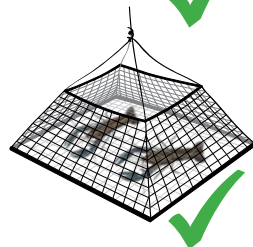
Opera House traps are no longer permitted for use in all NSW waters as they can impact on non-targeted species. As such, the NSW Government encourages fishers to dispose of opera house traps and replace them with open pyramid lift nets.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries is distributing open pyramid lift nets at upcoming boat and tackle shows, school days, agricultural/ farm expo's and other field events. Further information on the changes to yabby fishing rules can be found at: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/yabbytrap-faq](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/yabbytrap-faq)

**NOT PERMITTED:**  
Opera house traps



**PERMITTED\***



**\* A person can only use up to 5 in total - either one type or a combination of both.**

# FACT BOX

# Golden PERCH



It's no surprise that golden perch are the No.1 target in Windamere Dam – these waters are home to some of the biggest goldens you'll ever encounter!

While the maximum growth of goldens is about 14 kg, it's fair to say fish of this size are very rare. However, fish of more than 7 kg measuring 60 cm+ are caught in Windy every year.

Golden perch of this size are true "trophy fish". Most anglers these days choose to practice catch and release on these XOS specimens.

Some lucky fishos find themselves attached to one of these big goldens without spending too much time targeting them, but for most persistence and dedication is the key to catching trophy-sized golden perch.

Spring is regarded as the peak time of year to target big goldens in Windamere. At this time of year, the fish move to the shallower water to feed along the weed edges and points throughout the dam.

During autumn and summer, the perch move deeper, taking up residence on the myriad of flooded trees dotted along the old Cudgegong River bed. Deeper rock walls like the "Cod Run" and flats with a depth of 10 m or more will also produce fish.

Winter isn't regarded as being a great time for fishing in Windamere. It can be bitterly cold at times and the fishing can be very slow. The fish are still there, but generally only bite for very limited periods.

## Techniques

The two most common techniques when targeting golden perch in Windamere involves either casting lures or fishing with baits.

Bait fishing is generally done with a boat and most use a technique known as "bobbing", however, bank fishing - especially in spring - can be extremely productive.

Bobbing involves fishing around sunken trees. You can use your side scan sounder to find fish around the trees or use the "old school" method of trial and error by fishing each tree until fish are caught.

A bobbing rig is ultra simple - a 1/0 – 3/0 non offset circle below a running ball sinker is all that's required. Adjust the sinker weight to suit with a 00 to No.1 size sinkers covering most scenarios.

Live shrimp, yabbies and worms are the preferred baits when bobbing. The technique involves lowering the bait down alongside the chosen tree. It's then slowly wound up and lowered back down until you get a bite.

Fishing from the bank is a great family activity. You can set up at your campsite or take the boat up the dam until you find a good bank.

The same running sinker rig and baits used for bobbing are all that are required when fishing from shore. Simply cast out just beyond the weed line (usually about 10m from the shore), leave the rod in a holder with a light drag and wait for a fish to find it.

## Lures

The dam's reputation for producing some of NSW's biggest golden perch results in a lot of anglers targeting them on lures.

Most of the fishing is focused around the peak springtime bite and involves casting lures around the banks, bays and points of the dam.

Dark and natural coloured soft plastic grubs in the 50–90 mm size on 2–5 gram jigheads work well when hopped and rolled along the bottom just outside the weed line.

The small yabby styled blades with assist hooks have caused the undoing of many a big perch. Used in much the same way as the plastic grubs, the blades have an added advantage of being easier to fish if there is a wind blowing.

Black or dark coloured soft vibes in the 80–100mm size have become a particular favourite with many Windamere anglers in recent years. Used with a “shaking” retrieve and plenty of pauses, the vibes took top honours in many perch tournaments and are well worth trying.

The key to lure fishing success in Windamere is to keep mobile and work your lures close to the bottom,

preferably by casting at the bank or weed edge and working down the contour off the bottom to the boat.

If the banks are not producing, try working the trees and deeper rock walls until you find a location, lure or technique that gets the perch biting.

## Locations

Some of the best spots to try are actually very well known locations which we've featured in the fishing maps section of this guide. For example, Mystery Bay, Luckys Bay and Goat Gully are all well worth fishing. Do a bit of exploration and you'll find your own gun spots!

## Tackle

Bait fishing: 1000–4000 size spin reel, 2.1 m 2–4 kg rod, 2–4 kg braid, 5 kg leader.

Lure fishing: 1000–3000 size spin reel, 2.1 m 2–4 kg rod, 2–4 kg braid, 2–5 kg leader.

## Key tips

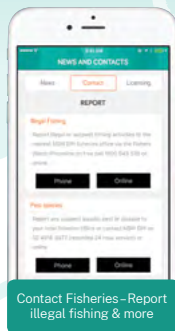
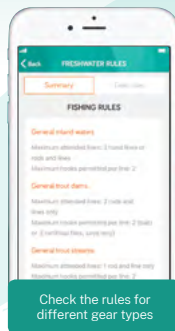
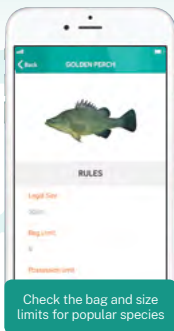
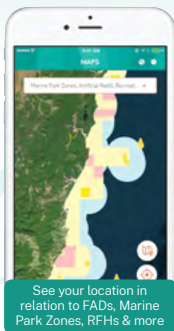
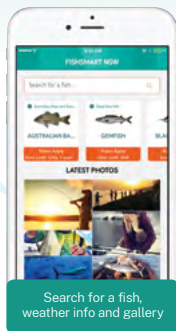
- Focus your efforts around light changes.
- Always fish around structure (weed, rock or timber).
- Locate good bait and fish it.
- Use good quality gear, from hooks to rods and reels.
- Don't give up!

# Check out the app: FishSmart



DPIRD has created an app that provides recreational fishers with 24/7 access to essential information they need to know to fish in NSW, such as:

- ❑ a pictorial guide of common recreational species, bag & size limits, closed seasons and fishing gear rules
- ❑ real-time maps to locate nearest FADs (Fish Aggregation Devices), artificial reefs, Recreational Fishing Havens and Marine Park Zones
- ❑ local weather, tide, moon phase and barometric pressure to help choose best time to fish
- ❑ guides on spearfishing, fishing safely, trout fishing, regional fishing
- ❑ DPIRD contact for reporting



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