



NSW Guide  
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**FREE!**

# Go Fishing

*Featured Location:*  
**Great Lakes**  
NSW MID-NORTH COAST

*Recreational fishing*  
**Hot Spot!**



# Foreword from NSW DPI



## Contents

Overview	3
Zoning Map	4
Wallis Lake fishing locations	6
Key target species	8
Other species	9
Factbox: Whiting	10

Cover Image and all other images by Chris Cleaver. Fish illustrations: Pat Tully.  
16867 08/2022

This fishing location guide is produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) LMB 3020 Nowra NSW 2541, for and on the behalf of the state of New South Wales. This guide is produced using funds from the Recreational Fishing Trust as part of our commitment to providing recreational fishers with comprehensive, user-friendly information.

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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.

NSW DPI 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 and permitted gear not listed in these guides, visit the NSW DPI website or download the FishSmart App from the App store on your Android or iPhone.

# Overview



The Great Lakes region is located around 3.5 hours drive north of Sydney. The area stretches from Tea Gardens in the south, to Forster in the north nestled on the shores of the picturesque Wallis Lake, the largest of the five lakes. Labelled as the perfect family getaway, it has also made a reputation as a must go fishing destination, especially with the vast array of areas and options.

With five fishable lakes – Wallis, Myall, Smiths, Two Mile and Boolambayte – plus numerous rivers including Myall, Coolongolook, Wallamba and more the small craft and shore-based estuary fisher and family are spoilt for choice.

There are productive shore-based fishing options from many of the white sand beaches and rocky headlands are seasonally known for producing some gamefish like cobia, longtail tuna and even marlin.

Heading offshore? There is everything from snapper, teraglin, mulloway and even pearl perch, plus summer predators such as Spanish and spotted mackerel and blue marlin along the kinks and canyons over the continental shelf.

Before you just grab the gear and go fishing, you need to be aware that the region is part of the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park (PSGLMP), covering 980 km<sup>2</sup> from Cape Hawke near Forster south to Birubi Beach at the northern end of Stockton Beach.

Like all NSW marine parks, PSGLMP consists of special rules and zones. If you're planning a fishing trip to this region with family or friends, it's important to familiarise yourself with the rules before heading out and wetting a line. Penalties can apply for fishing in the wrong area.

Download DPI's free "FishSmart" app onto your smart phone or tablet. The Fishsmart

app includes all NSW marine park maps so you can tell where you are in real time plus features local weather and tides, bag and size limit information and much more.

You can also download the marine park Zoning Map and User Guide via the website providing information about the current zoning arrangements and management rules in the park.

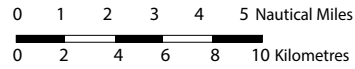
As well fish, the area offers bushwalks through the Myall Lakes and Wallingat national parks, as well as white sandy beaches for surfing, sunbaking, swimming and snorkelling. There's also canoeing and kayaking in the many lakes and rivers or you can check out the famous like Seal Rocks Lighthouse.

With plenty of accommodation options from beachside caravan and camping sites, hotels and motels right up to ocean view holiday houses, there are plenty of options for a group of mates on a fishing trip or a nice family holiday with the boat in tow.

This guide to the 'Great Lakes NSW Mid-North Coast' is part of a series of guides to popular locations in NSW, be sure to keep an eye out for current and future editions in DPI's *Go Fishing* series.



# Port Stephens - Great Lakes Marine Park Zoning Map



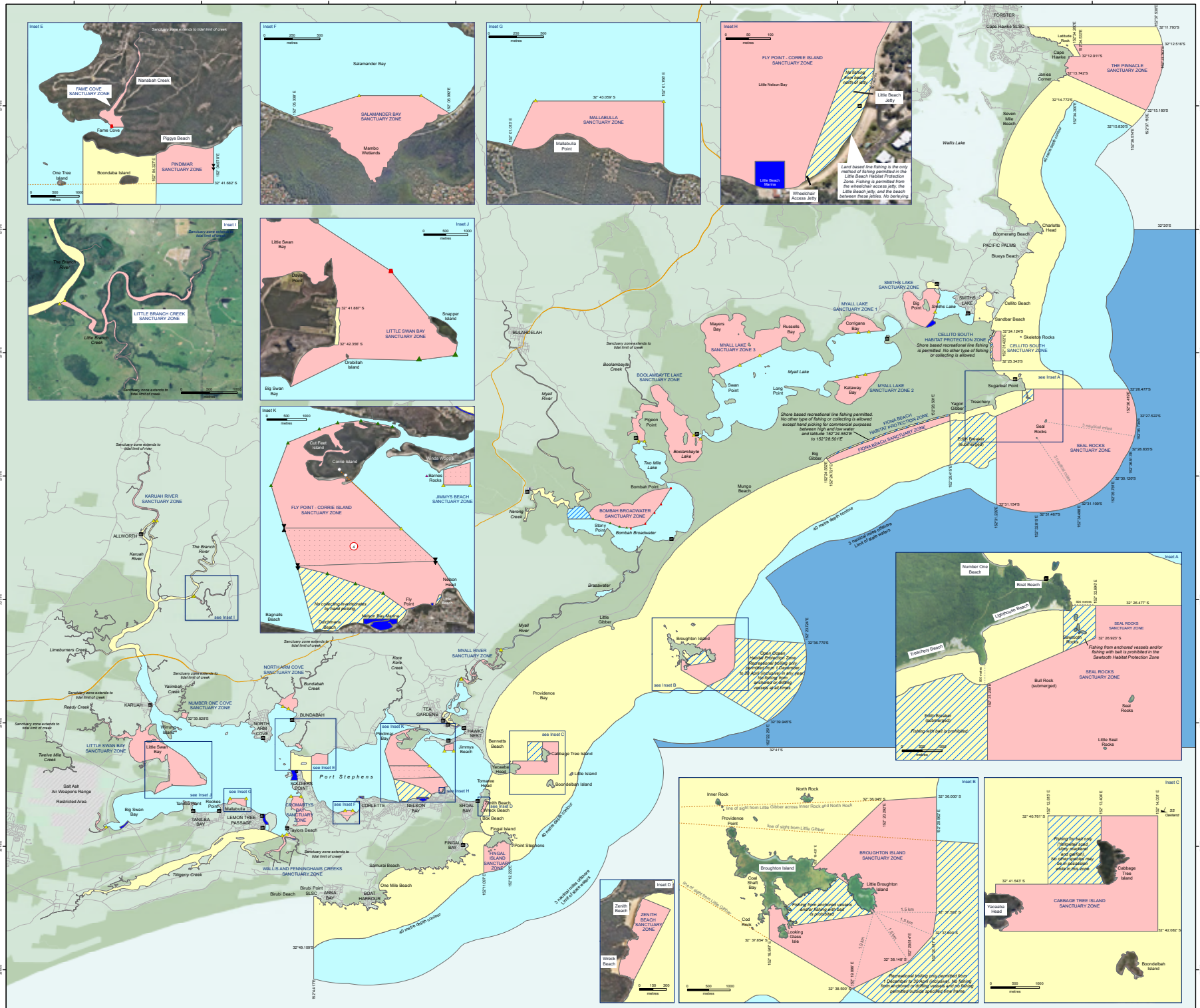
Map projection: Unprojected Geographic, Horizontal Datum: Geodetic Datum of Australia (GDA94).  
Produced by DPI Fisheries, Aquatic Environment  
July 2019. Imagery provided by Nearmap 2019.

- Sanctuary Zone
- Sanctuary Zone (Speed restriction 4 knots)
- Habitat Protection Zone
- Habitat Protection Zone\*
- General Use Zone
- General Use Zone (Seasonal Commercial Closure)
- Special Purpose Zone
- Hunter Marine Park\* (Commonwealth Waters)
- Restricted Area
- Zone Marker Buoys
- Navigation Markers (Selected Areas Only)
- Boat Ramp

\* For further information and regulations on the Port Stephens - Great Lakes Marine Park please visit:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/port-stephens-marine-park](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/port-stephens-marine-park)

Or alternatively download the **FishSmart NSW App** for your phone or tablet.



# Wallis Lake 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.

Boating access to the ocean at Forster and Tuncurry requires crossing a bar from the river to the ocean, please check and read the following link before attempting to go through these areas as at times these can be extremely hazardous for even the most experienced skipper. [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/using-waterways/designated/coastal-bars/crossing.html](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/using-waterways/designated/coastal-bars/crossing.html)

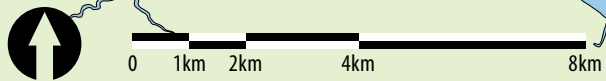
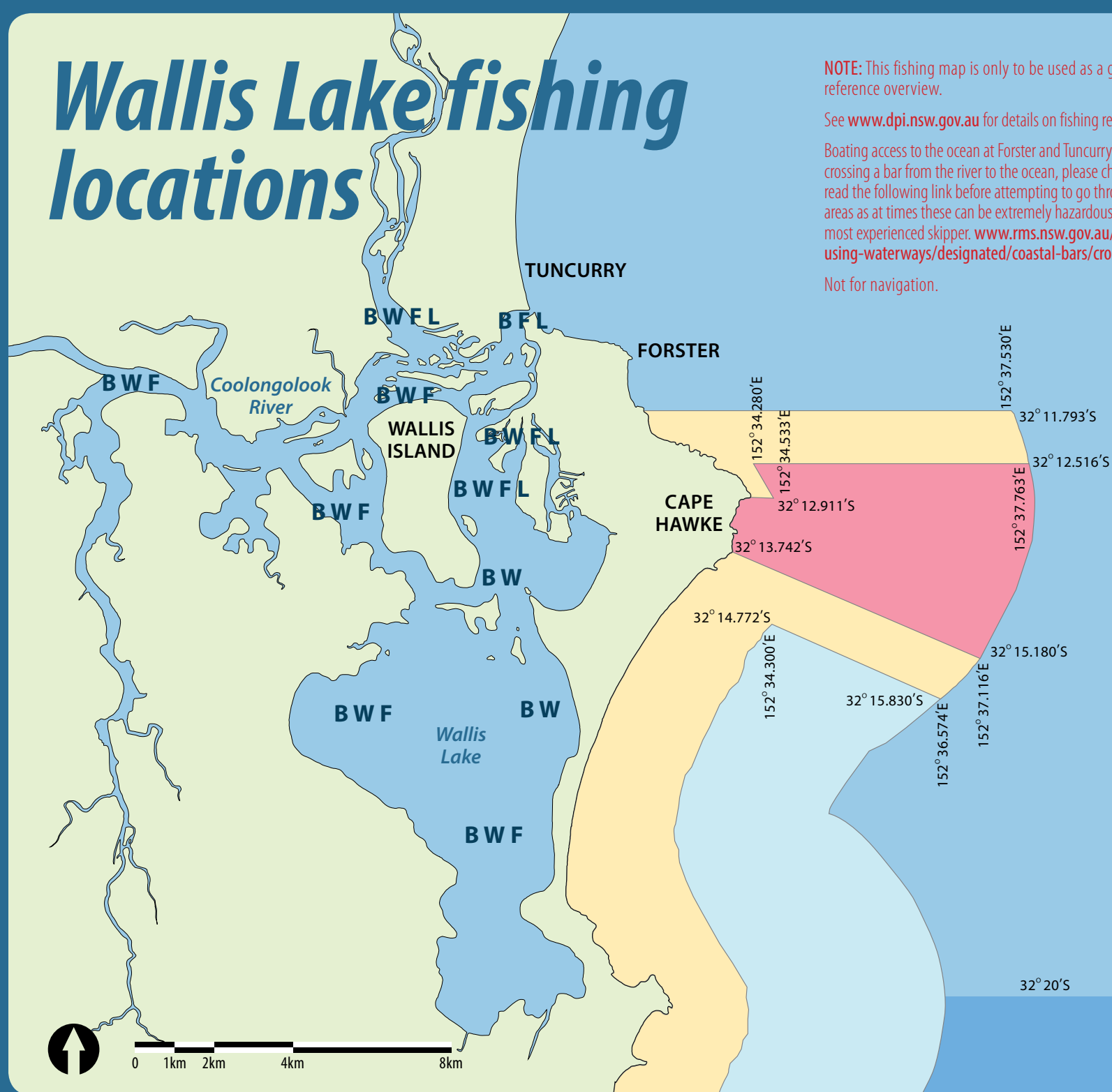
Not for navigation.

-  Sanctuary Zone\*
-  Habitat Protection Zone\*
-  General Use Zone
-  Commonwealth Waters\*
- B** Bream
- F** Flathead
- W** Whiting
- L** Luderick

\* For further information and regulations on the Port Stephens - Great Lakes Marine Park please visit:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/port-stephens-marine-park](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/marine-parks/port-stephens-marine-park)

Or alternatively download the **FishSmart NSW App** to your phone or tablet.



## Fishing Hotspots!

- Bait Grounds** – 32°10.750'S / 152° 31.310'E
- 7 Mile Reef** – 32°16.840'S / 152° 36.230'E
- Forster Triangle** – 32°06.510'S / 152° 37.000'E
- 5 Mile Reef** – 32°05.400'S / 152° 40.070'E
- Black Head Reef** – 32°04.350'S / 152° 35.390'E

# Key target species



## Luderick

**PEAK SEASON:** Year round.

**TECHNIQUE:** Bait fishing with cabbage and green weed and occasionally as by-catch targeting bream and whiting with marine worms.

There is also a growing number of anglers targeting luderick with fly fishing outfits and weed flies.

**TACKLE:** 3–4 kg spin outfits generally using longer 3m slow action rods. Standard luderick rigs incorporate a stem float weighted by a split shot terminating in a 6-8 sneck hook baited with strands of green or cabbage weed. Some anglers are also having success using artificial weed flies in place of actual weed.

**HOT SPOTS:** Forster and Tuncurry breakwalls, bridge pylons.

**BAG & SIZE LIMITS:** 10 per day 27 cm and over.



## Dusky Flathead

**PEAK SEASON:** October to April.

**TECHNIQUE:** Bait fishing with whitebait, fresh prawns, live prawns or live poddy mullet; lurecasting with soft plastics, vibes and deep diving hard-bodies.

**TACKLE:** 2–5 kg spin outfits, 3–6 kg braid or mono line and 5-8kg leader. For bait fishing, use 1/0 to 4/0 non-offset circle hooks on a running sinker rig. If you're using soft plastics, try jig heads of 7–21 grams on 2/0 or 5/0 heavier gauge hooks as there is every chance a mulloway might be encountered as well as the flatties. Stick with tails in the 6-12 cm size. Curl or paddle tails work well, as do shads. Start with natural colours like grey, silver, "black & gold" or greens but don't be afraid of using something bright as on the last of the run out tide the water can become discoloured. An effective retrieve technique is to let your plastic hit the bottom then "rip" the rod firmly and allow the lure to swim back to the bottom. Be prepared for the bite as it sinks. Vibes can be substituted for soft plastics, especially when drifting water with significant depth changes. Diving hard-bodies can be effective around drop-offs and flats.

**HOT SPOTS:** Drop-offs, flats systems, creek mouths and oyster leases.

**BAG & SIZE LIMITS:** 5 per day 36cm to 70cm. All dusky flathead outside of this size range will be required to be released back into the water.





# Whiting



**PEAK SEASON:** November to April.

**TECHNIQUE:** Bait fishing with live saltwater yabbies or marine worms; lure fishing with small blades, surface poppers and stickbaits.

**TACKLE:** 1–3 kg 2.1 m graphite spin outfits with 2–3 kg braid and 2–5 kg mono or fluorocarbon leader. When bait fishing, use a size 1-1/0 non-offset circle or long shank hook, making sure it matches the bait size and shape. Try a running sinker rig with a metre of 2–5 kg trace. Cast small blades, surface poppers and stickbaits around sandflats and shallow weed-beds for some exciting action on hard fighting whiting!

**A GUN TIP:** Keep your surface lure retrieve brisk and consistent.

**HOT SPOTS:** Beach gutters, sand flats and weedbeds (especially Wallis Lake).

**SIZE & BAG LIMITS:** 20 per day 27 cm and over.



# Snapper



**PEAK SEASON:** Year around. April to October generally offer the best fishing.

**TECHNIQUE:** Bait fishing with pilchards and strips of fresh tuna or similar; lure fishing with soft plastics, jigs and vibes.

**TACKLE:** 4–6 kg spin outfits, 4–8 kg braid or equivalent mono and a leader of 8–15 kg. When bait fishing, use a 2/0 – 7/0 non-offset circle hook with a running ball sinker directly to it. Try using berley and allowing the bait to naturally drift down in the current. Using a traditional paternoster rig baited with squid, fresh tuna or pilchards can work well around reefs and gravel beds. Lure fishing for snapper is very successful. Octopus and slow jigs in the 60–200 gram size or jigheads in the 7–27 gram size with 8–14 cm plastics will entice snapper from the shallows out to 70 m depth range.

**HOT SPOTS:** Skeleton Rocks, Diamond Reef, Forster Triangle.

**BAG & SIZE LIMIT:** 10 per day 30 cm and over.



# Other species

The freshwater headwaters of the Great Lakes system offer good fishing for

**Australian bass.** As these headwaters join

the main tributaries **flounder, mullet, garfish** and the odd **mulloway** are on the cards. The Wallis Lake breakwalls are known to produce **kingfish, longtail tuna** and **cobia** when conditions are right within sight of the main boat ramp. The ocean beaches can be very productive for **Australian salmon, tailor, mulloway** and **dart**. Inshore and offshore reefs will produce **teraglin, mulloway, cobia, kingfish, pearl perch** with warm water visitors in summer including **marlin, dolphinfish** and **mackerel**. As you can see the Great Lakes really does have a lot to offer anglers of all skill levels and interests. Check it out for yourself!

# FACT BOX



# WHITING

Sand Whiting or Yellowfin Whiting in the Great Lakes region especially Forster/Tuncurry's Wallis Lake are arguably one of the key drawcards for local and travelling fishos.

The region's estuaries have a unique geographical landscape. Myriads of channels interspersing nipper bed sandflats with patchy ribbon weed and oyster racks fed by creeks and lake basins in middle and upper tidal limits create the perfect whiting habitat.

The excellent eating qualities of whiting have always seen them as a perennial favourite among estuary and beach fishers. The hunter gatherer style subsistence fishing certainly still happens around the lakes, however, the whiting fishing is largely dominated by an increasing catch and release fishery targeting them on topwater lures.

Catching whiting on topwater lures has been one of the great discoveries in modern estuary sport fishing. Its birthplace or discovery was on the far south coast of NSW but The Great Lakes quickly stamped its name as one of the State's top class topwater whiting fisheries.

For whiting enthusiasts, the vast maze of lakes, basins, creeks and rivers present enough water for everyone to enjoy and more than one could explore on even an extended stay.

The months from November to April are the best for chasing these fish on topwater along with a few other species as dusky flathead and bream which gorge on the lake's plentiful prawn supply and will happily strike a surface lure.

In Winter, bait reigns supreme with beach or squirt worms presented along the channel edges and the foamy surf gutters along the coast's pristine beaches offering good results.

## Technique

Bait fishing can be done from either a boat, kayak or land based. Whiting regularly feed in shallow water on a rising tide, which is great for those without a boat.

Freshly caught or bought squirt and beach worms, pink nippers and peeled prawn are the preferred baits and are fished on running sinker rigs.

The two main rigs involve a sinker either running directly 1-1/0 non offset circle or long shank hook or running down to a swivel with a 2-5kg trace off 20-30cm with a hook on the other end.

These rigs are fished on channel edges adjacent to large flats or even up on the sand flat itself especially on the top of the rising tide.

While whiting can be caught at anytime of the tide, the top of the run in and run out is preferred when fishing the flats and channel edges.

This is a relaxed and no fuss style of fishing that will yield other species like mullet, luderick, bream, flathead and flounder and is perfect for the whole family to enjoy.

The region's whiting reputation has seen it become a popular location for topwater fishing fanatics, and rightly so with options for boat, kayak, stand up paddle board and land based to all get into the action.

With so many shallower margins it can be difficult to know where to start, **Google Earth** and **FishSmart** are a great source of locating the hotspots. Large shallow flats with sparse ribbon weed beds that drain to deeper water are great place to prospect.



Target these areas on the last hour of the run-in tide and the first of the runout tide, approach quietly and fish with long casts well ahead of the direction you are drifting or wading.

Tackle companies have an immense choice of lures suitable for topwater, stickbaits, poppers and sliders all work. Preferred sizing is 50mm -100mm with the most popular being the 70mm length in a walk the dog style stick bait.

These lures are fished on a 2-4kg 2m to 2.4m graphite rod with a 1000-2500 sized reel loaded with 2-3kg braid and a rod length of 2-4kg fluorocarbon or mono leader.

Long casts with constant retrieves is key as pausing the lure can cause the whiting to shy away, the constant retrieve will often draw in several fish that will compete for the lure and hopefully one will find the hooks.

Hooking them can be tricky but a few tips to help increase this is to retrofit small stinger assist hooks in replacement of the lures rear treble, also try not to strike at the fish and just keep retrieving until the rod loads up on a hooked fish.

Keep mobile and look for concentrations of fish, once they have seen the lure a few times you may have to change lure to show them something different or move on to another location.

## Tackle

**Bait fishing:** 1000 - 4000 size spin reel, 7ft 2-4kg rod, 2-4kg braid or monofilament, 2-4kg leader.

**Lure fishing:** 1000-2500 size spin reel, 7ft 2-4kg rod, 2-4kg braid, 4-10lb leader.

## Hotspots

Large sandflats, channel edges & weed beds (use *FishSmart* and *Google Earth* maps to locate hotspots).

## Key tips

- Fish top of rising tide and first few hours of falling tide.
- Replace rear treble on surface lures with stinger assist hooks.
- Keep retrieves constant with surface lures till fish is hooked.
- Use the freshest possible bait.
- Keep mobile seek out areas with good bait and fish concentrations.
- Cloudy days can increase catches in shallow water.

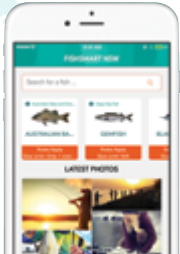




# Check out the app: **FishSmart**

NSW DPI 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:

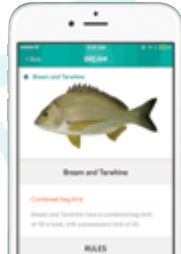
- a pictorial guide of common recreational species, bag & size limits, closed seasons and fishing gear rules
- real-time maps to locate nearest FADs (Fish Aggregation Devices), artificial reefs, Recreational Fishing Havens and Marine Park Zones
- local weather, tide, moon phase and barometric pressure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



Search for a fish, weather info and gallery



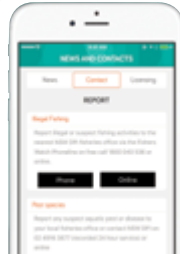
See your location in relation to FADs, Marine Park Zones, RFHs & more



Check the bag and size limits for popular species



Check the rules for different gear types



Contact Fisheries – Report illegal fishing & more