

# BEACH FISHING

Australia is fortunate in possessing some of the finest beaches in the world, and with them, excellent fishing. The ever changing formation of our beaches due to natural forces provides both shelter and food for a variety of fish. By learning to "read a beach, you can locate all the popular angling species such as Tailor, Salmon, Flathead, Mulloway, Trevally, Dart, Bream and Whiting.

## THE GEAR SUCCESSFUL SURF FISHERMAN USES:

As in all fishing, the correct rod and reel combination will dictate the degree of your success. The golden rule is to fish as lightly as possible. The lightest line, sinker, and rod/reel as the conditions dictate. Try not to anchor your bait to the bottom with a big sinker. A bait that is moving with the surge of the wave and tide action helps find a lot more fish.

## THE ROD:

A beach rod must have an action that lets you cast a heavy sinker or lure if the conditions demand it. by the same token the action in the tip section should be light enough to cast lightly weighted baits, and to "feel" the bite. The tip action will also enable you to hook and play a fish without placing too much pressure on the line. The range of Aussie made Snyder Glas rods is made with these very features.

The rod can be made of either hollow fibreglass or carbon composite and must be from 3.5 to 4 metres long and preferably one piece. (New glass to glass ferrules have improved the action of two piece rods) For an Alvey reel the design of the rod is all important. The reel should sit about 20 cm up from the butt and the first or stripping runner should be approximately half way along the rod Any closer will restrict the cast. To bring the line closer to the finger guiding the line on to the reel, and Alvey open runner serves the same purpose as an ordinary runner by controlling the line when fishing, and also prevents the line cutting your fingers when playing a fish. When you are ready to cast, simply slip the line out of the open runner. Place it back in for the retrieve or fighting a fish.

## THE REEL:

Why are anglers who use an Alvey Reel more successful? It's not just luck, they are using the right reel and an Alvey makes all the difference.

If you are casting a bait with a heavy sinker, spinning with a lure, or more importantly, bait spinning with little or no lead, the versatility of an Alvey reel can't be bettered. The fast, direct line recovery lets you keep up with a fish if it runs towards you and the controlled winding will keep the line tight. The minimum of moving parts in an Alvey, and their simple design compared to other reel types, make them almost maintenance and trouble free, especially with the corrosive wear from sand and salt.

## THE LINE:

There are a number of advantages in using as light a line as possible that the conditions allow. You can cast further, feel a bite a lot better and it is less noticeable to fish. An excellent line for beach fishing is the Platypus brand in breaking strains from 4 to 8 kg. The lighter line for Bream, whiting etc. and the heavier sizes for Tailor and the larger fish such as Mulloway.

## RIGGING AND BAITING:

The surface feeding fish that move into surf gutters such as Tailor and salmon feed mainly on small baitfish. Baits such as WA and Blue Pilchards, Gar, White and Frogmouth Pilchards are the best bait for these fish, Strips of fish flesh can be used in the same manner.

The most efficient way to use these baits is on a chain or gang of linked hooks. The number and size of the hooks used depends on the type and size of your bait. For Gar you can use up to a 5 hook rig in #4/0 or #5/0, WA Pilchards usually require a 3 hook rig in the same hook sizes. Small White Pilchards or similar baitfish need smaller hooks, from #3 to #1/0. You can purchase rigs already made to suit, or make your own. They are made by using a hook that you can open the eye on (mustad 4200, 7766, 8260 or 3407A. Eagle Claw 6041T). The shank on all the hooks must be bent upwards slightly. this is to allow the bait to sit straight on the rig. Hooks with the eyes opened and bent are available (Mustad 4202, Eagle Claw 6043T). The correct way to bait your rig is to place it alongside the bait and align the point of the first hook with eye of the bait. Note the spot on the side of the bait where the last hook rests. Insert this hook first and continue with the others in sequence. The first hook should now go through the bait's eye socket.

The fish that take a fish bait usually have sharp teeth that can cut through line, so some trace is needed. Wire traces are not needed and do tend to scare fish. A simple trace of heavier nylon is all you need. About 1 metre of 15 to 20 kg line is sufficient. platypus make a special clear trace line that is excellent for this purpose.

The smaller fish such as whiting, Bream and Dart, that feed in the shallower surf zone naturally need smaller hooks. A #3 to #4 for Whiting and Dart, a #1 to #2/0 for Bream, preferable in a French or Beak pattern which tend to be finer and sharper. If you want a super sharp hood, use any of the chemically or laser sharpened models that are now available.

The bait to use for these fish can vary, pipis and worms can be obtained right on the spot. Bream and Flathead can't resist a White or Frogmouth Pilchard rigged on a small gang of hooks.

The most important step when rigging, is to use 2 swivels (as small a possible) and run the sinker on a short section of line between them. The top swivel, the one closest to the rod tip is the major eliminator of line twist.

## READING THE BEACH:

As the weather changes, so do the beach formations. A successful surf fisherman knows this and with experience learns to read the beach and surf conditions and fishes accordingly.

There are high and low tide gutters. A gutter that produces good fishing on high water can be almost dry on the low. Conversely, a gutter than can be fished at low tide can be increasingly difficult to fish as the tide makes. The surf fisherman must be able to select a likely spot by assessing the conditions, state of the tide, and the existing structure of the beach formation.

## DEFINING SURF GUTTERS:

A surf gutter is formed by an outer submerged sand bank running parallel to the beach. Variable in length, the channel in between can have an outlet at one or both of the ends. Long featureless gutters are not as productive as smaller, shorter or narrower ones. Holes are formed at the gutter's outlet to the sea. Waves breaking on the outer bank, spread a layer of foam and broken water across the inner channel. Referred to by fishermen as white water, this disturbed water offers cover to fish and stirs up the bottom exposing food.

The ideal gutter is one that is narrow enough to allow the angler to cast to the outer bank and bring his bait back through the deeper water of the channel. This is known as bait spinning and is best done with a fish bait and as little lead as possible. A sand spit forming inwards from the outer bank. This creates pockets in which fish congregate to feed. If you have to use extra weight to reach these spots, keep it to a minimum.



Fish will often be found where a gutter empties to the sea. The surge of water in and out, stirs up the sand and with it food. Position yourself near the mouth and allow the bait to drift with the run from the gutter. Potholes are the small indentations which form in the shallower water, often near the edge of the beach. Anglers often wade through them, not knowing that they can offer some good fishing. Whiting, Dart and Flathead actively feed in this shallow water, so it often pays to try these areas before disturbing them.

Dawn and dusk are usually considered the best times to fish the beach, but often good fishing can occur during the day if the conditions and gutter formation are right. Fishing at night can be done during moonlight conditions when it is easier to read the water. Often good gutters can be picked during the day and returned to at night, when the conditions are more suitable for fishing.

## METHOD:

Now you have equipped yourself with a balanced rod and reel outfit, and have selected the right spot to start fishing, how do you go about catching some fish? As mentioned before, the species of fish you are chasing will dictate the tackle and bait to use and where to cast.

Fishing for Tailor needs a long cast to the white water breaking into a gutter. As the bait lands and you turn your reel around to the retrieve position, give the bait a short, sharp flick to make it break the surface before it sinks. This often attracts feeding fish and provokes a strike. Keep the line tight with a slow and steady retrieve, occasionally lifting the rod to impart an action to the bait. When a fish hits, you will feel distinct bite. Sometimes the fish will take the bait and move toward you. A sudden slackening of line will be the sign of this happening. In this case, lean back on the rod to increase the retrieve rate to set the hook. Keep the rod high to take the weight of the fish, but always be ready to let the fish take line if it decides to make a dash seaward.

Fishing for other species on the shallower water of pot holes and gutters requires the same slow rewind to keep the line tight.

## LURE FISHING:

The use of the lure to catch fish on the beach is an exciting method. Tailor, Salmon, Flathead and even the occasional Dart or Bream will take lures. Tailor and other fish which feed out wide need a lure that will carry the distance. In these conditions a metal lure weighing anywhere from, 25 to 90 gms is needed. They take the form of chrome spoons such as the Toby design, the Wilson Big T and stainless flashback Spoons. Lead bodied lures such as Juro Lasers, have a strip of prism tape to add flash, and give you a lure with maximum weight with minimum bulk to help you attain a distance. Another popular design is the sliced chromed metal type, one of the original lure patterns.

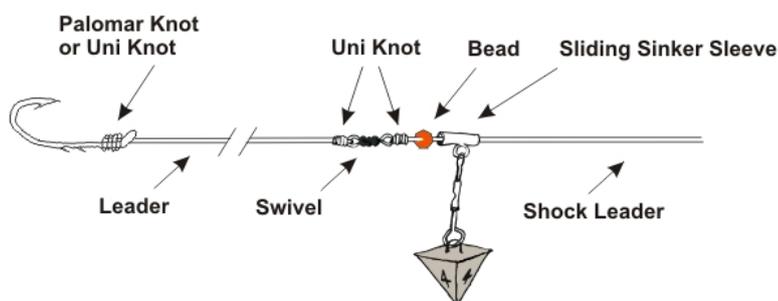
To get the best results when spinning, you need a fast retrieve. the Alvey 700C and 650GRC models have the best line recovery for spinning the surf and a drag to handle the heavier strike you will get on a lure. The smaller you go in spool size the slower the retrieve and the less effective. You do not need a sinker when using lures, however the addition of an extra swivel in the form of a snap swivel to connect the lure to the line will help alleviate the increased line twist that comes with spinning.

Try to cast to the edges of Tailor schools. Often the lure continually being pulled through the school can alarm it. Give the lure an erratic action by working the tip of the rod as you retrieve. The fish of the shallower water such as Flathead will take a lure. A smaller spoon or minnow pattern lure is ideal. You don't need the fast retrieve you use on Tailor. A steady but still erratic retrieve is all you need. Again move carefully when wading, so you don't frighten the fish. Start at one end of the gutter and cover the water in a series of casts before moving on a short distance and doing the same.

## Start Surf Fishing With Two Popular Surf Fishing Rigs

To start surf fishing you will need to get familiar with the two most popular surf fishing rigs used. These two rigs are sometimes referred to by other names but most surf anglers refer to them as the fish finder rig and the fireball rig.

### The Fish Finder Rig



The purpose of the fish finder rig is to allow the live bait to free line in the surf until a fish picks up the bait. The sinker rests on the bottom and the rig allows the line to feed the bait out freely. It works well with an out going tide or in moving current. As the tide

moves out it takes the bait with it. When a fish picks up the bait it doesn't feel the weight of the sinker until it's hooked.

The hooks used are based on the size of the bait and the sinkers are based on surf conditions. The weight of the sinker has to be heavy enough so it holds the bottom. These rigs are very easy to make. The sinker must be able to slide on the main line. Use either an egg sinker (for light surf) or a pyramid sinker (for heavier surf conditions). Both sinkers are slid on to the main line before tying on a swivel. Pyramid sinkers require a plastic sleeve with a snap swivel in order to slide them on the main line. Egg sinkers can slide directly on the main line.

Whichever sinker you decide to use will go on the main line followed by a plastic bead before you tie on a swivel. The bead is used to protect the knot at the swivel so the sinker doesn't damage it.

Make up a short leader 18" to 24" long with a hook of your choice on one end and tie the other end on the swivel and you're ready to start fishing. Cast the fish finder rig out into the surf and let the line feed out freely with the current or the tide until a fish picks it up.

### **The Fireball Rig**

The fireball rig is completely different from the fish finder rig. It's probably easier if you buy these rigs made up rather than make them yourself. This rig is usually about 12" to 18" long with a regular swivel on one end and a snap swivel on the other. In between the swivels there are two hooks tied on with short leaders. Each hook will have a small float attached near it. The purpose of the floats is to keep your bait just off the bottom so the crabs won't steal it.

Use a sinker large enough to hold the bottom based on surf conditions. Attach the sinker to the snap swivel and tie your main line to the regular swivel and you're ready to fish.

Cast the fireball rig out into the surf, keep your line taut and wait until a fish picks up the bait.

Both surf rigs are simple to use and can be fished with a variety of baits. The two most popular kinds of bait used on these rigs are shrimp and sand fleas.

## **SURF FISHING VICTORIAN BEACHES.**

Australian Salmon. Bag limit 20 per day at 21 cms long.

### ***BAITS AND PRESENTATION.***

- Thaw and shell pipis, separate smaller pipis for mullet baits. Mullet baits may be marinated in tuna oil or a pinch of curry powder, and store in plastic Tupper ware type containers in the refrigerator.
- Break up a block of frozen pilchards on a concrete floor to separate the pilchards. Using a serrated blade knife to cut the frozen pilchards behind the vent, angling up over the stomach of the fish. Place the tail ends of the cut pilchards into a six pack esky and return them to the freezer.
- **Pipis.** Use hook sizes #6 to #1, bait keeper or long shank chemically sharpened.
- **White Bait.** Use hook sizes #2 to # 1/0 long shank with fuse wire twisted through hook eye and 12 mm longer than the hooks bend.
- **Blue Bait.** Use suicide pattern #1 to #3/0 with two half hitches tied to the tail of the bait or use 3 or 4 ganged tarpon #2 ganged hooks to suit the length of the bait.
- **Glassies.** As for White Bait.
- **Cut Pilchards.** Use hook sizes #1 to #3/0 suicide with two half hitches tied to the tail of the bait.
- **Pilchards.** Use 3 ganged #5/0 type 4200 Mustad hooks or 4 # 4/0 type 4200 Mustad hooks. Tarpon type 7766 may be used as alternatives to the 4200's.
- **Pilchard fillets, Garfish fillets, squid or chicken strips.** Use 4 ganged #2 7766 or 4200 hooks.

**ARTIFICIAL BAITS.** Generally used on the top dropper of the Paternoster rig.

- Surf poppers. Blue and white, red and white or green and white, tip the hook with pipi.
- Surf Flies. Tip the hook with pipi.
- Plastic squid, 3" Silver Pisces brand, bar code 9323430 001913. Use #1 long shank hook with squid strip or tipped with pipi.
- Gulp or Sqidgies minnow plastics on a suitable worm type hook.

### ***LURES.***

- 28gm to 70 gm metal lures.
- Sliced hexagonal sliced type.
- 50 gm blue and white Laser (with new glow reflective strips)
- Surf lures must have tail weight and good swimming action.
- Best used at low tide to prospect the holes, gutters and deep water.

### ***RIGS.***

- Paternoster rigs that is 2 droppers above the fixed sinker.
- Prepare spare rigs at home to suit various bait presentations and wrap them onto a foam rubber or plastic rig holder.

***BURLEY. Hand burley on the back wash, little and often or when Salmon are in your area.***

- Chook pellets soaked in tuna oil, hand broadcast as required.
- Bread loaves cut in half lengthwise and soaked with tuna oil the night before and placed in onion bags staked at the wash edge.
- Fish scraps mixed with bread placed in onion bag and staked at the wash edge.
- Pilchards (frozen from previous fishing trip baits) crushed or cubed and hand broadcast as required.
- Pipi shells or stale pipis hand broadcast into receding wave wash.

***PRIME FISHING TIMES.***

- Last 1 to 2 hours of rising tide to the first 1 to 2 hours of the run out tide.
- Last 1 to 2 hours of darkness and the first 30 minutes of sun rise.
- After a storm when the barometer rises.
- Mouth of estuaries when heavy rain flushes the estuary. Fish the boundary line between the dirty and the clean water.

***WHERE TO FISH.***

- Survey the beach from the highest vantage point. Look for structure that is gutters, channels, deep holes, reef, sand bars, sand spits and rips or channels that drain the gutters back to the sea. Look for floating seaweed and the direction of the drift by which way other anglers are fishing the beach. Use binoculars to see if you recognise any of your opposition and if they are catching fish. This action is very important for a successful days fishing because the beach formations and structure can vary daily and definitely following a storm.
- Australian Salmon prefer sudsy broken water with deep access to deep water. Because these areas generally hold food and provide cover. The food chain starts at the edge of the sand banks where waves wash out marine creatures that feed and provide cover for bait fish. The ideal location is the edge of the sand bank where waves and the white foam spill into the gutters, channels or deep water beyond the wave break, deep hole the rip channel back to the sea. Don't fish into the middle of the deep holes, fish around the margins of the hole or channels in the white water, cast towards the end of the sand bank nearest to current drift and allow the baits to be washed into the hole or gutter.

***RODS.***

- Medium taper 4144 or 5144 for smaller salmon. (4144 is 4 wraps of fibreglass 144 inches long)
- Medium taper 7144 or 8144 for the larger salmon.
- FSU4120, FSU5120 or Magsurf for long distance casting or lure spinning.
- Currently I use Sistar GS1302 and GS1503 hi modulus graphite rods.
- For mullet, I use Sistar X-Citer Match 3859 360 modified with fuji guides in place of the original course angling guides.

***REELS.***

- Quality robust front drag long cast spinning reel.
- Quality overhead casting reels with breaking system such as Abu 7000.

## ***LINES.***

- 20lb nylon line for most beginners. Most beginners struggle to cast heavy sinkers and land big salmon on 12 lb line.
- 12 to 15 lb line, use the smallest diameter for the breaking stain for more experienced anglers because the thinner diameter allows for further casting distances and less line drag in the side current. A 20 lb nylon shock leader twice the length of the rod is tied to the reel line to allow the use of heavier sinkers and provides the heavier breaking stain when landing salmon in the shore wash.
- Fused super lines such as Fireline are ideal for surf fishing because of their finer diameter and no stretch features. This line is also tied to a 20 lb nylon shock leader, twice the length of the rod.
- Some braided lines can be prone to twist and fluffing with spinning reels.
- Penn 10X nylon line is also highly recommended, while Maxima, Platypus and Ande are still good options from the older manufactures.
- Lure casting use 10 to 12 lb Fireline with 20 lb shock leader if required.

## ***GEAR & OTHER TACKLE REQUIREMENTS.***

- Ball sinkers size 1 to 7.
- Bomb sinkers size 1 oz to 6 oz.
- Star/Pyramid sinkers 1 oz to 6 oz.
- Breakaway anchor sinkers size 3 oz to 6 oz.
- Swivels, black rolling swivels size 6 to 4.
- Can use snap swivels for attaching sinkers to the Paternoster rig.
- Quality back pack for carrying all your gear while finding the fish.
- 6 pack esky to keep your frozen bait in prime condition.
- Waders with a belt around your waist to keep put water. Long John wet suit is good alternative.
- Lightweight spray jacket over the waders to keep out the water.
- Burley bucket and carries fish back to car.
- Canvas fish shoulder bag.
- Knife and scabbard, bait buckets and a rod bucket on the waist belt
- Surf rod sand spike rod holders.
- Rod wraps or straps to assist in carrying the rods.
- Small clip lock tackle box with hooks swivels to re rig as required.
- Onion bags for berley application.
- Fish ruler.
- Head lamp or waterproof torch.
- Binoculars for beach activity studies.
- Roll of absorbent paper.

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