

Be well prepared for **the mullet run**

Seasonal fishing tip from Bruce Harris

It is time for shore and jetty fishers to get their mullet gear out of hibernation.

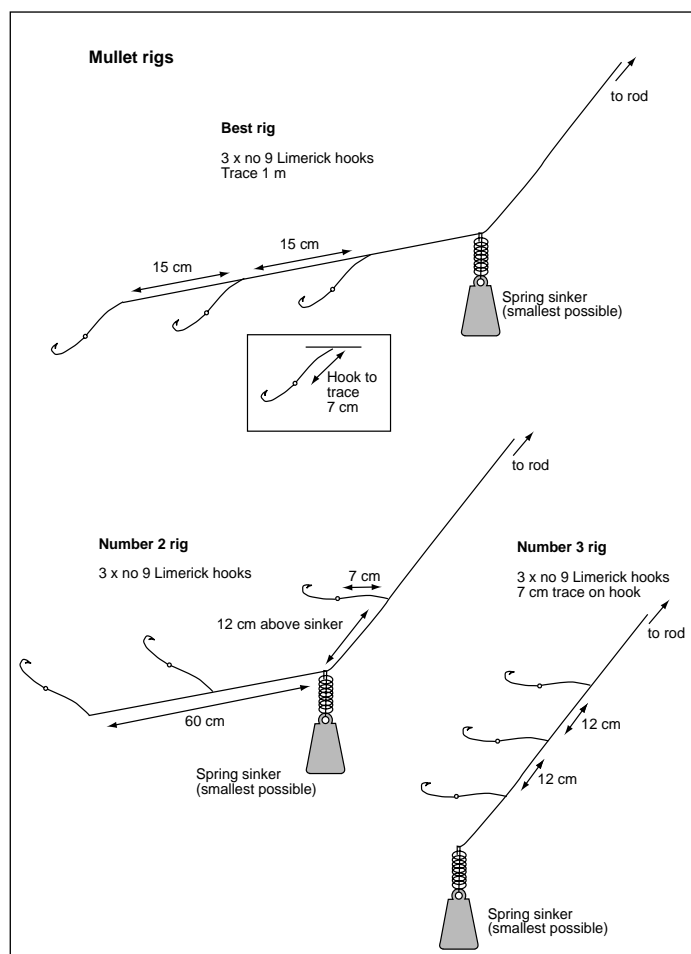
At this time of the year, big schools cruise the shores of Gulf St. Vincent, Spencer Gulf and shallow waters of the west coast. In most cases, the schools have already spawned and the fish are looking for feed in the shallows on each high tide.

About half an hour before the tide changes from low water, the schools start to build and about an hour before the high tide they are in full feeding mood.

Mullet will eat just about anything and, because of this, they are not on the most wanted fish list. However, mullet are arguably the most nutritious fish in our waters.

Mullet are often seen in polluted waters, but once they enter the open sea it is a different story. After a week or two in clean waters, their bellies become white and lose the yellow tinge that is a clear indicator of dirty or polluted water. The "yellow belly" fish can still be eaten, but they do not taste as good.

The best rig for mullet is three number 9 limerick hooks below a spring berley sinker. The rod should be about two and a half metres in length with a fine, fast action tip.



The line should be about 4kg breaking strain and the reel a small sidecaster.

Always use two swivels - one direct to the sinker and the other about 50 cm up the line. This will stop casting twist in the line.

The big trick is to know where the fish are schooling. Visit the beach or jetty you want to fish at high tide and see where all the local fishers are gathered. Then at low tide, take an onion bag about a third full of stale bread and any prawn

or crab shells you may have. Anchor the bag to the sand and use a stone or something heavy so the incoming tide cannot move it.

You should place the bag on the seaward edge of the gutter closest to the shore. This may be only 20 metres away from where you will be casting. Ideally, it should be near a position where the incoming tide is running into the gutter.

Start fishing about an hour before high tide until an hour after. Also check the gutter to see which way the berley is running. Simply cast the line over the school and slowly reel the line through the fish.

In shore and jetty fishing never reel in fast. Take your time. Once a fish is hooked, the rest of the school will follow and you may get more than one fish if you keep the line tight.

There is a wide choice of bait from sea worms of all types to cockles or mince meat. I like a mixture of half a kilogram of Kangaroo mince with a loaf of bread (no crust), and a tea spoon of curry powder laced with fish oil to make it sticky.

Use this mixture for both bait and berley. It will hold in the spring sinker for up to five casts. Never use a loose berley because it will only take the fish away from your baited hooks.

Be sure to take an ice slurry with you. This is made up of ice and sea water. As the fish are caught, place them in the slurry and this will keep the flesh of the fish firm. Never let fish die in a bucket of water because the flesh will go soft.

Don't forget the size limit for mullet is 21cm and the bag limit is 60. A boat limit of 180 mullet applies when three or more are fishing.

Before you leave the beach, retrieve the bag that contained the berley. When it comes to cooking your mullet, remember the fish are quite oily. They should never be fried. Grilled in the oven, roasted, steamed or on a barbecue rack are all good choices.

Good fishing!