



Bread and Butter Basics

Fly fishing the Coffs Coast, NSW

Tom Clancy

What we will cover today

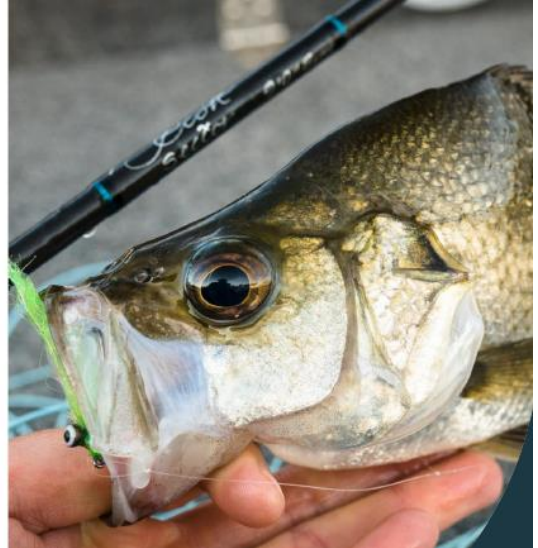
- Coffs Coast waterways overview
- Coffs Coast bread and butter species overview
- Flies
- Gear



What we won't cover today

Spoon feeding of locations

'Must have' brands of rods, reels, lines or flies



A bit about me

Currently live in Woolgoolga, NSW

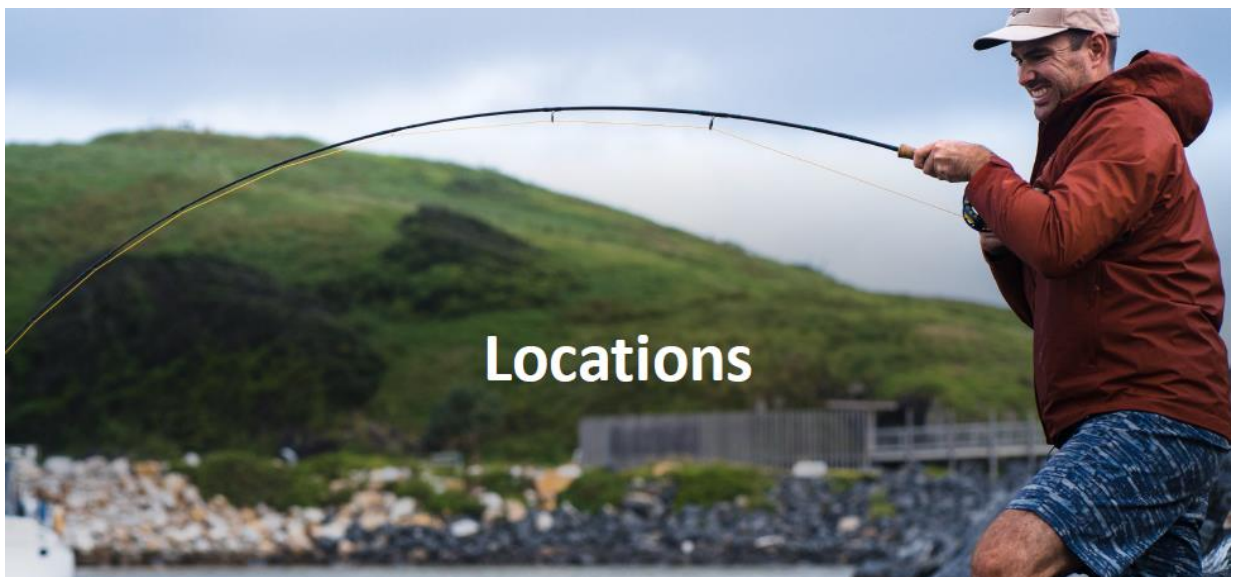
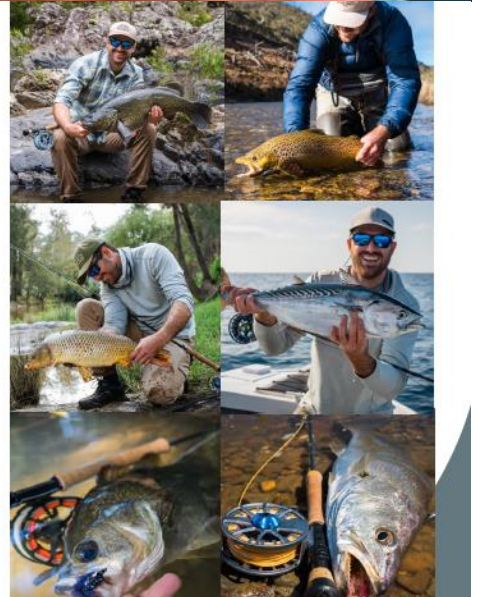
Fly fishing for over 15 years; learnt to fly fish on bread-and-butter species in SE QLD

Experience in a wide range of Australian fisheries

Contributor to Flylife Magazine since 2015

Brand ambassador for Manic Tackle Project

Enjoy flyfishing, photography, hiking and spending time with my family



Locations

The Coffs Coast is an estuary fly fisherman's paradise

What defines the 'Coffs Coast'?

For our purposes: Yamba to Nambucca Heads

Beach creeks (e.g. Coffs Creek, Boambee Creek)

Lagoons (e.g. Woolgoolga Lake)

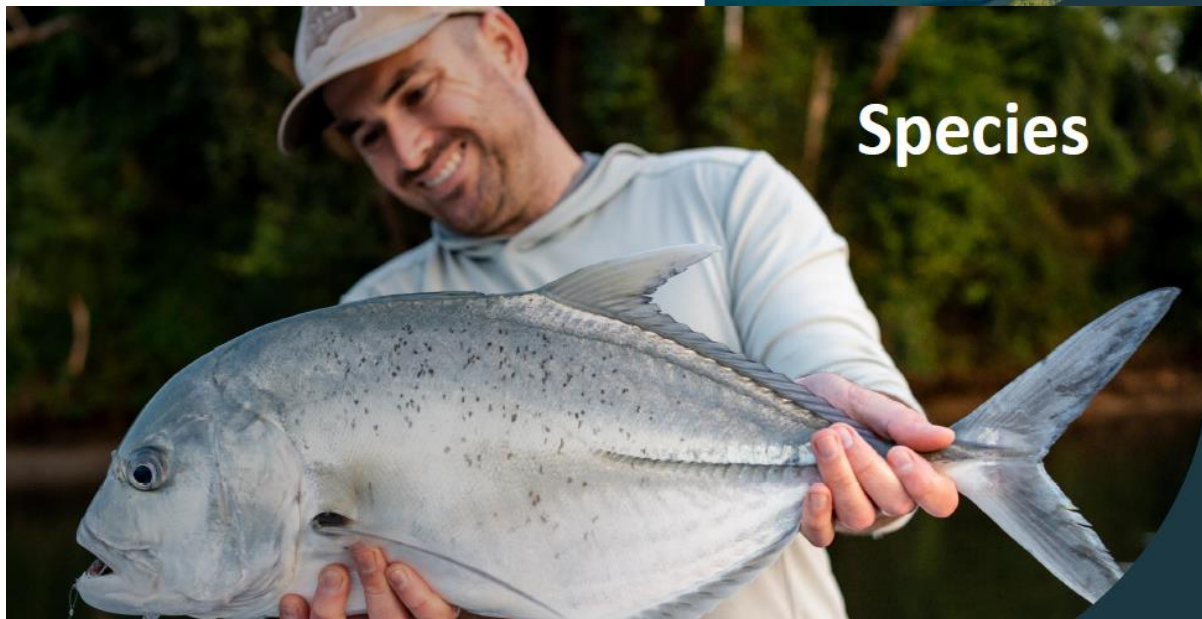
Small estuaries (Bonville Creek, Corindi River)

Medium – large estuaries (Bellinger River, Clarence River)

Rockwalls (e.g. Harbour boat ramp, south wall)

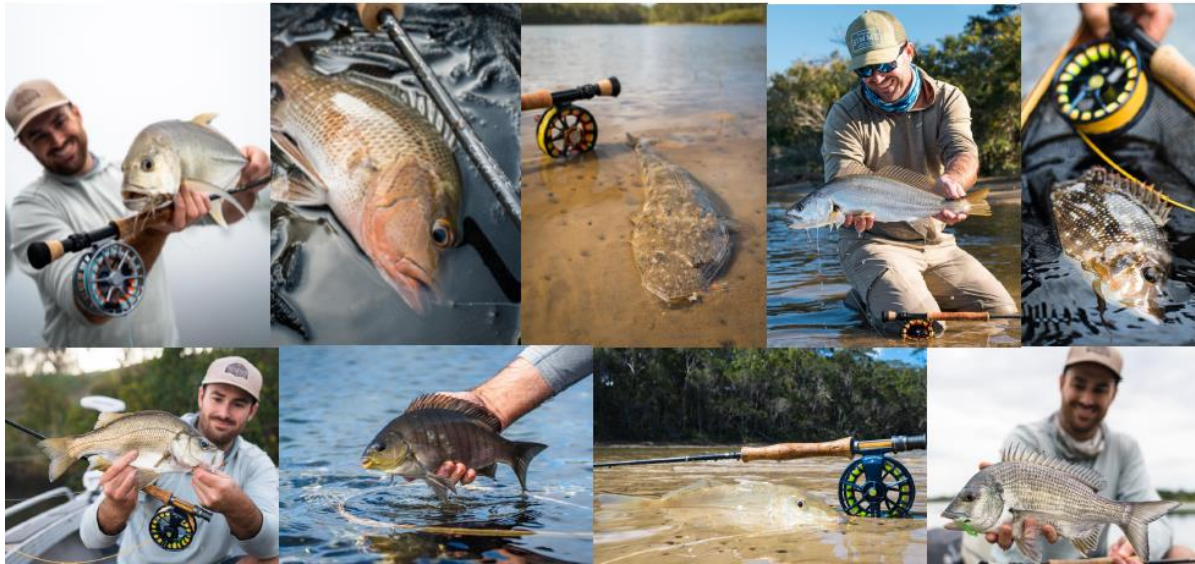
Headlands/Marina

There's always somewhere to fish

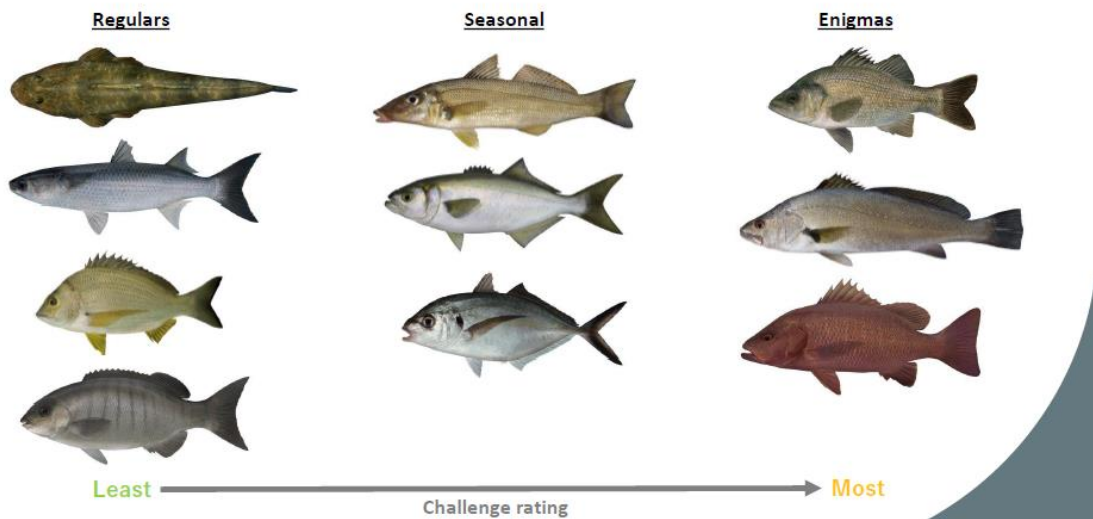


Species

Mixing of warm and cool currents = rich & diverse systems



Bread-and-Butter species of the Coffs Coast



Fly fishing for luderick

Species

Luderick

Bycatch includes bream, surgeon fish, drummer, mullet, dusky rabbit fish, grassy sweetlip (even remora and trevally!)

Habitats

Coffs Harbour boat ramp and Coffs Harbour Marina rock walls

Training walls in Clarence, Bellinger, Nambucca etc.

Seasons

All year round - rougher seas and overcast conditions preferred

Flies

Weed flies: size 6 and 8 Gamakatsu panfish hook with Tiewell weed dubbing dubbed onto shank. Tungsten bead or weightless.

Presentation

One or two flies suspended under moveable strike indicator or bobber. Split shot added if necessary. Length of drop dependent on water depth

Tackle

5 – 7 weight, floating line, 9ft leader (2/3 10-12lb and 1/3 4 – 8lb)



Fly fishing for flathead, bream & tailor

Habitats

Sandflats, oyster leases, rock walls, sunken timber, gravel beds, artificial structures

Seasons

Winter: Bream near river mouths, flathead in the shallows sunning themselves

Winter: Tailor enter estuaries and spreads throughout lower-middle reaches depending on salinity and tide

Summer: Bream throughout rivers up into brackish reaches, flathead spread throughout

Flies

Size 6 to size 2 shrimp and minnow variations

- BWC raw prawns, bream vampires
- Clousers

Large brass - large lead dumbbell eyes to suit depth and tidal flow

Tackle

6 – 7 weight, floating line, 9-12ft fluorocarbon leader ending in 6-10lb.



Fly fishing for trevally

Habitats

Throughout river, depending on food source and salinity.
Prefers beats along drop offs, snaggy riverbanks etc.

Seasons

Can be caught all year round

Early-mid summer & early-mid autumn: plague proportions enter the medium and large estuary systems from spring through into summer.

Flies

Size 1 – 2/0 shrimp and minnow variations

- BWC raw prawns; clousers

Large – extra large lead dumbbell eyes to suit depth, fly size and tidal flow

Tackle

7 – 10 weight depending on size of fish and type of structure fishing, floating, sink tip and intermediate lines, 9-12ft fluorocarbon leader ending in 14-30lb



Fly fishing for whiting

Habitats

Sandflats, ideally between 30cm and 1.5m deep

Seasons

Summer- early Autumn: warm water temps are key to get this species aggressive enough to hit a fly.

Flies

Surface flies such as SK Skipping Prawn, Disco Shrimp with stinger hooks

Small gotcha style patterns with plenty of weight and lots of shine

Tackle

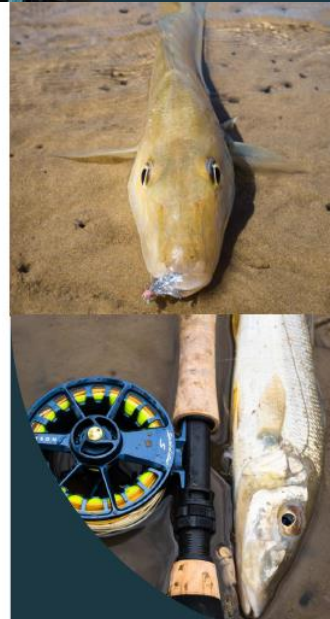
4 – 6 weight, floating line, 9-12ft fluorocarbon leader ending in 4-6lb for subsurface, 4-8ft monofilament leader ending in 8-10lb for surface fishing

Presentation

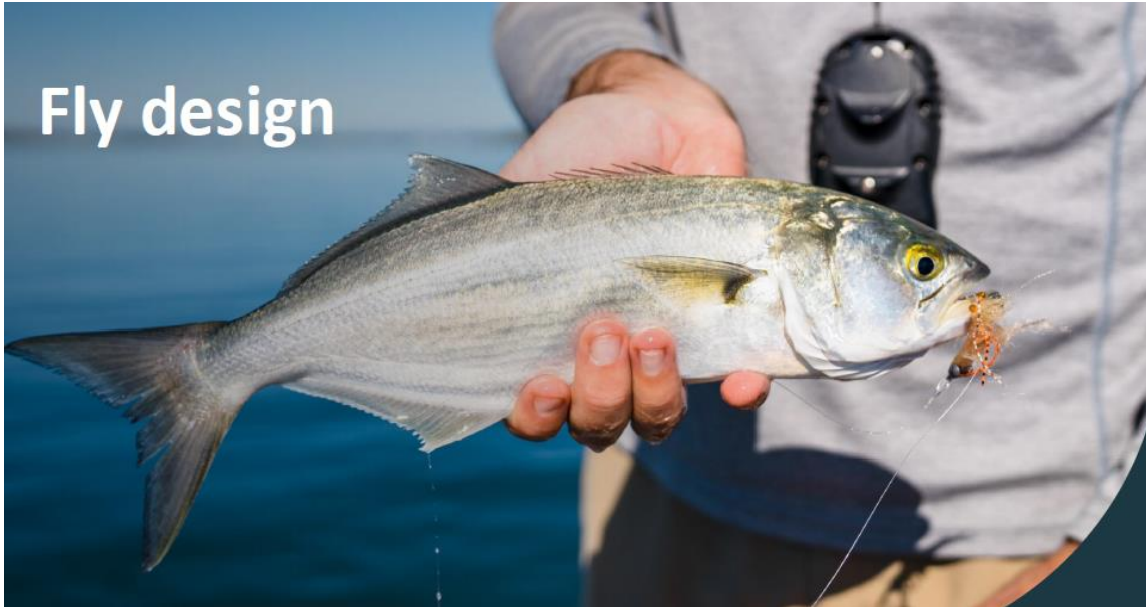
This is the single most important aspect about consistently catching whiting on fly.

Surface – medium to fast pace, constant stripping with no pauses. If a fish is following or strikes your fly, keep same pace. If you pause, the fish will become disinterested.

Subsurface – similar retrieve, medium to fast, short sharp strips, very little pausing. Pause and the fish often lose interest.



Fly design



Two things to keep in mind

- Get your fly to where the fish are
- Don't be afraid of adding weight



Consider this...

Typical estuary rig for a conventional lure angler



Hareline Dubbin Heavy Lead Eyes

Heavy Lead Eyes (Size)	Heavy Lead Eyes (Length)	Heavy Lead Eyes (Weight)
Small	4.8 mm	0.3 grams
Medium	7.3 mm	0.6 grams
Large	7.5 mm	1.0 gram
Extra Large	8.5 mm	1.5 grams



Most of the flies I fish in the medium to large Coffs Coast estuaries have the following weight systems:



Spawn flyfish 5.5-7.5mm (0.4 – 1.4g) tungsten football beads



Spawn flyfish 6.3mm (2g) tungsten beads



Plain lead eyes (med, large)



Generalist patterns for bream, flathead, EPs, tailor etc.



Manic Tackle Project Spawning Shrimp

Works well for flathead over flats in 0.5m – 1.5m deep



Bream vampire (lead eyes)

Generalist pattern best along rock walls, sunken timber shorelines 1 – 2.5m deep



Raw prawn (various weights)

THE generalist pattern – I've caught jewfish, jacks, GTs, bream, flathead, bass, EPs, tailor etc. on this thing



Luderick



Weed fly - weighted

In a two fly rig I will use this one much like the 'bomb' nymph in trout fishing, to get my rig down to depth



Weed fly - unweighted

In a two fly rig I will trail this one 30-40cm after the weighted weed fly, tied off the bend of its hook



Thingamabobber

Perfect for luderick fishing as they always stay afloat
3/4 inch size is good for most conditions



Whiting



Whiting Mesmeriser

Short, sharp constant strips at a medium-fast pace



Disco shrimp

When you need more surface presence than the SK Skipping Prawn



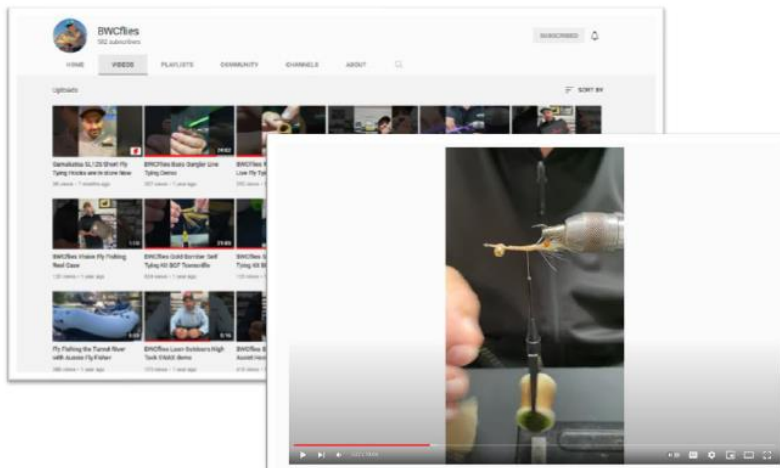
SK Skipping Prawn*

Subtle skittering action on the constant medium-fast paced retrieve. Treble hook aids greatly in hooking whiting



**Shannon Kitchener has a YouTube channel which has a fly tying tutorial for the SK Skipping Prawn (X Stream Fly)*

BWC Flies have a comprehensive library of fly tying videos – an excellent resource



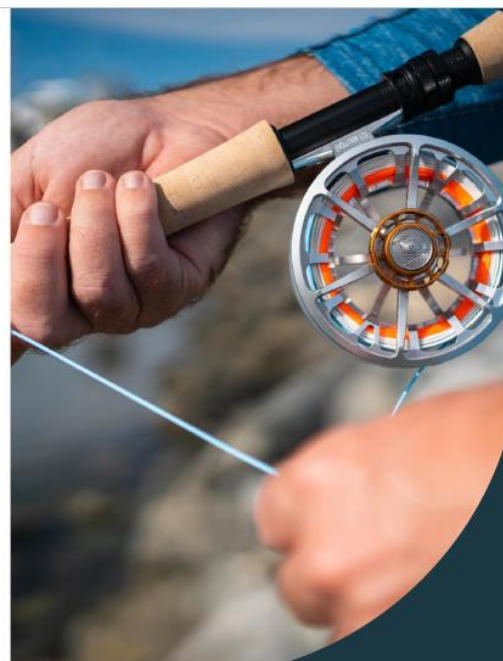
My recommendations:

General purpose 'workhorse' outfit

- 6 – 7wt 9ft saltwater build fly rod, with a med-fast to fast action
- Two lines
 - A floating line with an aggressive head (SA Titan Taper or similar; bonefish tapers not overly ideal for bread n butter fishing)
 - A sinking line (5-7tips) for dredging deeper holes or channels
- Fly reel to balance outfit. Doesn't need to be flash, just rugged enough to withstand the salt (most freshwater reels are fine with proper care and maintenance).

Tailor, trevally, jewfish, big flathead

- 8 – 10wt 9ft saltwater build fly rod, fast action
- Two lines
 - Intermediate sink tip (Airlfo Flatsmaster or similar) or full floating with aggressive head
 - A sinking line (5-7tips) if targeting river mouths or bridge pylons for jewfish
- Reel same as above, just with a more robust drag



Leave the trout gear at home!

- Trout fly line tapers are ill suited to most estuary applications
- Flex profile/taper of trout rods usually aren't optimal for estuary work
- Components of freshwater rods often not built to withstand saltwater environments
- There are exceptions (e.g. bread flies for bream & fishing for luderick) but wash your gear properly!



Waterway overview

Lagoons (e.g. Woolgoolga Lake)

Typical fishing depth
30cm to 2m

What you'll be fishing
Sandflats, channels, gravel beds, weed beds, isolated timber or rock structures

Outfit

- 9ft 4 - 6 weight, fast action
- Weight forward, floating line
- 9ft fluorocarbon tapered leader

Beach creeks (e.g. Coffs Creek)

Typical fishing depth
30cm to 3m

What you'll be fishing
Lagoon habitat plus mangroves, more timber lined banks, limited man made structure

Outfit

- 9ft 5 - 7 weight, fast action
- Weight forward, floating or slow intermediate line
- 9ft fluorocarbon tapered leader

Small estuaries (e.g. Corindi/Bonville)

Typical fishing depth
30cm to 4m

What you'll be fishing
Beach creek plus deeper bends, rockbars, abundant overhanging vege and submerged timber

Outfit

- 9ft 6 - 8 weight, fast action
- Weight forward, floating or slow intermediate line
- 9-12ft fluorocarbon tapered leader

Medium-large estuaries (e.g. Clarence/Bellinger)

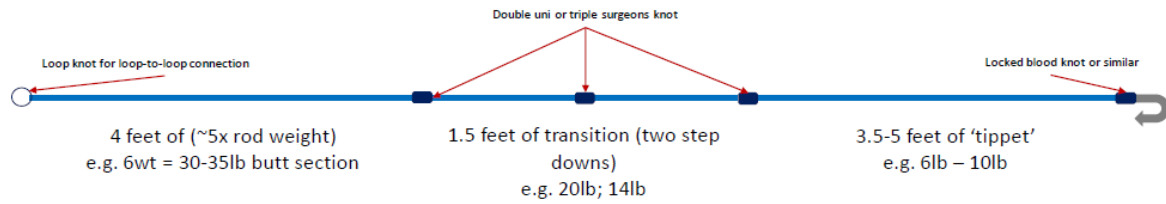
Typical fishing depth
30cm to 5m+

What you'll be fishing
Small estuaries plus more man made structure, deeper water

Outfit

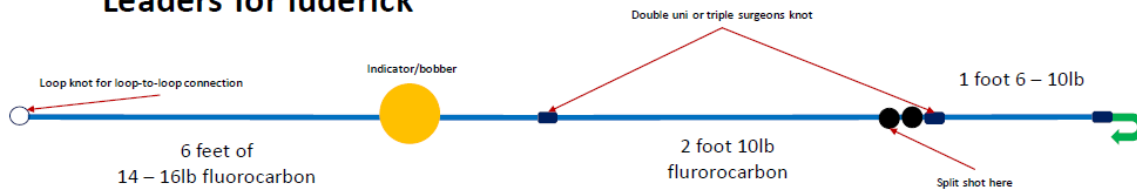
- 9ft 6 - 10 weight, fast action
- Weight forward, floating, slow intermediate, fast sink (5 - 7 ips) line
- 9-12ft fluorocarbon tapered leader

Leaders for general bread & butter fishing



- I make my own leaders with 3 to 4 different breaking strains of fluorocarbon
- Sunline FC Rock or Daiwa J-Thread FC – much more economical than fly fishing specific material
- Bream, flathead, EPs etc. – starting 'tippet' 8-10lb
- GT, tailor, big flathead – starting 'tippet' 12-16lb
- Approximate rule I follow:
 - Half the leader of butt section, 1-2 feet of 'transition zone', then the remainder your 'tippet'

Leaders for luderick



- Luderick leader is approx. 9ft in total and made of 2 – 3 breaking strains (depending on terrain)
- 2/3 of the leader is 14 – 16lb fluorocarbon. This is where you will add your sliding bobber or indicator. By placing the bobber on the stronger fluorocarbon, you reduce the risk of losing it if you get snagged.
- Placing a triple surgeon knot within your tippet section gives the split shot something to rest against
 - Prevents the shot sliding down onto weed fly