



Department of
Primary Industries

NSW Guide
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FREE!

Go Fishing



Featured Location:
**Sydney's Mighty
Hawkesbury River**

Recreational fishing
Hot Spot!



Message from the Minister



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Throwing a line in at a new spot always makes for a great fishing adventure. Whether you're just starting out or an expert fisher, NSW boasts some of the best locations to fish in the world. In addition to being one of the state's favourite activities, recreational fishing is a massive contributor to our economy. It's a \$3.4 billion industry and generates 14,000 full-time jobs across the state.

The NSW Government knows how important recreational fishing is and has developed a range of programs to enhance angler access and opportunities. This series of guides to popular fishing locations is a great example of the proactive approach by the NSW Government to promote recreational fishing. We're fortunate to live in NSW where there are so many great places to fish. I hope these DPI guides help you have a safe and productive fishing experience around our great state. Tight lines!

The Hon. Adam Marshall, MP
Minister for Agriculture
and Western New South Wales

Cover image: Ben Coombes angler image by Chris Cleaver and all other images by Chris Cleaver. Fish illustrations: Pat Tully.

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Overview

Located just north of Sydney, the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system emerges from the foothills of the Blue Mountains then winds its way east as the Hawkesbury River to meet the sea at Broken Bay.

A truly impressive system, the Hawkesbury-Nepean is the longest coastal catchment in NSW spanning 470 kms and draining a staggering 2.14 Mha of land. Check out www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/your-catchment/hawkesbury-nepean for more info.

As it is a huge system with an array of differing habitats and features, it is no wonder that the Hawkesbury is often seen as being pretty daunting for a first-time fisher; however, when a few secrets are revealed, you begin to understand and appreciate how productive this mighty river can be.

The Hawkesbury is best known for producing some of NSW's largest mulloway. Fish exceeding 1.6m and 40kg have been taken from these waters. While these huge fish aren't common nowadays, the Hawkesbury still offers a good chance at quality fish around the magical metre mark.

While mulloway are a major drawcard for local and visiting anglers, there's plenty more on offer in this huge and diverse system. For example, the Hawkesbury is well known for its big bream and during winter plenty of keen fishos brave the cold to chase the mysterious hairtail in well-known locations such as Cowan Creek and there's usually plenty of pelagic action with surface-feeding Australian salmon, bonito, tailor and yellowtail kingfish in Broken Bay. Additionally, the Hawkesbury and surrounding waters produce all the usual estuary targets such as sand whiting, luderick, black and silver drummer, mullet, leatherjacket, snapper, silver trevally and many more.

The upper reaches of the system are revered as iconic Australian bass and estuary perch waters and there are many kilometres of fishy creeks and banks to explore.

Due to its stunning landscape, rich heritage and adjoining national parks, the Hawkesbury region is a very popular tourist destination, obviously for fishing but also for other watersports such as kayaking, cruising or sailing.

Continued on page 4

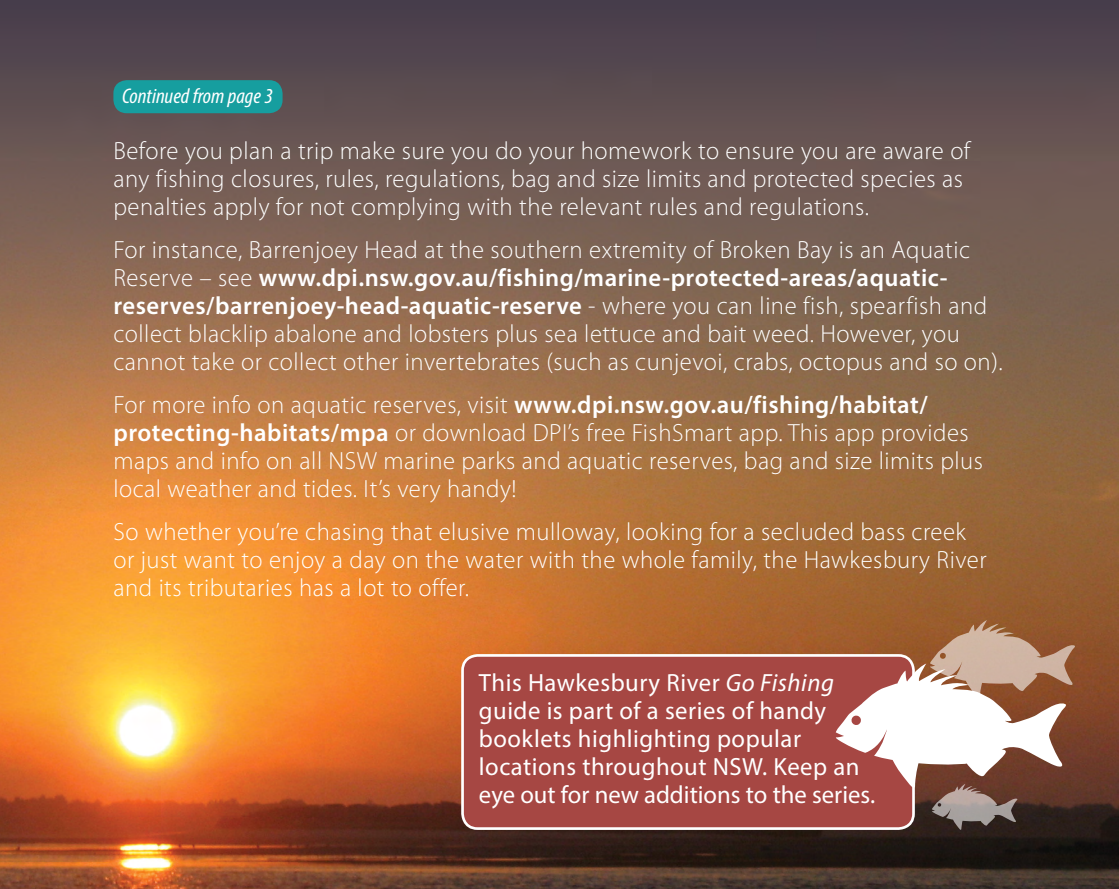


Before you plan a trip make sure you do your homework to ensure you are aware of any fishing closures, rules, regulations, bag and size limits and protected species as penalties apply for not complying with the relevant rules and regulations.

For instance, Barrenjoey Head at the southern extremity of Broken Bay is an Aquatic Reserve – see www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/aquatic-reserves/barrenjoey-head-aquatic-reserve - where you can line fish, spearfish and collect blacklip abalone and lobsters plus sea lettuce and bait weed. However, you cannot take or collect other invertebrates (such as cunjevoi, crabs, octopus and so on).

For more info on aquatic reserves, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/protecting-habitats/mpa or download DPI's free FishSmart app. This app provides maps and info on all NSW marine parks and aquatic reserves, bag and size limits plus local weather and tides. It's very handy!

So whether you're chasing that elusive mulloway, looking for a secluded bass creek or just want to enjoy a day on the water with the whole family, the Hawkesbury River and its tributaries has a lot to offer.



This Hawkesbury River *Go Fishing* guide is part of a series of handy booklets highlighting popular locations throughout NSW. Keep an eye out for new additions to the series.

FACT BOX

Mulloway, are without doubt the No.1 species for most anglers fishing the Hawkesbury. They are a truly iconic sportfish, with stunning silver-bronze colouration and a well-deserved reputation as a challenging target.

While mulloway can get to 60 kg in weight and 1.8 m in length, it's fair to say that fish of this size are pretty rare. However, the Hawkesbury continues to produce its share of quality fish in the 20-30 kg range.

Mulloway distribution in the Hawkesbury extends all the way from the mouth at

THE MAGIC OF

MULLOWAY

Broken Bay well up to Wisemans Ferry (especially during an extended dry spell). As with most systems, a few key hotspots tend to hold the majority of the fish.

Techniques

The two most common techniques when targeting mulloway involve either casting lures or fishing with baits.

Bait fishing is generally done at anchor with a "sit and wait" approach. There's no set preference to night or day - time on the water at a chosen location generally reveals the most productive periods.

A running sinker rig down to a rolling swivel with 60-90cm of 25kg leader with a 5/0 – 8/0 non-offset circle is all that is required to have a chance at a Hawkesbury mulloway. Simply just adjust the sinker weight to hold the bait in place depending on the strength of the tide.

The best baits by far are locally caught Hawkesbury squid, butterflied yellowtail and yellowtail fillets. Other baits include mackerel, pike, octopus, pilchards, mullet and herring.

Casting lures has certainly grown in popularity for mulloway and can be a very effective technique, especially with an electric motor equipped boat and following the tide changes along the river over several hotspots.

The key is to work soft plastic stickbaits and paddletails in the 100-150mm size or soft vibes in the 15-21gram weight close to the bottom with a single lift or double flick technique, preferably casting at the bank and working down the contour off the bottom to the boat. Try to work your lures across or with the tide as working against the tide will require too much weight and present the lure in an unnatural fashion.

Try picking out several locations along the river and fish each one close to a tide change when the water movement slows down; this is when mulloway become most active and feed. As you move up a river, the time of a tide change is later the further the location is away from the mouth, thus enabling you to fish the peak activity time at several locations.

Tackle

Bait fishing: 4000-10000 size spin reel, 2.1m 8-15kg rod, 15kg braid, 25kg fluorocarbon leader.

Lure fishing: 3000-4000 size spin reel, 2.1m 3-6kg rod, 5-10kg braid, 8-15kg leader.

Locations

Strange as it sounds, some of the best spots to try are actually well-known locations. In fact, many can be found on the fishing maps in this guide for example, Flint and Steel, Juno Point, Yellow Rock, Gunyah Point, Railway and Road Bridge, The Vines, Bar Point and Pumpkin Point are all proven mulloway locations.

Size & bag limit

1 per day 70 cm and over.

Key Tips

- Focus your efforts around tide changes
- Always fish around structure
- Locate the bait - the mulloway won't be far away
- Use good quality gear, from hooks to rods
- Don't give up!



Hawkesbury River fishing locations

NOTE: This fishing map is only to be used as a general reference overview.

For more details on crabbing around the Hawkesbury River please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/674739/sydney-north-recreational-crab-guide.pdf

See www.dpi.nsw.gov.au for details on fishing regulations.

See www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/using-waterways/public-ferry-wharves/clean-safe-wharf.html on ferry wharf fishing regulations.

Not for navigation.



Special fishing rules apply at Barrenjoey Head Aquatic Reserve and Careel Bay. Download the **NSW DPI FishSmart App** for all the essential information you need to fish in NSW.

Fishing location

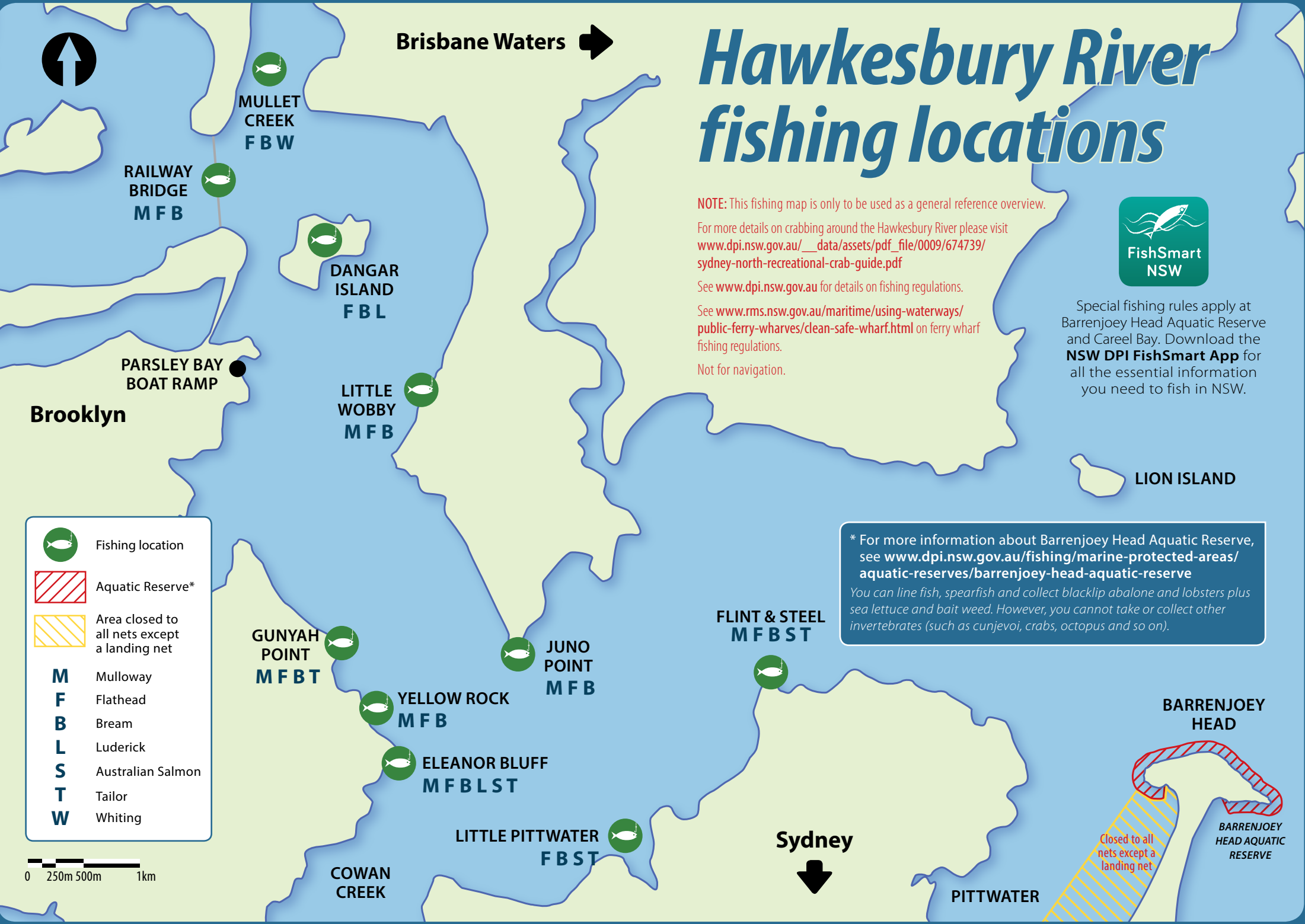
Aquatic Reserve*

Area closed to all nets except a landing net

M Mulloway
F Flathead
B Bream
L Luderick
S Australian Salmon
T Tailor
W Whiting

0 250m 500m 1km

* For more information about Barrenjoey Head Aquatic Reserve, see www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/marine-protected-areas/aquatic-reserves/barrenjoey-head-aquatic-reserve
 You can line fish, spearfish and collect blacklip abalone and lobsters plus sea lettuce and bait weed. However, you cannot take or collect other invertebrates (such as cunjevoi, crabs, octopus and so on).



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See www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/using-waterways/public-ferry-wharves/clean-safe-wharf.html on ferry wharf fishing regulations.

Not for navigation.

	Fishing location
M	Mulloway
F	Flathead
B	Bream
L	Luderick
S	Australian Salmon
T	Tailor
W	Whiting
H	Hairtail

PUMPKIN POINT
M F B



THE VINES
M F B



MILSON ISLAND
M B



BAR POINT
M F B



THE VINES
M F B



Mooney Mooney

MULLET CREEK
F B W



BAR ISLAND
M F B



SPECTACLE ISLAND
M F B



RAILWAY BRIDGE
M F B



ROAD BRIDGE
M F B L



LONG ISLAND
M F B L



DANGAR ISLAND
F B L



BEROWRA WATERS
M F B H



Sydney



Central Coast



PARSLEY BAY BOAT RAMP



0 250m 500m 1km

Key target species



Bream

PEAK SEASON: Year-round, May–August is best for large fish.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with fresh prawns, fish strips (i.e. mullet, striped tuna), marine worms; lure fishing with soft plastics, vibes and small hard-bodied divers.

TACKLE: 2-5kg spin outfits, 3kg braid or mono and 3-6kg leader. For bait fishing, use size 2-1/0 non-offset circle hooks unweighted or with a small running “00” ball sinker around shallow areas with little tidal influence. In areas with good tidal flow, a sinker with enough weight to hold bottom running down to a swivel with 30–50cm of 3-6kg leader and 2-1/0 non-offset circle hooks is preferred. The use of berley is effective when targeting bream on bait in the Hawkesbury. If you like using soft plastics, try 1-2 gram jig heads on size 1-2 hooks teamed with 3-8cm “wiggler” style tails. Use a slow “lift and drop” retrieve.

HOT SPOTS: Cottage Point, The Vines, Bar Point, Dangar Island, Milsons Island.

BAG & SIZE LIMITS: 10 per day 25cm and over.



Dusky Flathead

PEAK SEASON: October – April.

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

TACKLE: 2-5kg spin outfits, 3-6kg 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, remember that the Hawkesbury is a particularly deep system so try jig heads of 7 - 21grams 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 6-12cm 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 a 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: 10 per day 36cm and over, only one over 70cm.





Australian salmon



PEAK SEASON: October – April.

TECHNIQUE: Small soft plastics, metal lures, flies and hard-bodied lures cast or trolled around the deeper rocks in Pittwater, West Head, Barrenjoey and Lion Island all work extremely well for the ever-popular salmon. Keep a close eye out for birds diving and wheeling near the surface – this is a prime indication that a school of hungry salmon is in the area. Whole pilchards, whitebait and strip baits fished unweighted work well in the same areas mentioned for casting lures.

TACKLE: Medium spinning outfits of 3-6kg involving a 2.1m rod and 4000-5000 size spin reel loaded with 8-15kg braid and 10-15kg fluorocarbon leader is perfect when chasing salmon. Fly fishing with a 8-10 weight outfit using Clouser or Surf Candy style flies around surface feeding schools is always a very productive and enjoyable way to target these great sportfish.

HOT SPOTS: West Head, Lion Island, Cowan Creek, Barrenjoey Head.

BAG & SIZE LIMITS: 5 per day, no size limit.



Hairtail



PEAK SEASON: June – September.

TECHNIQUE: Bait fishing with pilchards, yellowtail, fresh fish strips or live yellowtail; lurecasting with soft or hard vibes and deep diving hard-bodies.

TACKLE: 3-6kg spin outfits, 3-6kg braid or mono line and 8-10kg leader with a small wire trace to prevent being snipped off by the hairtail's fang-like teeth. For bait fishing, a running sinker rig using three 1/0 to 4/0 hooks ganged together with a small trailing treble works best as these fish can be notoriously difficult to hook. If fishing at night, which can be the best time, be sure to add a small glow stick above your bait; red is the best colour if you can get it.

While they can be difficult to hook, hairtail are a very viable lure fishing target. Deep diving hard-bodies and soft or hard vibes worked slowly through schools of bait where hairtail are present is a good way to get a strike.

HOT SPOTS: Cottage Point, Coal and Candle Creek, Jerusalem Bay, Little Wobby Shores, Cowan Creek.

BAG & SIZE LIMITS: 10 per day, no size limit.



Other species

Aside from the key target species a number of other common species are available in the Hawkesbury River system, **luderick** are plentiful along the many rockwalls

and best targeted with fresh green weed suspended under a stemmed float set 1/3 from the bottom depth. Berley with a mix of sand and chopped weed to increase your chances, find areas of slower tidal flow or current eddies along the rock walls.

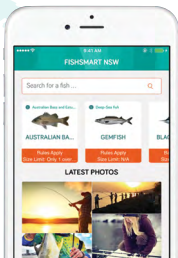
Tailor, bonito and **kingfish** can be found mixing with the **Australian salmon** schools in the lower section of the river from the entrance to Cowan Creek out to the mouth in Broken Bay. If there are no surface feeding schools, trolling small hard-bodies or skirted lures in the 8-14cm range along the numerous washy points can be productive.

Other species which can be found are **estuary perch, Australian Bass, garfish, leatherjacket, flounder, whiting, mullet, tarwhine, drummer, silver trevally, snapper** and a few less desirables like **pike eels, red rock cod** and **catfish**.

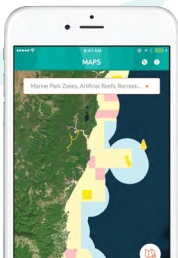
Check out the app: **FishSmart**

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:

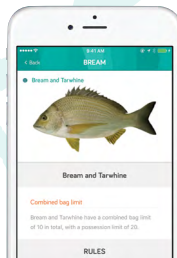
- ❑ a pictorial guide of common recreational species, bag & size limits, closed seasons and fishing gear rules
- ❑ real-time maps to locate nearest FADs (Fish Aggregation Devices), artificial reefs, Recreational Fishing Havens and Marine Park Zones
- ❑ local weather, tide, moon phase and barometric pressure 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.



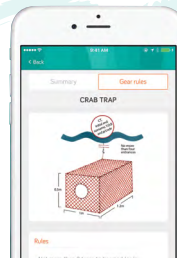
Search for a fish, weather info and gallery



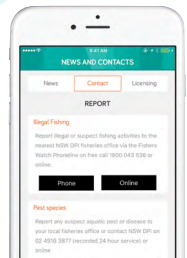
See your location in relation to FADs, Marine Park Zones, RFHs & more



Check the bag and size limits for popular species



Check the rules for different gear types



Contact Fisheries – Report illegal fishing & more