

## Surf Casting and Angling Club of WA Inc Instruction Period presentation by Peter Osborne, General Meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2011



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## **1.0 General statistics - Overview**

**1.1 Common Names:** This world-wide saltwater fish has different names in various countries. (With the Scientific Name of: *Pomatomus saltatrix*)

- United States - bluefish,
- South Africa - elf.
- Australia, - tailor .....sometimes incorrectly spelt "tailer" or "taylor",  
or popular nicknames of "chopper" or "green back".  
( In Victoria, tailor are sometimes called skipjack or "skippies".)

**1.2 Description:** The tailor is a mid-sized predatory fish with a relatively elongated body, forked tail and a large mouth lined with fairly small, but very sharp, teeth. Typical colouration is green to greenish-blue, grey or gun-metal on the back, silver on the flanks and silvery-white on the belly. Fish caught well offshore tend to have distinctive steely-blue backs. The fins are variable in colour but the tail is almost always darker, usually with a black trailing edge.

**1.3 Size:** The majority of tailor caught in Australia weigh from 0.2 to 2.5 kg. Smaller schools of big fish, in the 2 to 5 kg range, are regularly encountered in some areas, while outsize tailor, which are often caught further offshore, or around inshore reefs during winter, may weigh as much as 6 or even 8 kg. The very largest specimens taken in Australia have topped the 10 kg mark.

In WA, min size is currently 30 cm, bag limit 8 with only two over 50 cm

Club Record - 6.12 kg. Trigg Island, 19 Jan 1961 – A McDonnell

WA Record - 12.10 kg. Steep Point, 4 Nov 1981 – Brian Smith

Aust Record - " " " " " " " "



**1.4 Distribution:** In Australia, tailors are found in temperate and sub-tropical waters, being most prolific on the east coast between Wilsons Promontory and Fraser Island, and in the west from Albany to Carnarvon. They also occur sporadically along the southern seaboard, including South Australia, but are very rare in Tasmania. They make use of a wide range of habitats; from the upper, almost fresh-water reaches of estuaries, through bays, harbours and inlets to inshore grounds, shallow reefs, islands and on out to the edge of the continental shelf - and perhaps even beyond it.

**1.5 Fishing Techniques:** Tailor are fished for in a variety of ways. One of the most productive techniques is to cast and slowly retrieve un-weighted or very lightly-weighted mulie or garfish rigged on ganged or linked hooks. These gang-hooked rigs can also be used under bobby cork floats or with heavier sinkers when casting distance is required, particularly on the beach. Fish flesh strips and small live baits will also attract tailor, and they are one of the commonest lure-caught fish in our waters. They strike at a wide range of cast-and-retrieved or trolled chrome slices, spoons, lead slugs, minnows/stick lures, poppers, plastics, jigs and flies. A light wire trace is helpful to resist the tailor's razor sharp teeth, although this fish rarely bites-off ganged hooks or large, hard-bodied lures.

**1.6 Eating Qualities:** Fresh tailor are very tasty, although their soft, slightly grey meat bruises very easily and does not respond particularly well to freezing. Tailor flesh is mildly flavoured, flaky and somewhat oily. It is ideally suited to smoking, particularly cold smoking or smoke curing. All tailor destined for the table should be killed and bled as soon as they are landed.

As Terry discussed – on ice ASAP immediately and cleaned within an hour or two of capture. Avoid dropping the fish, stacking them on top of each other, and allowing rigor mortis to set in while they are bent or curled up. Even half an hour in the sun and wind can ruin the flesh. Avoid wrapping in plastic

I like to have a cotton bag, salt water wet, fish gilled and gutted and put on ice in an esky.

## **2.0 Reading the Beach**

**2.1 Wave Action:** Look for white water, in particularly rolling into a gutter or channel. Waves over clean water – stirred up sand, mud, and weed will detract.

**2.2 Gutters:** Gutters can form from sand bars, structures and or reefs or combinations. A gutter that has run-off from wave action and outflow from reefs to the open ocean can be ideal.

**2.3 Reefs:** can be either a casting distance out, under surface or exposed with a gutter between the reef and fisherperson or the reef can be from the shore with deep water/gutter in front.

**2.4 Structures:** Groins, Bridges/pylons, with a gutter or deep water adjacent.

Note. - All above gutters within casting distance

## **2.5 Examples**

### **3.0 Environment**

**3.1 Time:** dawn + 20 mins or two hours, and 2 hours until dusk, occasionally fish can feed during the day.

**3.2 Tides:** Change of tide, in particular the top of the tide

**3.3 Weather:** Best to have a SW wind say 8 to 15 knots – (easier and more comfortable to fish in lighter winds) Not to say that in the morning fish appear when easterlies are blowing. – whereas a calm is generally the least productive.

A high coming through is more conducive to favourable conditions A low tends to be unproductive and often are combined with strong NW winds – my least favourite.

**3.4 Sun lunar tables:** As discussed with John's presentation on this subject a couple of months ago, this is another tool to check for maximizing potential success. However our field days are selected based on a fixed calendar timetable so only coincidence if we have a fit.

Hence – If all the above factors come together for a period during our field day – the potential for success is greatly increased – so check all this out beforehand to see the time you should have a line in the water.

### **4.0 Rigs – Detail Fishing Techniques**

#### **4.1 Hooks, Leader, Sinkers. Rod and Reel/line**

Hooks: My preference is two tarpons, size 5/0 with a swivel linking to a 3/0 tarpon. This gives a 3 hook assembly that suits a mulie, or a fish fillet.

For general tailor fishing I will use 40 lb leader. If further North or where possibility of bigger fish I go up to 60 lb or even 80 lb leader.

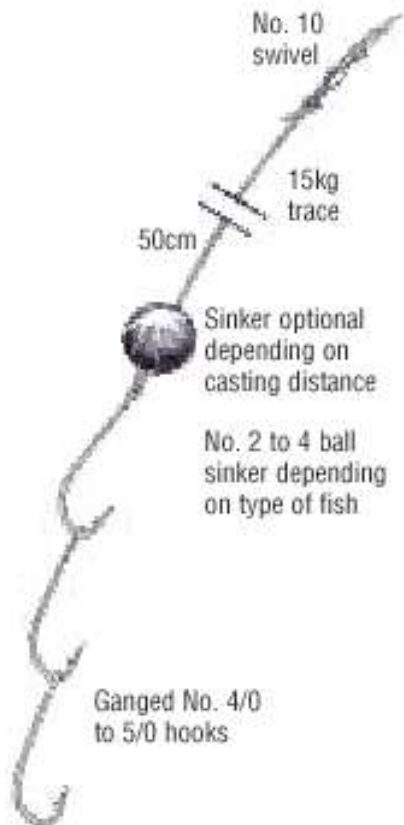
Sinkers to fix in sand – star, bucket or wire breakaway, if wanting to plane in over reef then a spoon will assist. (East coast tend to use a large running ball) Weight depending on wind, currents and weed.

My favourite rod is 13 ft slow taper 6 wrap, with a low mount – but a rod that fits your physical capabilities that you are comfortable with is the way to go, noting that for surf/ wave action control, a 13 to 14 foot rod gives the best result.

Reels can be overhead, eggbeater or Alvey – each have their own particular advantages and disadvantages. Hence use which ever you are comfortable with

**4.2 Bait Casting:** – at least a metre of leader, with a quality swivel, and a bean sinker size 3, or if punching distance or into wind a bean size 5. Hook set as above.

Ganged hook rig for tailor & salmon

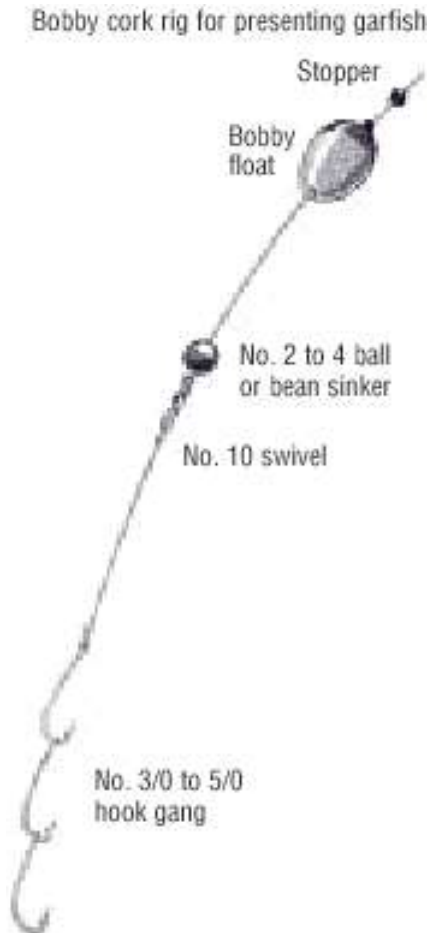


**4.3 Bottom – sand:** I use a running sinker between two swivels, leader approx 0.4 m between swivels, and leader to hook of 1.0 metre. Further refinement is a cork and a chemical stick, both just above hooks, sinker selection based on conditions so have a clip swivel to run between the two swivels

Pulley Rig with breakaway sinker – This is a further refinement, and is more complicated to build and use, but effective if big fish are about (Samson, mulloway, sharks)

**4.4 Bottom – Reef:** Use of a paternoster rig with leader to hooks of 0.5 m and separate leader length to sinker of 0.8 to 1.0 metre. A cork is a must if fishing over reef and if hauling in over a reef edge – a spoon is best

**4.5 Bobby Corking:** Takes more room – i.e. due to movement of the float cannot have other fisherpersons right beside you. This rig needs a good platform to fish from with a good gutter and ability to avoid line being caught up in wave break. Takes concentration to keep watching the float action but under right circumstances be productive.



**4.6 Lures:** If after really big specimens would use about 60 lb wire leader, but generally only use mono, particularly for metals and poppers. Selection of lure must not only be on shape, colour with weight to be suitable for distance casting. My preference is for metals for distance gutters and open ocean wit poppers in broken wave action across or adjacent to reef areas

**4.7 Chemical Light Sticks:** A light stick, just above hooks used as it gets dark can also increase probability of a fish strike. Also useful in attaching to rod tip for set rods at night – gives a good visual clue of a strike

## **5.0 The Bite**

**5.1 Tight Line:** It is imperative to keep a tight line to the bait – Without this bites will not be felt. While braid line is no stretch, and bites can be more readily felt, this line does not mix with reef/rocks, weed and once tangled difficult to straighten.

**5.2 Tap, Tap, Tap:** This level of bight is given by school smaller tailor, hence the name choppers. Needs good feel to pick up on and if a school is feeding, I like a spoon sinker where I wind in slowly to more readily get this message.

**5.3 Thump:** For bigger tailor it can be one hit only and the mulie is gone – hence the need for a tight line to set the hooks. It is amazing that such a fish can take a whole mulie in its mouth, with all those hooks, suck off the mulie and then spit out the hooks