

My First Taste of Aussie Fly Fishing

I'm fast approaching two years in 'Straya, and sadly haven't fished nearly as often as I would've liked to. That said, I have managed to cover a variety of both saltwater and freshwater venues, and have even landed a few new species.

My first few attempts were short sessions, throwing flies off of rocky points, south of Sydney on family camping trips. Despite losing a fish on my first ever cast in Australia (on an orange Crazy Charlie), these trips were largely unsuccessful. It may have been my tactics? Or it could have been the poor conditions? Either way, I was off to a poor start.



Over Easter we headed north to Coffs Harbour, roughly halfway between Sydney and Brisbane, to camp with Nick and his family. This meant many afternoons spent throwing flies into the surf for dart (wave garrick), of which there were thankfully many, putting me on the board in Australia. We also found some small trevally off a rocky point in the area, where I managed to lose a decent fish which I'm assuming was a larger trevally. The usual flies worked, including salty buggers, Crazy Charlies, and Clousers.



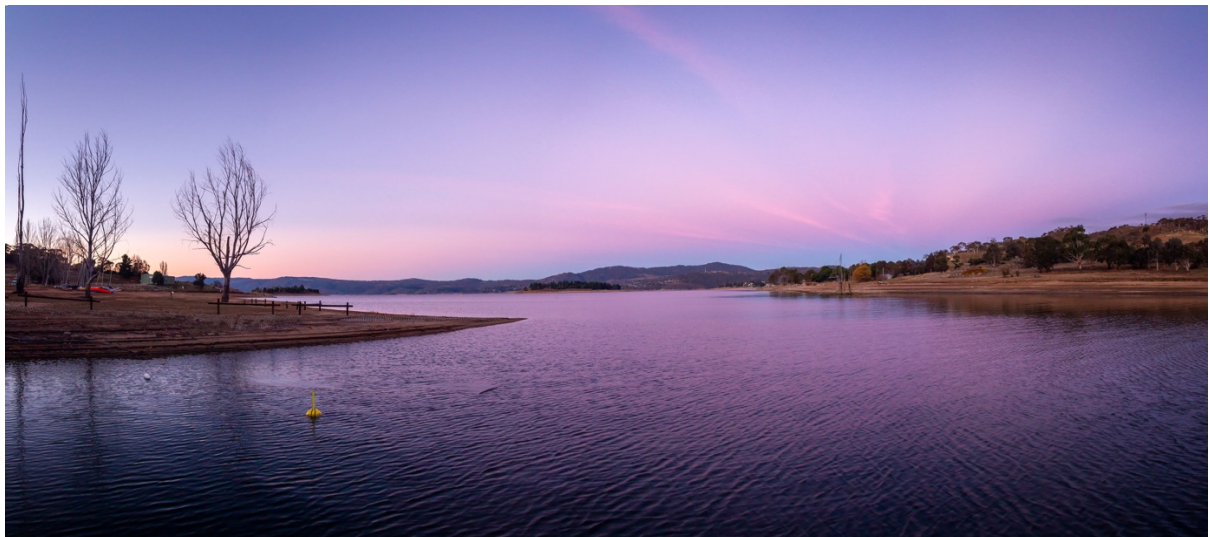




After that salty beach holiday, we headed off on a family skiing trip to the Snowy Mountains, some 500km south of Sydney, and the middle of trout country. We stayed on the shores of Lake Jindabyne, so I made sure to sneak my rods into the car for the odd flick between ski sessions.

The first of these flicks was in Lake Jindabyne itself, which is stocked with rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, and Atlantic salmon. Lake Jindabyne is a large piece of water, with a surface area greater than 3000 hectares, at a max depth of 40 meters. This scale made it somewhat intimidating for an angler who's used to the small farm dams of Underberg.

None the less, I walked the shore of a nearby bay, fishing around some visible structure. After an hour or so I had an explosive take on the surface, just as my fly hit the water. Sadly, it was not to be, and I lost the fish after a brief fight of no more than 10 seconds. All I can say is that the fish was large. Sadly, I had no more knocks, and eventually headed back to the cabin.





My next Snowy Mountain session was in the Thredbo River. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, as the rivers in the region vary from the higher alpine rivers, holding smaller trout, to the lower

stretches, which can be fished from drift boats, and also contain the much sought after Murray Cod. The fish also swim upstream from the large dams like Eucumbene to breed, and it's not uncommon to land 10 pound browns in these stretches.

I opted for a thinner piece of water, hoping to avoid the crowds which flock to the more popular spots. Unfortunately, not knowing the area, I failed dismally and was forced to share a 2km beat with around 10 other anglers, many of whom were throwing spoons.

I saw some big fish, ranging from 5 - 8 pounds, but was unable to entice them to my glow-bug patterns (the most common winter fly here, which is essentially an egg pattern). On the up side, I finally managed to land a few Aussie trout in a more remote section of the river, which I waded to to get away from the other anglers. And better yet, I caught my first ever trout by hand, tickling it out from beside a rock in the rapids.





Itching for more trout we snuck in a weekend away at Lake Oberon, which is a shorter 200km drive west of Sydney, just through the Blue Mountains. Lake Oberon is one of the regions water supplies,

so no powered watercraft are allowed on the water. I'd read mixed reports on the dam, which was once considered a great trout water, but appeared to have been taken over by redbfin perch. Thankfully, the government is aware of the issue, and have several plans in place to rehabilitate the water, include stocking both more and larger trout, as well as introducing other native species like the Murray Cod.

I fished a single afternoon session, and thankfully got into some great fish on the usual seeking pattern - a black woolly bugger. I landed 2 rainbow trout, both of around 5 pounds, and in both great condition.





I was impressed to see one of them was tagged and, upon doing some research discovered it was part of the fisheries' program to resolve the redfin perch problem. I reported the tag and growth rate, as requested, and was astounded when a trout lure was sent to me by the fisheries as a thank you. It's truly great to see my fishing licenses money being put to good use.

With the winter trout fishing out of the way, I turned my focus to waters closer to home. Living meters from the vibrant waters of Sydney harbour, full of flathead, bream, kingfish, and Australian salmon, and having hardly ever fished them, was really starting to eat at me. So, I started doing some fishing down at the nearest bay, throwing flies between the moored yachts.

I've had some incredible sessions, landing mostly flathead and tailor (as well as losing some big fish). However, I'm yet to land the famous kingfish or Aussie salmon, or the competition bream.



To this end my Christmas present to myself was a Hobie Outback fishing kayak. Being a peddle drive, it keeps my hands free to fish, not unlike being on a less manoeuvrable, but much faster, float tube. It gives me options, from covering the large trout waters, to fishing for Aussie bass and Murray Cod, or targeting bigger fish in the estuaries/harbour (or sea if I get brave enough), and bream in the rivers.

So far I've only taken it out at the local dam, where I managed to land a few Aussie Bass (which are really a variety of perch), but I'm thrilled with the purchase. Let's hope my fishing ramps up from here.





Despite not fishing as much as I would've liked, I've landed a few decent fish in some incredibly beautiful locations. And I can't wait to get out on the yak and land some more Aussie icons. Expect further articles in the future. And drop me a line if you're ever in Sydney (or are heading over to New Zealand) and we can go for a fish.