

FISHING

Lake Macquarie has a shoreline of 174 kilometres, with more than 11,000 hectares of surface water and an average depth of 9.7 metres. With a volume four times that of Sydney Harbour, there is a lot of water to house a lot of fish.

Angling has improved considerably since the introduction of a commercial fishing ban in 2002. Today Lake Macquarie is home to more than 280 different species, and attracts thousands of keen anglers each year.

Much of southern Lake Macquarie is around 4 to 9 metres deep, with deeper sections - up to 15 metres - found around Pulbah Island. There are many bottom features in this part of the lake; vast stretches of mud, weed, long sea grasses and sand mixed with rock, presenting plenty of opportunities for the angler.

SHORE FISHING:

Top local fishing spots from land include: -

1. Watkins Drive, Wangi Wangi (between Morisset and Toronto). 2. Sunshine Parade, Sunshine (near Morisset).
2. Shingle Splitters Point, Queen Street, Balcolyn (near Morisset). 4. Black Neds Point, Summerland Point.
3. Lucy's Wall, Lambton Parade, Swansea Heads.
4. Lakeview Parade, Pelican (near Swansea).
5. Blacksmiths Breakwall, Blacksmiths Beach (near Swansea).
6. Marks Point Marina, Marks Point (near Swansea).
7. Belmont Pier, Belmont.

BEACH FISHING:

Beach fishing is first rate at Blacksmiths Beach in the north; and Caves Beach or Catherine Hill Bay in the south for bream, jewfish, salmon, tailor and whiting. Local rocks also offer drummer, groper, kingfish and luderick.

BOAT FISHING:

Boat fishing is good in most areas of the lake. These include: -

10. Chain Valley Bay (Mannering Park).

Chain Valley Bay has banks fringed by mangroves and sea grasses. Trolling a deep-diving lure has accounted for many large flathead and increasing numbers of good sized tailor. For those using a lure, set it one to two metres from the bottom. As there is little tidal pull here weed fouling should not be a problem. For those using bait, try the isolated danger marks, which present special opportunities. Vales Point Power Station attracts some unusual fish usually associated with warmer northern waters, including cobia, mackerel, mangrove jacks and queenfish. Black Neds Point is also worth a try, spinning for flathead and bream along the edges, which drop off quite sharply. Other species found here include flounder and garfish.

11. Wyee Bay.

Wyee Bay and Wyee Point regularly turn up bream to 30cm, which are often in the shallows when it is dark.

12. Bardens Bay.

Bushland fringes the lake here, but there is enough shoreline structure to keep lure and bait anglers happy. There are sandy banks, small inlet creeks, drains and canals all with deeper gutters that run out of them. Some nice flathead have been caught here.

13. Dora Creek.

Dora Creek is clear, still water with little tidal run, and holds large flathead, bream and the occasional jewfish. A lot of crabs enter Dora Creek from August to April. By the Eraring Power Station the water gets dramatically warmer, and is a great place for winter fishing for summer species, with flathead, whiting and crabs remaining long after summer. During summer, the area thrives with bream, flathead, jewfish and large long tom. There are restrictions for boat traffic, and signs should display the distance you are to stay from each area. Nearby Bonnells Bay is good for drifting for flathead and flounder.

14. Between Pt. Wolstoncroft and Pulbah Island.

Pt. Wolstoncroft is a sport and recreational area not open to vehicles, but accessible by boat. It is a sandy area, and a great place to picnic, swim and fish. Flathead and whiting roam around here. The waters deepen around Pulbah Island, with sections up to 15 metres.

15. Between the bridge and channel at Swansea.

The drop-off between the channel markers and the sand islands that border the Swansea channel average 8 to 10 metres, and are excellent for flathead. Due to the tidal influence, drifting baits from the shallow waters over the drop-off can also produce results on an incoming tide.

16. Where Swansea channel meets the lake.

North of the sand islands, and at the end of the channel markers this area is best fished on an incoming tide, which stirs up the sandbars bringing in baitfish and their predators. The most popular method of fishing here is to anchor a few metres from the drop-off, cast into the wash, and let the bait or lure drift into deeper water. Note - this is a popular location for boat anglers and can get overcrowded.

17. Marks Point Marina.

Around the moorings the water is shallow over sea grass, and quality bream and blackfish haunt the area, sheltered under the moored craft. Nearby Belmont Bay is good for bream, flathead, mullaway, snapper and tailor. Two good fish haunts here are a wrecked yacht and sunken barge, however you will need a sounder to locate them.

18. Artificial Reefs.

There are six artificial reefs located between Murrays Beach/Swansea and Pulbah Island/Wangi Wangi Point. Co-ordinates are available on the NSW Dept Primary Industries website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au.

BAIT: The best baits in Lake Macquarie are live or frozen poddy mullet, fresh mullet strips, bloodworms and tubeworms.

LURES: Many of the locals use soft plastics

BURLEY: Many of the locals use chicken pellets mixed with tuna oil, or chicken pellets mixed with sand and bread.

FISH SPECIES:

Flathead

The months from October until April are best. Average size is over a kilo, but three kilos or more is not uncommon. Locals tend to use 100mm soft plastic lures.

Tailor

Autumn and winter are best. The larger Tailor (2 to 3 kilos) are more prevalent around Pulbah Island. Locals either troll with cord handlines, or use diving minnows or metal lures.

Bream

Year round, but spring and summer is best. Fish a kilo or so are frequently caught, with larger bream (1.5 to 2 kilos) not uncommon. Locals cast lures from rocky shorelines or sink bait deep.

Whiting

Year round, but November to April is best. Locals use bloodworms, beachworms and live nippers; but pipis, prawns and soldier crabs can also be effective.

Blue Swimmer Crabs

The months from August to April are best. Blue Swimmer Crabs are plentiful in any areas with deeper water within the lake, or close to the warm water outlets of the power stations. Mullet is regarded as the best bait in witches hats, hoop nets or dilly pots. Fully enclosed traps are not permitted in the lake, and any sort of crab trap cannot be left unattended overnight.

Other species

Luderick during the cooler months. Use weed or cabbage.

Silver Trevally during autumn and early winter. Same as bream.

Jewfish during autumn. Use squid or soft plastic lures.

Kingfish during autumn. Use squid or soft plastic lures.

Snapper during autumn. Use squid or soft plastic lures.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Due to its warm water, Lake Macquarie is home to the blue-ringed octopus, so if prawning at night it is recommended you wear shoes that cover the whole foot. Some parts of the shoreline are also infested with razor fish, which have a sharp shell that can cut deep.

Sharks are also seen in the deeper areas of the lake, including whaler sharks, bull sharks and hammerheads up to 3 metres in length.

There is a ban on night fishing around power station outlets on Lake Macquarie from May 1 to August 1, between the hours of 6.00pm to 6.00am each year to help protect juvenile fish which gather around the station warm-water discharge. Fisheries officers regularly conduct patrols.

Please note fishing licenses are required.

These can be purchased

Visit www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au for more information.

