Stephen Booth
Fishing Journo, Tournament Angler, Brand Manager

Stephen first wrote for Fishing World and Freshwater Fishing, eventually becoming a sub editor at Freshwater Fishing Magazine, then Managing Editor at Fishing Monthly Group for 13.5 years. For the past 4.5 years he’s been marketing manager at Wilson Fishing. A keen tournament angler, he was part of the 2015 Lake Mulwala Cod Nationals Championship team and the Australian Freshwater Masters Champion Team in 2017/18 and 2018/19. He was the 2017/18 Australian Freshwater Masters Champion Angler and backed that up with a runner up the following year. Also in 2017/18 he boated the biggest bass in the Glenbawn Freshwater Masters and in 2018 picked up the 2nd and 3rd biggest cod in the Copeton Cod Classic. I could go on, but you get the picture! Stephen really knows cod fishing and has been making the trek to fish Mulwala for 25 years.

Stephen’s Hot Tips For Murray Cod Fishing

- Don’t In recent years Lake Mulwala has become a year-round Murray cod fishing destination. Summer is more popular and generally produces more fish, but smaller. Cooler months tend to produce fish of better quality but smaller numbers.

- Whilst Lake Mulwala is technically in NSW north of the river channel and Victoria south of it, the lake comes under NSW fisheries law, so please observe NSW size and bag limits as well as closed seasons.

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• Cod accumulate in areas where there is some water flow. This can be where the river enters the lake, or in the vicinity of irrigation channels where water leaves the lake.

• Use your GPS maps, Google Earth or Google maps to find places where the original river bend once took a sharp turn. In these areas, the water spills from the river bed onto the flats immediately downstream, which is a magnet for cod.

• Prime fishing often occurs during the irrigation season when lake water levels are a foot or so higher than normal, making previously fishless shallow areas more fishy and creating currents that favour the cod.

• Stephen fishes surface lures at first hour of daylight, followed by hard earlier in the morning and moving to spinner baits as the sun gets higher. He takes a rest around midday, then follows the reverse order during the afternoon, finishing at last light (or beyond) with surface lures.

### Stephen’s Murray Cod Tackle Recommendations

• A Stephen has four outfits on his boat when fishing Mulwala for cod – but is careful to point out that under NSW law only two can be rigged up at any one time.

• A 10-20lb yellowbelly setup is perfect for fishing lighter lures and targeting smaller fish. Stephen uses a 10-20lb Bone Rod baitcaster, which is perfect for lipless crankbaits and hard bodies.

• Venom Crankbait PE 2-4 (20-40lb) 7 ft with 30lb braid is used for throwing hard bodies and spinnerbaits. It’s not so great on the lipless crankbaits and lighter lures though.

• The 7ft, 8kg Venom baitcaster is used for fishing medium sized swimbaits, spinnerbaits, chatterbaits and larger crankbaits.

• Stephen’s final outfit is a 7’6” Venom Swimbait rod PE 4-6 (40-60lb), which is too heavy to fish with all day but is perfect for the short periods around dawn and dusk when it can be fun to throw around heavy surface lures for cod.

• He prefers fluorocarbon leaders, but mono would be fine also. Leader weight ranges from 20lb for the light yellowbelly style rod to 60lb for the swimbait gear.

### Best Bass Murray Cod Fishing Lures

• A #2 Stumpjumper is Stephens top Murray cod lure, accounting for more of his cod captures than his next 5 favourite lures combined. This lure can be cast in among heavy cover as it is very snag resistant. A favourite technique is to clatter it into the root ball of trees that have been undercut by currents or into large laydowns to wake up the cod that may be sleeping there. Stephen doesn’t fish this lure in water deeper than 2.1m, with the 1.6-1.8m depth range being the prime opportunity. The lure is always fished slowly, usually with little pulses – but not aggressively as when you’re barra fishing.

• Bassman Spinnerbaits produce a colour called colour 7 that has been very successful for Stephen, which has been responsible for all of the cod he’s caught in his last three tournaments. These can be cast tight against root balls and laydowns, then allowed to sink right down deep into the structure to where the cod are lurking. Usually the fish hit this lure on the drop or within 2 winds of the retrieve and Stephen fishes it in depths from 1.2 to (rarely) 12 metres. 2.5m is the optimum depth.
As surface fishing is by far the most fun way to target cod, Stephen lists the 180mm Zerek Stalker as his third choice for targeting them. This lure is fished for an hour around dawn and dusk and is used to cover plenty of water. Many parts of Lake Mulwala contain massive amounts of fallen timber, so casting long and fanning casts out is a great way to find fish interested in slurping a surface lure. Water that’s 5ft or so deep with a few weedbeds, depressions, creek beds and other structure gives the best results.

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- **Venom Rods** are Australian designed and Australian made – for Australian anglers. Venom rods are lightweight, but have incredible strength and resilience – meaning you can fish all day without fatigue and not sacrifice the ability to put serious hurt on a serious fish.

- **Zerek Innovation Lures** are designed using 3D hydrodynamic technology to give incredibly lifelike action. With a massive range of diving, soft vibe, surface and swimbait options, you’ll hear the name Zerek come up over and again during this podcast series – just type Zerek into the search bar to see which of Australia’s top anglers are using them, and what species they’re targeting with them!