

# Sneaky Snapper

By Daniel Hanning

The waters of Brisbane provide an excellent mix of temperate and tropical fishes ranging from Kingfish and Snapper even the odd Jewfish right through to the more tropical Coral trout and the emperors/sweet lips, not to forget the large numbers of pelagic fish drawn to these waters thanks to our beloved friend the EAC (East Australian Current). The combination of these factors together with the consistently good visibility, say 90% of the time 15 metres or above often hitting 30 metres or more lends itself to some exciting and quite varied hunting.

It is in the winter months as the water cools down to 18 – 22 degrees when the numbers of snapper to be found on both the inshore and offshore reef increase dramatically, presenting the best time to strike. These snapper are hungry too so while burley is not absolutely essential to land these fish it is most certainly of great assistance.



Today the water was not great around 15 metres vis, we commenced drifting in an area of reef some 30 metres deep our Rabitechs primed for action. We have found that the deeper the water (within reason) the better for snapper as they seem to have more confidence if they have an out directly below them so to speak.

Immediately we secured some burley that would be our ticket, no flasher should be used when there are snapper around they are far too shy for that game. As the burley was dispensed into the water it slowly began to sink down to the edge of vision where in our squinting eyes it began to disappear as one by one the pieces were being taken no doubt by some snapper sneaking in on the edge of our vision, it was time to start diving!

On the first few dives it was evident the snapper had not settled yet as they quickly moved away from our initial onslaughts, we needed to be more patient. Amazingly when they fled that incredible whipping action they make with their disproportionately small tails was creating a loud noise and also vibrations that you could actually feel in your chest from a fair distance away.

To keep the show entertaining a large school of trevelly (maybe a hundred or more) leapt out of the blue depths to have a bit of a munch. There were actually a few golden's in amongst them, under normal conditions we would have taken the golden's down but today we were after a better tasting and more challenging prize.

We plied more and more burley to the water, the trail extended far and looked impressive as we continued to wait with baited

breath watching it slowly sink once again to the edge of our vision and into the strike zone, when suddenly we encountered an unexpected problem, a dolphin moved right in and began stealing our burley!

We would have tried to get rid of him somehow if he wasn't such a pleasure to watch, Dougie joined him with the camera as he performed cartwheels while taking a feed at the same time. Meanwhile the school of trevelly returned once more they probably found the dolphin as intriguing as we did, but more importantly underneath the trevelly were a few nice snapper too. Eventually the Dolphin satisfied himself and then moved away allowing us to focus back on the hunt. I dropped smoothly closing in on one of the few remaining scraps the dolphin had left behind, interestingly I could also see a snapper had his eye on it too. Descending further it became evident that this time an interception was inevitable it would therefore be just a question of getting the execution right. I tracked the fish with the knowledge time was of the essence; quickly I centred on him and let the Rabitech shaft of fury fly. The spear slammed straight into the fish's spine smashing it instantly and rendering him incapacitated, it was a moment of beauty as the fish rolled over in defeat.

I quickly threw the fish in the boat as Doug continued with the burley. Not a moment after I had reloaded ready for action again when another little beauty moved in underneath, I patiently waited while his confidence grew. This time I found myself hanging at 15 metres right in amongst the main mass of the freshly cut bite sized bait. If the snapper wanted it they would have to come through me first, bring it on I thought to myself as I now fancied my chances after my earlier success. Remaining perfectly still I was slowly sinking at this depth, I



had reached 20 metres when the snapper finally came into range, once again I sent the shaft crashing into the fish at almost maximum range but yet still penetrating enough to ensure I would not lose him as he attempted to make a run for the structure another 10 metres below us, I let him go until he got close before I applied any pressure, when that run was over he was completely spent and presented an easy retrieval.



I was now pretty stoked with my two snapper enough so that I volunteered to take the camera off Dougie and give him a shot. No sooner had I passed Doug the gun when a kingie entered the burley trail. Doug descended and set himself up deciding to put in the time on this one to try and get a good shot. It was obvious the kingie was not going to be hard to shoot, he moved around in the burley doing figure eights while Dougie continued to wait for the perfect shot i.e. a stone shot, something experienced spearo's take great pleasure in. Doug released the trigger at the critical moment sending the spear tip careening into the fish and putting him on ice instantly, he simply rolled over trailing a series of bubbles as the spear must have also struck the swim bladder, it almost resembled a plane being shot down. This was an excellent result as spending long periods fighting fish gets very old fast, especially with strong kingfish.

As Dougie was dealing with the fish I performed a couple of dives to maintain a survey over the area, just then I noticed a much larger snapper was feeding a few metres off the reef. I surfaced and immediately notified Doug about the fish and we both began to quickly burley the water once more. It only took about 10 minutes until we could see him again he must have decided to follow our drift. It wasn't until Doug's third dive that he managed to close in range of the nice looking fish, remarkably he managed to stone this one too, we were on fire today! It proved to be the perfect end to yet another perfect dive, which thanks to technology we were able to relive on the couch later on as it was all caught on film.