

As the cold bite of winter creeps up on us, many fisherman choose to pack away their cod and yellowbelly gear and chase cold water species such as redfin and trout in the highland dams or murray crayfish in the river. There is nothing wrong with these tactics, but what may people don't realise is that now if the best time of year to catch a native fish in the Murrumbidgee and its tributaries.

Lure fishing in particular really starts to come into its own as the most effective technique when the water is low, slow and clear which are the conditions we enjoy right through winter.

The most common fish caught on lures in winter are murray cod, which are usually above the legal limit of 50cm. Trout cod are also very aggressive lure takers and are a welcome by-catch (remember to put them back as they are protected). We are lucky to live in the middle of the area chosen for rehabilitating trout cod populations and aside from the many small fish picking at baits over the past few years, some massive fish are starting to show up. Once fish I heard of last week was 83cm in length. That is a serious line-burning trout cod!

To give yourself the best chance of luring a native fish, look for deep water with plenty of snags. Make repeated casts to structure or troll along a suitable bank two or three times before moving on. Native fish often need coaxing before they will attack your lure and it could be the tenth pass before one will choose to bite.

Lure selection is vital for consistent results. Most tackle shops have a big range of lure options, but you should look for lures that have a wide action, which will dive down four to five metres. The medium sized Hammerhead and 90mm AC Invader in yellow/black and green/black are ideal for tempting cold water natives. Remember to use line that is around 10-15kg breaking strain as the big cod also get very active at this time of year as they add condition before the water chills down excessively.

Last week the river did not fish as good as it was previously, however during this week the bardi grubs finished their three year underground life cycle and hatched into moths. Each year when this happens, the fish gorge themselves on the massive moths that fall into the water. An annual event such as this hatch should not be missed. This week should see many good native fish hooked. For the hard-core anglers, now is the time that you should be night fishing with surface lures.

You don't have to travel far to catch a native on a lure. The 'Rocks' area behind the Tourist Information Centre and the bank downstream from the Old Hampden Bridge to Wiradjuri Reserve are two areas where I have caught natives in winter.

Good luck and keep persisting – the green fish will come.