

There is no doubt that it's been cold in the past couple of weeks. Thick frosts and low daily temperatures have cooled the Murrumbidgee down to a frigid four degrees, which is the coldest I have ever seen the river. Most winters the water cools down to eight or nine degrees but at the moment the conditions are extreme.

Even though it's cold, now is the time to research new water. The shallow water does limit navigation, however by taking your time and watching your sounder you will see features that are impossible to see when you are blasting down the river at full throttle.

The clarity of the water in winter also makes it easier to visualise snags, dropoffs and other features that are usually covered by a metre or more of water in the warmer months. It pays to take photo's or write notes as when the river comes up again it looks very different.

In the past couple of weeks, there have been few fishing reports as most people aren't fishing, however there has been a lot of people on the river lobstering. The camps I have spoken with indicate that the lobsters aren't really on the bite, but with clever placement of pots and use of quality bait (carp) a good haul can be pulled together.

On the fishing front, the rewards are there for the patient. A couple of weeks ago Ian Wooden and myself spent a days casting in the river and landed six trout cod to 55cm and had as many solid bites again, whilst last Sunday I hosted Rod Cockburn from the Compleat Angler and Craig (Harro) Harris from Wagga Marine. We fished hard all day for a few timid bites, before Harro sparked into life landing a personal best 90cm (18kg) Murray cod. With Harro still basking in the glory, now may be the time to hit him up for a deal on a new boat!

Fish still have to eat and no matter how cold the conditions, eventually one will make a mistake and attack your lure. You just need the time and patience to keep persisting and in time a trophy sized fish may come your way.

If you are fortunate to land a big cod, take care when handling it as they are very susceptible to stress. A few things to keep in mind:

- When your fish is finally landed, keep the fish in the water for a couple of minutes so that both fish and fisherman calm down.
- Never lift a big fish by its gills or jaw as they cannot support their own weight.
- Support the fish with one hand holding the lower jaw and your other arm cradling the fish under the stomach.
- For massive fish it can be easier to photograph the fish whilst still in the water.
- Don't lay fish directly onto a hot, dry surface (such as a boat floor in summer).
- Revive the fish by moving it gently through the water before you let it go.

By following these few tips the fish is more likely to survive, continue breeding, and maybe provide a defining moment in another angler's life. If you would like a guided trip targeting big winter cod on the Murrumbidgee or Murray Rivers, contact me on 0427 692522 or visit www.riverinasportfishing.com.