

# Ice jigging tips for Somerset bass

**G**'DAY readers, as water temperatures at Lake Somerset continue to increase, so too does the fishing and red clawing.



Fresh Water  
by MIKE DELISSER

Several bass schools have formed on some of the flats, while the shallow margins and edges of the lake are still producing quality fish.

Anglers targeting the edges south of Wyangy Creek and also in the Stanley River north of Kirkleagh have been rewarded with some pretty large bass and the odd yellowbelly.

Most of these are being landed very early in the morning before the sun gets up over the hills, so it pays to be there when the gates open at 6am.

You should look for moderately sloping banks that have you sitting in 4-8m of water when you're around one cast length off the edge.

Generally I prefer fishing the shallow edges of banks that have a good covering of long grass rather than dirt or rocks.

I reckon there's more food available in the shallows along grass-covered banks and that equals more bass.

If there's deeper water or

an old riverbed close by, then that's another plus.

Popular lure choices here are 3/8oz spinnerbaits, blades and Jackall TN60s.

Another technique that has certainly been producing the goods at Somerset lately is ice jigging.

In two recent catch and release bass tournaments held at the dam, it's proved to be the winning tactic.

In fact ice jigging was the technique favoured by most of the anglers who finished in the prizes.

The prime locations were on the 10m flats south of Kirkleagh (between Pensioner Point and Queen St), to the west of Polly Point and some of the flats adjacent to the old river bed just before the powerlines.

For those who aren't familiar with ice jigs, they're unusual looking lures designed for fishing down through holes cut in the ice on the frozen lakes of Europe and Northern America.

Traditionally they'll have a single hook protruding

from each end and a light treble hanging below.

They get their action from a small tail fin that causes the lure to dart around like a shrimp or baitfish each time the angler flicks or raises the rod tip.

If you hold one just under the surface and study how it moves each time the rod tip is flicked, you'll get the picture.

They certainly have a very lifelike action.

The technique of ice jigging is by no means hard to master.

It just requires practise and a little concentration.

The main points are to find the fish, put your lure in their face, and keep it there as long as possible.

That means a reasonable sounder is essential and an electric motor will make the task a whole lot easier.

Once you've located a school on the sounder and positioned your boat directly above, the ice jig should be free spooled all the way to the bottom.

After clicking the reel into gear, you need to raise the lure to the approximate depth at which the fish are holding.

This is where it's a big advantage if the school you're targeting is sitting on the bottom, or at least close to it.

It makes it so much easier to keep the lure in the right zone.

If the fish are close to the bottom, raise your lure around 15cm and hold it there with your rod pointing down at around four o'clock.

Now give your rod tip two or three very short, sharp flicks, returning to

the four o'clock position each time and then pause the lure for several seconds.

Continue repeating the flicks and pauses but keep an eye on your sounder to make sure you remain over the fish.

When bites come, they'll feel like a tap tap tap, but you should resist the urge to strike until you feel the fish's weight.

It's also advisable to use a fairly light drag, and take it easy when bringing in your catch as ice jigs have a reputation for just lipping fish.

Most light spin and bait-caster outfits with crisp, sharp actions are fine for this technique and line should be 4 to 6lb braid through to a rod length of 6lb fluorocarbon leader.

The jigs themselves aren't stocked in every tackle store and most of the top shelf models are a little harder to get your hands on.

Some of the better performing ice jigs include small Rahulas, 15g Nils Masters, 6.5g Jackalls plus what I think is the pick of the bunch at the moment, the new Smak Gliders and Darters.

The two Smak models are interesting as they were designed in Australia to not only suit our bass, but also the various environments they school in.

These jigs come in a Glider model for the more open flats and a tighter action Darter model that's ideal for jigging around the bases of flooded trees.

The hooks have also been angled in more to improve the hook-up rate, a common problem with this style of lure.

Smak's initial supply sold out quickly and now there are quite a few anglers, including me, lined up and waiting for the next batch to hit the shelves.

Another soon to be released ice jig that looks very promising is the Twitch'n Shrimp from local lure company TT.

I was fortunate to grab a couple of samples off the TT guys at a recent comp and I've got plans to give the lures a good workout on the bass populations at Somerset and Borumba.

They're a slight departure from the traditional ice jig shape and I'm keen to see how this shrimp imitation performs.

Until next month, tight lines and good luck. ⚓



1. Smak Glider 2. Smak Darter 3. Jackall 4. Nils Master 5. Soon to be released Twitch'n Shrimp from TT



Bush 'n Beach writer Callum Munro displays a fat Somerset bass he landed on an ice jig.



This bass fell to a Nils Master ice jig.



Ian Wratten was fishing the edges when he landed this 3.22kg PB bass.



Successful ice jigging requires concentration as shown by Trevor Stead and Bob Town.