



Catching amberjack this size on jigs is good sport and good eating as Brad testified.



The author with a solid jig-caught kingie.



Bob McMullen demonstrates that age is no barrier to successful jigging.



Chicks rule too when it comes to jig-caught kingies.

# Hot action on deepwater jigs



Kevin Lithgow found that sharks enjoy jig-hooked amberjack too.



Glen Han is hooked on jigging for AJs.

## JIGGING TACKLE BOX

- Selection of jigs ranging from 150 to 400g in assorted colours with a slant towards anything lumo
- Pre-rigged assist hooks as spares
- Heavy leader ranging from 120 to 200lb
- Heavy-duty split rings
- Heavy-duty solid rings
- Quality split ring pliers capable of opening splitties of 200lb-plus
- Belt pouch for split ring pliers
- Gimbal belt to suit rod butts being used
- Jigging gloves
- Spare jigging outfit or at least a spare spool loaded with braid

**T**HIS month we are looking at deepwater jigging as it is still a timely part of the year for a range of jig-caught species to be captured.

If over recent months you have had a good fill of reef fishing, which is very much a sedentary activity, then why not try the hand at something far more active and exciting.

The choice of fishing the reefs with baits, livies, soft plastics or deepwater jigs is very much up to the individual and they all work well on their day with no particular style the right or wrong way to fish.

In an offshore environment, the more active fishing style required with deepwater jigging and the resultant excitement of a solid hook-up just as you are tiring and considering free spooling the jig back to the bottom for another series of vertical rips through the water column, really gets you hooked on this fishing style.

Dropping jigs to the bottom and pumping them up through the water column is energetic work and requires a certain level of fitness.

But the technique can be kept fairly simple and with a bit of practise even a fossil like me can keep going for a considerable time by working the jigs economically when necessary and putting in the hard yards by varying the technique in that part of the water column where the predator feeders are most likely to be hanging out.

Where to jig is the often asked question, with the answer lying somewhere between locating raised pinnacles or along sections of reef that are holding lots of tightly schooled bait, or being more abstract and working away from the main pieces of structure searching for schools of bait tightly packed as protection from predators.

For some people the answer can be to just start prospecting around your favourite tried and proven reefs with small jigs and slower jig action styles for snapper, pearl perch, the occasional maori cod and create your own luck as you go.

The fish species primarily targeted are amberjack, samson, yellowtail kingfish, cobia, snapper and pearl perch as well as some other incidental species.

So knowing something



Offshore  
by BILL CORTEN

about their feeding habits and where in the water column they are likely to be hanging out counts for a lot when selecting jigging locations.

Jigs should be dropped to the bottom and worked vertically upwards where there are good solid shows of fish on the sounder.

Selecting a jig of sufficient weight to provide as vertical an action as practical will give more erratic and interesting action to a fish rather than using a smaller lighter jig that has no mojo when sitting at a wide angle out the back of the boat.

Jig shape and colour can have a big impact on results some days and on others the fish will aggressively inhale almost anything thrown at them.

A mix of sizes and colours where there are two or three anglers working simultaneously soon identifies what the fish are interested in on the day.

So go prepared with a good broad range of tackle options and definitely always drop something with lumo in it as it is dark down deep and lumo acts as a trigger on apex predators.

On the reefs off Moreton and Straddie it is critical to be set up with a quality colour sounder and squeeze it to the max in manual mode to identify the precise location of the structure that is holding fish and to then have it tuned correctly to locate the fish.

This last point is critical as that setting is then used to locate the free swimming surrounding bait schools as the supplementary target to maximise the jigging opportunity.

Many a sounder merely set in auto mode in terms of range and gain will not give you the required results to help in the search for structure and identify and then confirm fish density.

So get out the manual and swot up on how to control your fishing destiny.

Mark the structure and accompanying fish schools with the GPS and zoom right into a small range to accurately work out the preferred drift lines over structure and

or fish.

Where there is a bit of current and preferably some breeze against it, a good quality anchor such as a parachute sea anchor will stabilise the boat, maintain a slower drift, provide a consistent drift line and at the same time allow the jig to be worked more vertically over the structure or fish.

The more accurately you position the boat and maintain jigging action where the fish are, the more successful your efforts will be.

Kingies will get excited and follow for some distance off the structure or fish schools.

But in a general sense, if the fish are not hitting thick and fast, just work the good shows, wind up when the fish are no longer underneath the boat and conserve energy.

Speaking of marking, the good jigging braids are colour coded every 10m which allows you to count the colours fed out to know almost precisely when you will hit bottom and how many metres you have jigged up off the bottom.

For example if the fish are sitting up to 30m off the bottom then jig up four or even five colours, as many apex predators will hang around the top of the bait as well as anywhere around or among it.

And if you still haven't had a rod bending strike, then feed the jig back below the bait and start the process again.

Jigging action can vary from fast direct pumping and winding by dropping the rod low and raising it high in a very aggressive action (which will tire you out quickly) to a turn of the handle with every lift of the rod tip at a more moderate pace.

More skilled jiggers like Duncan O'Connell from Fish Head Tackle at Victoria Point use an economical shorter lift and wind approach with bigger variations of lifting, pausing and retrieving to suit in some cases the jig size and shape being used, or more specifically to entice a more than half-hearted act of aggression from a large predator.

In fact it would benefit

anyone reading this to pop in and see Duncan or any of his staff of professional jiggers to get some face to face pointers and top up your tackle stocks.

His range varies from budget to high-end and there is something for everyone.

There are a lot of excellent short but stout jigging rods on the market that impart good jig action, unlike conventional rods.

These can range from Shimano TCurve rods, the Synit range or the revolutionary Live Fibre Venom sticks down to the lighter Maria rods.

They are all purpose built and can be mated with reels that suit the rod function.

High speed reels of very high quality are essential for jigging as the cheapies soon burn out from the stress loads applied by predators smashing jigs in the midst of a speedy retrieve.

Spin or overhead reels are a personal choice and both perform extremely well in jigging applications.

In spin, the pecking order starts with the Saltigas and Stellas ranging to the mid-range Catalina and Spheros/Saragosa models.

While I really enjoy using my Saltiga 5000 spin reel on the Venom PE2.5 stick, I prefer the comfort of using an overhead reel, as this has been honed from years of fishing offshore.

In overheads the Saltiga lever drags are popular as are the Jigging Master range.

A newer player that I have had considerable success with is the Tiburon two-speed lever drag reels which have heavily engineered internals and very high speed retrieves.

Whatever your choice, jig fishing is an exciting alternative to fishing with baits. ↴



Thai and Tony were pleased with the results of their persistence with jigs.



With a bag limit of two per person, catch and release is common practice when jigging for kings.



Alston enjoyed the thrill of catching this amberjack on a jig.