

# Catching a big one

With the Australian Salmon Fishing Championship now on in Elliston on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, Glenys Gelzinis shares her tips on how to reel in a salmon.

WORDS AND PICTURES BY GLENYS GELZINIS



Salmon fishers at Talia Beach



Fishing at Walkers Rock

Australian salmon

For fishing enthusiasts, there's nothing more exciting than reeling in a big fighting fish species, such as Australian salmon; and for land-based fishers, the best time and place to do that is during the annual Australian Salmon Fishing Championship held in Elliston on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia.

#### AUSTRALIAN SALMON FISHING CHAMPIONSHIP

This competition takes place from 1 June to 31 August each year, and 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the championship. Taking part is made easy with competitors only needing to pay for an entry ticket and follow a few simple rules as listed on the ticket.

Entry is a one-off cost of \$10 for the entire period of the championship, and tickets can be purchased from a range of businesses in the area including the caravan parks. Other rules include that a maximum of three fish can be entered per day and the salmon must be caught between the beaches in the Elliston District Council area, from Sheringa Beach in the south to Mount Camel Beach in the north.

There are a number of renowned salmon fishing beaches along the almost 100 kilometres of spectacular coastline, including Talia Beach and Locks Well which are both very popular and reliable salmon grounds.

Your catch has to be gutted and washed, then presented for official weigh-in at the Elliston Caravan Park on the day it's caught - but this can be anytime between 9.00am and 6.00pm daily.

As well as the overall prize of \$2,000 for the heaviest fish caught during the competition period, there are also cash prizes for the second- and third-heaviest, and a photo competition can be entered with the best photos each month also earning prize money.

Even if you don't think you've nabbed the big one, it still pays to weigh in, as everyone has a chance to score cash prizes with an unknown mystery weight chosen each week. The fish closest to the chosen weight earns the lucky angler \$200 in prize money.

#### HOW TO REEL IN A SALMON

To increase your chances of catching one of these big silver torpedoes, I've included a few tips that have been successful for us in the past.

In South Australia, the best time to catch the bigger salmon from exposed beaches and rocky headland areas is between June and October. There are a number of places on the Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, the Fleurieu Peninsula and south-east beaches that fit the bill perfectly.

Some of the best salmon fishing beaches have steep access to reach them, so it pays to take a look first from the high vantage point to try to find the gutters before you make your way down. A gutter can appear as a distinctly darker and smoother strip of water running parallel to the shore, where the waves break behind and in front of these deeper channels.

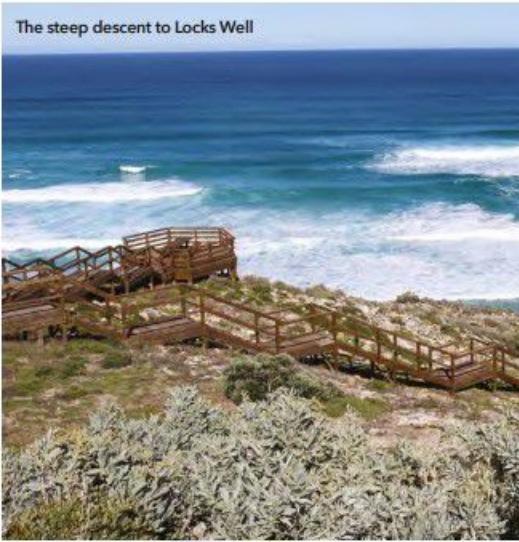
Fishing in a gutter makes casting from the beach easier as they tend to be closer in, and the bait stays out where you want it to lie for longer. From above the beach, you may even spot a school of fish and see in which direction they're moving.

The time of day to go fishing for salmon can be pretty flexible from day to night, but it's best to try on the incoming tide. We've had some of our best successes in the middle of the day and early afternoon. If you do try fishing at night, a head torch is a must and a fishing rod glow stick attached to the rod tip will help to see when you've hooked up.

For beach fishing it's useful to have a backpack to carry spare tackle, bait, and rod holders which leaves your hands free to carry rods. Use a rod length that you find comfortable to handle - anywhere from 9 foot to 12 foot are good sizes for surf fishing - and have one that is flexible and lightweight to enable you to cast easier over swell.



The steep descent to Locks Well



Around the rugged rocks at Locks Well



Seal on Eyre Peninsula

Use a spinning reel or Alvey reel with 6-15kg line and single or ganged hooks, around 4/0 size; and a sand sinker is a must to hold the bait where you cast it. These sinkers, also known as 'grapnel' sinkers, have protruding wires that can be bent to hold your rig in place like a small anchor.

For bait, you can use pilchards or other small fish, squid or even metal lures which can be easier to cast further. It pays to have spare rigs made up in your tackle box, in case the worst happens and you get snapped off.

Make sure to dress appropriately for the weather at this time of year, as many of these exposed beach areas can be cold and blustery. A good rain jacket, beanie and warm clothes are necessary, and fingerless gloves are useful too. Some people wear waders to save getting wet feet as they run in to cast on the receding waves, but we tend to try and just time it and dash in and out between incoming waves.

Australian salmon aren't always considered the best-tasting fish, but to enhance the flavour it's best to bleed the fish as soon as they're caught by cutting them below the gills.



One thing you might find is that you're not the only one hunting for salmon. It's not unusual to catch one and find that something else has taken a bite of it first. That's due to seals and sharks also being prevalent in the waters where you'll find salmon.

The thrilling thing about these big and powerful sportfish is that if you catch one, you may just be lucky enough to catch more if a school is moving through. They're exciting fish to catch ... especially when they get airborne, leaping out of the water as you fight to reel them in. It can take a bit of time and effort to land them.

One tip to remember, especially if you've had to make a long trek down to a beach, is that you've also got to get back up to the top with your catch. Having caught a big salmon though, the adrenaline will kick in and make the journey back that little bit easier.

After the excitement has died down, don't forget to take the brag photos too! 🚗



Salmon fishing at Locks Well