



Beach Fishing with Bruce Reading

Bruce heads south to White Hills on the Yalgorup Coast

The destination for today's fishing was White Hills. White Hills remains one of only a few 4WD beaches left on the southern side of Perth. It is situated on the Yalgorup coast 20 kilometres past Mandurah on the Old Coast Road and is part of the Yalgorup National Park and therefore all park conditions apply.

The road into White Hills is roughly 10km past the Dawsville Channel. The road is right on the end of the Overtaking Lane. Mandurah is an easy 75 kilometres south of Perth and with the extension of the Kwinana Freeway providing good access.

Turn right into White Hills Road, which is bitumen; continue straight ahead onto the limestone section. At the end of the limestone road is a sign indicating the do's and don'ts on the beach. No camping, no motorbikes, etc. Only road-registered vehicles are permitted on the beach.

To ensure continued access is permitted on the beach, as it one of few remaining, PLEASE observe the signs and act responsibly. Stay on the left of the sign heading down the track, as the track coming up on the right hand side is the exit track.



Silver toad fish, a.k.a. norwest blowies, are highly toxic and definitely NOT for the table

This is a good place to deflate your tyres to at least half normal pressure as you go down into the valley and continue up the other side, the up side can be quite boggy. It is only a beach sand track. The track takes you to the top of the hill, which leads directly down to the beach. If you turn right once you are on the beach, this section of the beach takes you northwards back towards Tim's Thicket. This section of the beach is roughly 5 kilometres long, quite reefy and rocky.

For access onto White Hills, head south when you get to the beach. The beach goes for roughly 20 kilometres right through to Preston Beach. With caution you can drive this beach right the way through to Preston. The first section of this beach is fairly soft sand but as you travel south you notice the sand change and become firmer and easier to drive on.



Beach Fishing

It is not ideal fishing the first section because of the excess of rocks and you can lose a bulk lot of gear in this section for no fish. About one kilometre south, there is a house on the hill on the left (of course). This section of the beach becomes very narrow and there is usually not a lot to drive on. But, beware; there is most times a four feet drop on the right side of the track where the waves have cut away the beach. Stay high on the track and away from the edge.



When you have rounded this point, you will see the reef is on the edge of the beach and starts to get better for fishing. From this point south, I reckon, are the fishable sections. The reef is great to fish off; they are not as dangerous as the northern side reefs. A lot of times you can fish over the reef from the actual beach and you don't have to get wet.

Good gutters form along just out from the edge of the reef, about 8 metres out, quite castable. Weed can be a nuisance. From the reef when you turn the point for the first five kilometres seems to be the best fishing section. It is made up of broken reef, holes and gutters. So find a spot you think looks good from the vehicle. Climb the dune; check out from a height to see holes or gutters. Rips and undertow are prominent along this beach, so watch kids, if you take them, and don't be complacent about the water. It is a good swimming beach with caution.

The wind is usually stronger than what is stated on Mandurah wind reports. This is because you are around the point past the Mandurah area. The point seems to break the winds to Mandurah. Probably the Bunbury wind reports are the more accurate. Even though you are only 20 kilometres south of Mandurah.

The afternoon started off fine, catching herring, which kept everyone interested. We started to catch a few tailor so everyone swapped to tailor rigs, using mulie for bait. All was going well until we started losing a few rigs. Something was biting the leader off just above the hooks. I usually use a mono leader because I don't favour using wire; sometimes wire has a tendency to tangle or to kink. Plus it's not common to get bitten off on this stretch of beach. With a wire leader, it doesn't allow the mulie to move around in the water as naturally as you would want, compared to using a mono leader.

We re-rigged the lines, using mono again, and cast another bait to see what was doing the damage. Lucky or unlucky strike! The fish bit well, fought well but not real hard as a decent size tailor would. There was a lot of weight on the line, but once the fish was in the surf break, it gave up fighting and was easily landed.

Some of the guys were new to surf fishing and were excited about the size of the catch, until I broke the bad news. The "catch" was inedible and was commonly known as a "Norwest Blowie" or a Silver Toad Fish. The scientific name is Lagocephalus laticaudatus. Adults can grow to 85cm approx and migrate from the top of WA.

Silver Toads, as the name applies, are a highly toxic fish with the flesh and gut particularly so and are definitely INEDIBLE. The toxin can effect skin, so handle with care and if you have to cut or kill the fish, you must clean your gear or knife to avoid contamination of any eating fish.

The only good thing to do with a Norwest Blowie is to take a photo to brag what a good size "fish" you landed, and then release them back to from where they came! When removing a Norwest from your hook, beware, they have a very big set of teeth, more like a parrot's beak – solid and sharp. It can bite through steel and your hooks so if your finger is in the way, you may go home with one less.

It's quite common to catch them from boats out near Rottneest, but not usually off the beach where they have been appearing more regularly. The other fish don't necessarily disappear when the "blowies" are around, as they only seem to be in two's or three's so if you catch a couple, you know you have just about caught the lot and can keep fishing for tailor or your targeted fish.

So, we took the photos for all to see. And you think when you're fishing the rivers and catch blowies you have a problem? In the end, everyone enjoyed themselves, caught a fish, had a feed and a good day out, which is what fishing is all about.

White Hills is a great beach to fish early morning, during the day or at night. It is not permissible to camp or light fires on White Hills and the rangers do patrol this beach. Oh by the way, we had tailor photos but how often do you get to see a blowie in a fishing mag! And the anglers all look so happy to pose with them.

Don't forget - tread lightly, leave the beach clean. See you fishing on the beach.....

Bruce Reading
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