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LBG in NZ – Pete Lamb - August 2010

Part One - Getting Prepared

Rockfishing or Land Based Gamefishing (fishing for big fish from the land) will always be one of my favorite pastimes. The thing I love about rockfishing is the visual contact you have with the fish. The challenge to catch them and the variety of fish from small stuff to monsters that you are likely to encounter. Often you will see a fish take a bait right at your feet and spit it out without hardly giving you a nibble. This could be a 10kg snapper or 30kg kingfish. Its amazing how such a big fish can take the bait off your hook and not give a big bite. The other thing thats always amazed me is how the same sized fish will swim happily through the berley trail eating minced skipjack tuna or pillie cubes but will not take your bait unless it is thrown right in front of its mouth. Even then if it notices the hook or line it will bypass it for another morsel of berley.

It is my theory that the hungrier the fish, the more likely it is to take your bait. In this circumstance you can get away with a larger hook or heavier traceline.

If the fish has a full gut then it becomes "wise" or "cagey" and is difficult to hook. In this situation the smaller your hook, lighter your line and more tastier your bait, the more likely you are to get a hookup.

If your hook is too small it will bend out or get pulled out of the fishes mouth with the pressure. If your line is too light the fish will snap it off or cut it off on the rocks or kelp.

Decide where you are going to fish for the day

The weather conditions will often dictate this for you. If the weather is perfect I will go to my best spot straight away. A good spot normally has deep water, kelp, close proximity to a food source and closeness to the continental shelf.

Being as far away from civilisation as possible also helps. The less fishing pressure the spot has, the better the fishing. Theres nothing better and more exciting to fish a spot no one or few people have ever fished before.

Get your tackle and bait ready

A checklist is good

Rods and Reels - The guides on the rods need to be checked for chips or breaks and the reels need to have smooth drags and spooled up with fresh good quality line. These are the three sets I take out:

A 15 to 24kg outfit for big kingies - I use a Daiwa VIP 24kg standup rod and 600 or 900H Sealine star-drag reel spooled up with 24 or 37kg nylon. I have used 37kg braid off the rocks and found it very good for anti-abrasion. You have to be careful how much drag pressure you apply as the braid is unforgiving in the stretch department (has none) and there is a chance of busting off.

A 10 to 15kg outfit for snapper, smaller kingies and general fishing (for snapper and trevs I use a 12ft carbon-fibre surfcaster with an SL or SG50H Daiwa Sealine reel - these are good casting sets and very robust.

A light tackle outfit to catch bait and have a bit of fun on the smaller stuff. A 4 - 6kg outfit suits me, some prefer lighter.

A good sturdy pack - I use a heavy duty tramping pack, internal frame, which is kind on your back when you carry a big weight. These retail at \$300 to \$500 but are worth their weight in gold. The abu fishing pack at \$75 is a good cheap one if you want something sturdy without too much expense

10 or 20 litre bucket - Good for carrying bait in and fish out and making up berley brews through the day. It is handy to have a lid which doubles as a bait board.

A chilly bag or sack - good to keep your bait and fish in good condition.
Boots or sandals - must be comfortable and have a good grip.

Wet weather gear and spare clothing - I have been using Proflex wet weather gear lately - strong, lightweight and breaths well. Always be prepared for cold (polyprop) and hot weather (hat, sunscreen, glasses).

Torch and spare batteries - I often carry a spare torch for my mates who forget theirs.

Polaroid sunglasses are imperative for the extra vision they give you for fish spotting.

Safety gear - rope, life jackets (inflatable), first aid kit.

Gaff - a good long one - 2 mtr extendable to 4 mtr.

Hooks - #10 for baitfish, 1/0 for trevs or mackerel, 3/0 for schoolie snapper, 5/0 for big snapper and schoolie kings and 10/0 livebait hooks for mega kings and snapper.
Lately we have been using 14/0 mustad tuna circle hooks for livebaiting. You get a nice lip hook almost every time.

Line - 15kg nylon or 24kg braid is good for big snapper and medium kingis. 24kg nylon or 37kg braid is good for big kingis and xos snapper. Lighter tackle (2 - 8kg) is good for a bit of fun and catching bait.

Spare nylon - a spool of 10 - 15kg in case you get spooled by a ray or kingi.
Trace line - 24kg for snapper, 60 - 80kg for kingies.

Sinkers - 4oz for casing and some 1/4 and 1/2 ounce running sinkers for straylining.

Lures - Casting jig and poppers.

Balloons, cotton, 2 x knives, swivels

Bait - per person - 2kg pillie, 1 - 2 skipjack tuna or blue mackerel, 500gm squid

Berley - around 2 - 4kgs per person.

I only use fish oil for mixing into kahawai and 'couta frames. I believe the natural oils from pilchard or tuna should not be compromised.

If I want to cut back on the weight of my pack then I take half the amount of berley and take bran or rolled oats to mix with water and your brew on location. You may find a stash of kinas at low tide for berley which will help create a good berley trail.

Pilchards - the best dead bait for kingis and best berley when cubed



Gimbal and harness - wear it once you've got your livebait in the water.
Water - 2 litres per person per day.
Food - plenty of high energy stuff - fruit, sandwiches, muesli bars, chocolate.

Share the gear out evenly through the team and to the physical capabilities of each person

Once you've reached location, put a big bait out. I have seen many a good fish caught on the first cast of the day. I like to have the first line out in the water and have learnt how to tie knots fast to make sure this happens. When I think about it, I also like to have the last bait out in the water at the end of the day, caught some good fish then too.

Anyway, now it's time to make the berley brew and catch your livebait.

Berley

One of the most important things for rockfishing is using good quality berley and having plenty of it. The best stuff I reckon is pilchard followed closely by skipjack tuna, especially for kingfish. For snapper and trevs crustacean berley is good, i.e. smashed up or minced kina, paua gut and crayfish bodies.

My best method of berleying is making up a bucket brew and ladling out small or large quantities on a regular basis into the water, preferably a gut with backwash. This helps disperse the berley. While doing this I keep a good watch on what is swimming through the trail and present the right bait or lure on the right tackle to the right fish. No point in putting 3kg tackle out for 30kgs of steam rolling kingfish, however 3kg line is perfect to catch your kahawai for livebait.

Putting berley into a tough berley bag, tying it onto a rope and dangling it into the water is another good berley method for rockfishing and works in combination with the bucket brew very well. It is important to ration the berley for the day and have a bit spare for when the kingis turn up or if nothings happening you can 'berley up a storm'. Cubing pilchards into the water is another excellent way of attracting kingis.

Set up your gear and catch a livebait

Your livebaiting kit needs to be assembled and rigged up with the right terminal tackle. Balloon tied on (I like 4 to 8 strands of cotton), hook checked for sharpness and nylon checked for frays.

Once you have caught your livebait you need to deploy with the right size hook and breaking strain of trace. For 1kg + livebaits I use a 10/O livebait hook or 14/O Mustad tuna circle and about 6 - 8 mtrs of 80 - 100kg trace. (I'm after a BIG kingi and I don't want it to get away)

The kahawai is one of the easiest livies to catch and once put out is very good at attracting kingfish. The best way of catching a kahawai is to strayline a pilchard with or without out a small running sinker. Another good way but can result in deep hooking the kahawai is to fish a pilly under a float. When doing this use a small circle (recurve) hook.

Lures work sometimes but often the kahawai will get off the hook, which can be frustrating. When the kahawai are hard to catch use your lightest tackle and a small hook (1/O or #1) and a small cube of skipjack tuna or pilly. That is a good way of catching a trevally or even a blue cod. Jiggling some sabiki flies will also give you a live bait when nothing else works.

Part Two - Catch a Real Monster!

In New Zealand we are blessed with a host of fish species. There is no better place to catch a variety than off the rocks. Many anglers only target snapper, trevally and kingfish, and theres nothing wrong with that. But some folks (including myself) like to target something a bit bigger. If you would like an XOS kingfish, snapper, trevally, marlin, shark, ray or tuna, the following information is for you.

The daiwa 600H – close to the perfect LBG reel

EQUIPMENT

Rods

Many anglers like a 2.5 - 3 meter 15 - 24kg LBG rod for keeping your line away from the rocks and kelp and throwing the odd cast. I prefer a short standup rod for the extra power you can apply on the fish.

It is the same rod I use for deepwater fishing, a 1.75 meter 24kg Daiwa VIP.

Graphite rods are great for casting and for power but sometimes dont take the knocks.

Heavy fibreglass or eglass are good for this.



Safety gear

Life jackets are becoming mandatory for sensible anglers. I use an inflatable, as it is not too bulky or too hot to wear. First aid kit, heavy pliers (for chopping out an imbedded hook), knife, rope and rope chucker (in case someone falls in). You might consider one or all of the following to get help in an emergency - flares, EPIRB (emergency locator beacon), VHF radio and cellphone.

Wearing a comfortable gimbal and harness helps to apply maximum pressure on a fish before it finds a reef or the end of your spool. It also helps avoiding back or shoulder strain.

Nylon - I generally match the weight of line to the maximum weight of fish I am targeting (up to 80lb). I use the following IGFA (international game fishing association) line classes - 10, 15, 24 and 37kg.

Traces, leaders - This is the heavy nylon tied onto the end of your mainline to stop abrasion on the fishes mouth and the rocks. The leader is normally twice the breaking strain of the main line on your reel but this will depend on the size of fish and terrain you are fishing. I use the maximum length allowed by the IGFA (4.5 metres for up to 10kg, 9 metres for over 15, 24 and 37kg).



A kingi livebait trace with balloons and swivel. I prefer a ball bearing swivel instead of a 3 way

The drag pressure on the reel is normally set between a quarter and one third of the breaking strain of the main line. If you do not have scales to test this then remember the following - a litre of liquid is equal to a kilo of weight (tie a 5 litre water container onto the end of your rod for 5kgs of pressure).

Your gaff needs to be longer than normal for safety on the rocks - I use a two-meter gaff extendable to four metres. For big sharks and marlin a flying (detachable head) gaff might be considered.

Gloves are a good idea for the person tracing the fish prior to gaffing.

Safety tip - Be very careful when tracing, gaffing and releasing a fish that is lively - it is easy to get pulled in if the leader gets wrapped around the tip of your rod or around your hand. Sharks are always unpredictable and with their bulk and teeth, need a great deal of respect. Always remember - you and your mates safety is paramount.

SPECIES YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER

Marlin

Catching a billfish from the land is still one of the pinnacles of Sportfishing yet to be achieved in NZ. Many have tried, few have hooked up but no one to my knowledge has got close. The last hookup I heard of was at Lottin Point a couple of years ago when a marlin took a live kahawai set for kingfish close into the rocks. I think the reel was a TLD25 spooled with 24kg nylon. The fish jumped a few times before busting off.

I'm pretty sure, but not certain I hooked one at Cape Brett a number of years ago. We saw the dorsal and tailfin out of the water as it took the live bait set close to the rocks. We never saw the bill but it cleaned out 400 metres of 24kg in less than 30 seconds before breaking the line. After looking at pictures and talking to people we picked it to be a black probably over 150kgs.

My favorite story was from a friend fishing an offshore rock at Cape Kari Kari in the Far North. He hooked a good-sized striped marlin in the morning, which emptied a 50 wide reel full of 24kg nylon in a matter of a few minutes. It jumped a few times before breaking off. Later in the day a bigger marlin stuck. Before being spooled, two keen men jumped into their three-meter inflatable and continued the battle while being towed out to sea.

Another friend in a Sportfishing vessel saw the two guys chasing the fish in their inflatable approximately five miles out from the Cape. They went over to investigate and saw the battle in full swing. They transferred over the bigger boat and continued the fight. About five hours after hooking the fish, a large black estimated over 300kgs came close to the boat. Darkness was not far away and the petrol supply wasn't great so the angler gave it a last ditch effort to bring the fish within gaffing range. Then SNAP!!!, the line departed and the fish swam slowly away. Bugger!

In order to catch one from the land you need a passion for adventure, a lot of patience, some serious tackle and access to some of the offshore rocks and headlands in the upper North Island. You should also be in touch with the Gamefishing fraternity and find out when the fish are close into shore and be able to get a mission going at short notice.

The tackle - From my experience an 80 wide lever drag reel spooled up with 37kg braid and a 24-37kg standup Gamefishing rod is a good set. You should be able to store about 1500 - 2000 metres of braid on the reel and I would put about 100 meters of 80lb nylon on the end of the braid for a bit of a shock absorber (braid doesn't stretch, mono does). I would run a 9-meter trace of 400lb mono and a 16/O Mustad tuna circle hook. Any livebait will do - it's just a matter of always having a bait in the water. A kite may be an advantage in getting a bait out to suitable water.

The hook up could happen at your feet, 50 metres out or 200 plus metres out. If I were to target a billfish again from the rocks, I would not be putting out light gear into the water just in case a marlin jumped onto it - this has happened a few times already. So far all of the marlin hookups in NZ have been lost due to inadequate tackle or the fish being too big and the angler has been unable to stop them.

Locations - (to name a few) Lottin Point, Cape Runaway, Cape Brett, Cape Kari Kari, North Cape and any other offshore island or rock which has the blue water around it in the summer. Time of year - January to April (depending on the season)

Black marlin have been caught up to around 120kg and broadbill swordfish to 6kgs landbased in Australia.

In NZ we would hope to catch a small striped marlin of 60 - 80kgs. Unfortunately most of the marlin that come in close to the rocks are large blacks over 150kgs. That is why we haven't

seen a capture yet - they are too big.

Sharks

Sharks are a much more obtainable big fish from the rocks and there have been many good captures already around the country. The big ones have mainly been Bronze Whalers. They grow up to and over 150kgs and are awesome fighters. Most of them are caught from the Waikato northwards and often frequent harbors to feed and spawn through the summer months.

The premiere shark would have to be the Mako. Big Makos have been hooked, lost and come near to being landed, but so far only small fish up to about 50kgs have been caught. They are a worthy target for the serious LBG fisho.

There have been plenty of Blue and Seven Gill sharks taken up to approximately 80kg, both of which are not known for their fighting prowess but do offer a challenge when they get big. Threshers, White Pointers and Porbeagles are all possibilities from various parts of the country and all grow big and fight hard offering serious challenges. Only juvenile specimens have been caught so far.

Tope (school) sharks are a lot of fun and get caught up to about 35kgs. They jump, strip off heaps of line and are a worthy recipient of their IGFA status.

The main thing about sharks is that you need steel trace to catch them (about the same breaking strain as the size of shark you wish to catch), heaps of berley and dead baits rather than live ones.

I would use similar tackle to target big sharks as marlin.

Tuna

So far there have been a handful of skipjack tuna caught - mainly from Cape Kari Kari. They have all been small fish up to around 5kgs. I have heard of three yellowfin tuna caught but only one officially weighed, witnessed and ratified. The authenticated one was caught at Cape Brett by myself and weighed 9kgs. It was caught on 6.8kg line on a lure and took 15 minutes to land. The other two were caught in the eastern Bay of Plenty and weighed around 20kgs. Apparently one was caught surfcasting near Torere beach and the other was on a lure at Lottin Point.

We have seen many yellowfin tuna free jumping in the Lottin Point area but have only once had a good-sized live bait out in the area when this has happened.

Ideally you could catch one on a casting lure (popper or jig) or on a small livebait or dead bait.

Depending on the size of fish you will want as much line as possible to stop the first run.

For a fish of 20 - 30kgs you will probably need about 350 plus metres of 15kg nylon but I'd feel safer with 500m of 24kg. Again braid is an option because you can fit so much more line on the spool.

They have been caught off the rocks to 100kgs in Australia.

Kingfish

These are the best and most easily targeted big fish off the rocks. They take lures, dead and livebaits and are a hell of a lot of fun to watch, hook and catch.

They test you and your tackle out to the max and are very well respected by all anglers. You can catch them almost all round the country during the warm summer months but all year round from East Cape northwards. I have seen the most and consistently the biggest in the eastern Bay of Plenty.



So far the record off the land is 42kgs taken by Richard Baker at Great Barrier.

I have seen a couple of fish landed in the 40kg size bracket but lost a few as well.

I use 37kg nylon and 9 metres of 100kg trace when targeting a biggie.

Earlier this year at Matakaoa point (East Cape), we lost a fish on this gear that could have been over 50kgs. My mate Tiny (who is around 23 stone and 7 foot tall) hooked into it in the first hour of the trip. It took about 100 metres of line off the spool at 12kgs of pressure and then stopped. We got some mono back on the spool before it took off again and broke the main line to win its freedom. On the same trip we saw yellowfin and makos free jumping, had a possible marlin sighting as well as some incredible kingi action.

Trevally

Pound for pound I believe they are as good as kingfish and probably harder to catch. They grow to around 10kgs in our waters. Over the years I have seen a few around the 8 - 10kg mark, hooking some of them but landing only one at about 8.5kg. They can sometimes be very hard to catch especially around very rocky terrain. As soon as you hook them they go straight into the kelp. Normally they don't like taking heavy line and big hooks. You may get lucky every now and then.

In Hawaii giant trevally GTs get caught over 100 pounds off the rocks most seasons.

Snapper

For a real monster I fish 24kg nylon and baits no smaller than my fist. Some people would think that's crazy or unfair on the fish but we fish very rough ground and I want a 15kg plus fish. There is also a chance of picking up a groper/hapuku when you are fishing deep water as well. The wintertime is great for big snaps and the far north is a good location, although anywhere with deep water and kelp will do.



In fact you don't really need deep water, especially after dark. While I'm fishing for the bigger stuff it's always nice to have a big bait out on the bottom for a snapper.

Rays also offer a challenge for landbased anglers, especially eagle rays. We call eagle rays affectionately reverse marlin because the stick comes out of the wrong end. Eagles are turbo charged bundles of fighting machine. I have had many a good scrap with these fish over the years and truly respect them.

Stingrays are big but don't offer nearly the same fight pound for pound. Most of the time we tend to leave them alone.

A stingray fight is more of a tug of war.

The real battle begins with these creatures if you decide to take them to the scales for a NZ record. All the rays we catch we prefer to release. The same goes with sharks unless we want to cut up a small one for a feed.



Probably the best fillet bait – **skipjack tuna**. The head is one of the best big snapper baits. The frame makes some of the best berley you can get.

Part Three - Landbased Gamefishing for Kingfish

Raising a fish I use a variety of techniques and tackle to target kingfish off the rocks.

Livebaiting certainly seems to be the most successful form of catching them but lures and deadbaits have taken their fair share. I always have a lure ready to go and a straylining outfit in which I can throw out a whole pilchard or baby squid. My livebaiting outfit is normally a 24 or 37kg and my straylining sets 15 - 24kg. Sometimes I'll fish lighter tackle if the fish is not a monster as it's nice to match the tackle to the size of fish. Occasionally a kingi storms in and takes the bait on a 'blind strike'. I try and match the tackle to the expected size of fish in the area.

1. Livebaiting is certainly one of the best ways of attracting and catching kingfish. However, if the kingi doesn't take the livebait then it will often take a lure or deadbait. Having a livey in the water will often keep a kingi around and bring it into vision so you can attempt to catch them with another technique.

Looking after your livebait is important. It is your ticket in the kingi lottery. Livebaits can be like kids. Take your eyes off them and they can cause mayhem, costing you money and at worst killing themselves. You may only get one livey for the day so don't blow it. I have seen desperate LBG fisho's attempt mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on a dying bait when the kingis are rampant. You don't want your livey to swim over other people's lines and tangle them up either. It is your responsibility to stop this happening and this means keep a close watch. If the livebait is behaving badly, keep it on a shorter or a longer lead (depending on circumstances).

Having a livebait at my feet, one out about 50 metres under a balloon and one on a long drop (out about 100 - 200 metres) pretty much covers the territory well.

The best livebait I have used are kahawai around the 1kg size if possible. A kahawai is never too big to put out. Kingis will easily take 10% of their own body weight and sometimes take 15 or even 20% if they are hungry. They can literally choke taking the livey down. Having a live kahawai out underneath a balloon is an awesome way of attracting kingfish. I also like having a live kahawai set right at my feet and keep it on a short lead - ball bearing swivel wound right up to the tip of the rod. This will often bring the kingfish right into view. If they don't take the livebait then you can often induce a strike with a lure or deadbait.

Kahawai can sometimes be elusive so if you can't catch one, try a trevally, snapper or blue cod. They have all worked well for us at times. Mackerel and pilchards are top performers but sometimes get eaten by barracouta and big kahawai too easily. I have also had good success with piper and herrings. If you can't catch your livebaits on location then catch them somewhere else and transport them in. A ten or twenty litre plastic bucket is good for this and

on location a paddling or large rock pool make good livebait storage tanks. When doing this it is important to replace the water a few times in the first hour or so because they often regurgitate berley, which will dirty the water causing the livebait to die. Put a couple of fresh buckets of water into the pool every hour or so after that. Having an 'airator' in the pool will help pump the oxygen and keep the bait alive longer. Another good method is to have your livebaits in a cage in the water - a collapsible craypot with main hole stitched up is ideal for this.

2. Straylining deadbaits - whole fish or cubes.

Kingfish love pilchard dead baits. I hook a pilchard through the eye socket with a 5 or 6/O hook and throw it out. Sometimes I thread the hook back through the pilly about half way down the body. Also tying the bait on with cotton is good for extra durability in casting. Having a small running sinker say 1/4 to 1oz is good to assist casting and to get the bait away from the seagulls that often hang around.

Occasionally when the fish won't take a pilly I will either thread 5 pillies on a hook or fish a single cube with a smaller hook and possibly a lighter trace.

I like to work the bait at different speeds (fast and slow retrieval or a mixture of both). A good method is to let the bait sink down near the bottom then retrieve it fast and/or erratically back to the rocks. Skipjack tuna cubes, mackerel and chunks of squid have also been good baits on kingfish. At the end of the day a kingfish is a scavenger and will take just about anything if it is hungry. I have found flounder, spotties, mao mao and kelpies inside their stomachs.

3. Casting lures - Working a lure is hard work and takes dedication and perseverance.

They work well in conjunction with live and deadbaits and you can cover a lot of water with a lure. Casting and retrieving at great speed is certainly one of the more effective ways to catch kingfish but is good to try all speeds of retrieval (fast, slow and erratic). I like to let the lure sink half or all the way to the bottom before winding back in.

The popper is a surface lure that spurts out water all over the place and makes plenty of noise. It mimics a baitfish in trouble and is one of the best kingi lures for rockfishing.

A jig is a metal lure that is better for big distance casting and sinking down to the bottom. The bibbed or bibless minnow is a lure that travels a meter or so underneath the surface and darts from side to side. These can be very effective.

4. Keep the berley trail going

The best berley for attracting kingis is certainly pilchard or skipjack tuna cubes. Feed them out into the water one by one at 30 seconds to one-minute intervals. The bucket brew and berley sack or cage (on a rope) also works well. I like to use all three methods at once.

The hookup

The best time to set the hook is when the kingfish has the bait in its mouth. It is hard to put a time frame on this because it is different on every fish. Most of the time I will strike within two to three seconds of the kingi taking the bait. Often I strike straight away if I can see the bait has gone inside the mouth. Strike too early and the bait and hook comes out. Too late and the fish either gets gut hooked or spits the whole thing out.

The best way I have found lately is to use a strong recurve hook and pretty much start winding fast after the fish has taken the bait. The hook should set itself in the corner of the mouth. Have the drag setting on your reel set at about 30% of the line breaking strain. Once you get used to things you can pull up to 50% but be careful not to get pulled in!

The fight

When you hook a kingfish they generally go berserk. They know where the reefs are and go straight for them in order to cut the line. You can either put maximum pressure on to stop the fish before it finds a reef or back the pressure right off and hopefully the fish will swim into clean open water. I like to put maximum pressure on straight away, then if I feel the fish in a reef, I back the pressure right off and let the fish go with a small amount of pressure.

It's hard for the fish to cut the line when there is no pressure on. After giving it as much line as it wants I put a bit more pressure on and try winding it back in. If it takes off again I back the pressure off again.

Most of the time when the drag is set from 8 - 12kgs of pressure (fishing 24 or 37kg line) a 20 - 30kg kingi should take about 20 - 30 metres of line. There will be the odd time when the fish

will take more than this especially if it is foul hooked.

The gaff

This is a vital time of the fight and potentially dangerous. Make a mistake here and it could be all over.

I tend to back the drag off a bit and take it easy on the fish. Hopefully the fish is tired and won't cause too many problems. If the fight was a quick one the fish may still be 'green' or lively. Do not let the leader or trace get wrapped around the tip of the rod or around your hand as the fish may take off and pull you in.

The gaff-person must be patient and wait for the fish to swim in close to shore. A long gaff (3 - 4 metres) is ideal for getting closer to the fish, especially if there is a bit of a sea running. Do not take your eyes off the sea. You may need to lead the fish to a calm spot or where you can get close without the risk of a wave taking you out.

Place the gaff hook into the water and wait for the fish to swim over it. One hard positive shot is all that it should take. The gaff hook point should be razor sharp and the shot should be through the head if you're taking the fish home or in the lip if you wish to release it.

Releasing a fish

The fish needs to be as healthy as possible when released to increase its chances of survival.

Lip gaffing is important for starters. Handling it gently while out of the water, possibly with gloves or wet hands. Lay it on a wet sack and cover its head with a towel - this will usually stop it thrashing around and injuring itself. Get it back into the water as quickly as possible.

Take the hook out and either place the fish into the water or torpedo it from a low height. This may not be possible if there is a sea running but do what you can. It is certainly very satisfying to see a kingfish swim away.

Other key points

Terminal tackle

10/O livebait hook or 14/O Mustad tuna circle and about 6 - 8 mtrs of 80 - 100kg trace

A ball bearing swivel attaching mainline to trace - balloon tied to top end of swivel with 4 - 8 strands of cotton (depending on livebait size). I use a long trace because I fish rough ground and don't want the fish to get away.

Decide where you are going to fish for the day - the weather conditions will often dictate this for you. If the weather is perfect I will go to my best spot straight away. A good spot normally has deep water, kelp, close proximity to a food source and closeness the continental shelf.

Tackle

I use a Daiwa VIP 24kg standup rod and 600 or 900H Sealine star-drag reel spooled up with 24 or 37kg nylon. A Gimbal and harness - wear it once you've got your livebait in the water.

Safety tips/gear

Rope chucker, life jackets (inflatable), first aid kit, flares, cellphone/EPIRB or VHF.

Keep your eye on the sea at all times and don't fish a place that has waves coming in especially on the rising tide.

Common sense prevails

- a fish is not worth your life.

LBG is not a matter of life or death its far more important than that!

Pete

