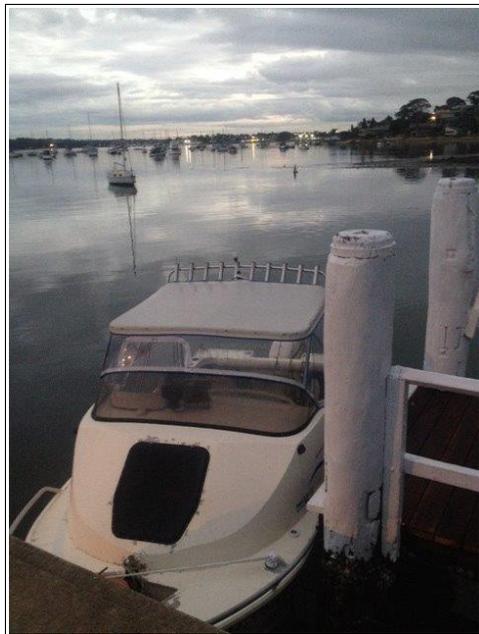


## BOTANY FADS

by Phil O'Brien

Perhaps I should have called this article "My Mahi Mahi" as it is the first of that species I have caught on fly. ( Number 65 ). The target species for the day was Dolphin Fish.



Also known as Mahi Mahi or in the US the Dorado.

My fishing partner for the day supplied the boat and instructions as to the dark side equipment I would require. ( I did smuggle a fly rod on board - just in case). We left the boat ramp at Sylvania at 6.00.

The rain started the moment the boat motor kicked over and it stayed with us until Botany Heads. The sea flattened off as we headed for the Sydney East Fad 9.5 Km from Kurnell Peninsular.

We arrived to find 5 boats either trolling or drift fishing live baits. Bruce has not as yet discovered the enjoyment associated with fly fishing so it was

burley and pilchards over the side for a couple of undersized Dolphin Fish. After persisting for a while we headed off to Botany Wide a further 6.5 km out. Same story



at Botany Wide - 5 boats trolling or drift fishing live baits. The technique was to drift about 100 M either side of the fad and then to move out so that the parallel drifts covered wider

water. We could see the occasional bent rod and jumping fish as well as the free jumpers teasing the non successful anglers. Bruce put a 98 cm specimen in the icebox - the largest for our trip. Whilst his enthusiasm continued to gain momentum I found that the smell of freshly thawed pilchards had permeated my entire body so I decided enough was enough. I recently had Adam obtain a TFO 9 Wt Mangrove 9 ft 4 piece rod for me. They were released in August 2013 in the USA - designed for the tropical flats market - larger flies, quick loading with a heavier butt section. As it had only grassed a couple of flathead and a bream it was my weapon of choice. I fished a SA Stripper full sink line with a 12 foot of Leader and a 14 lb Fluoro tippet. The fish were skittish hence the long leader. I could see the fish on the surface. Their artificial blue colour easily seen in and through the surface.



I selected a white on white Clouser with a 5/16 dumbbell eye so that I could obtain a sink rate similar to my fly line. The fly tied on a 1/0 Mustard Tarpon hook, had a white fishhair tail and body, mid section white supreme hair and a white bucktail wing. Two strands of light blue flashabou dressed the centreline. I usually tie a blend of natural and synthetic as it is much more durable than Bucktail alone. If the fish are really toothy then I revert to total synthetic. As Bruce threw out another pilchard to be consumed by a picker, mutton bird or a Dolphin fish I threw my first cast at the yellow FAD ( Buoy). With pin point accuracy I hooked the goose barnacles attached to its chain. The bent rod certainly attracted some attention. Lesson learned not so close.

After some experimentation I found the best technique for me was to set the fly at distance about 10 foot from the FAD. Casting when I could see shapes, pressure rings or flashes of colour. So it was strip off most of the line almost to the backing. Roll cast on the retrieve and water haul, back lengthen and load, forward lengthen load, back lengthen load and shoot. Typical casts were 80 ft. The line was then left to sink about 10 feet, shaking out any remaining line into the water. This reduces line twist, tangles and it also means that the fly is drawn at depth i.e. not as quickly to the surface. I tried a variety of retrieves from the whiting twitch to full out double handing. The best method was a rapid extra long strip, brief pause and strip again.

Most fish were hooked about between 30 and 40 ft from the boat. I landed 8 Dollies between 67 and 75 cm. Lost a similar number of takes without setting the hook, 1 50 cm Rainbow Runner and one Mutton bird (mid flight). Once hooked the fish, now an iridescent blue, make short hard runs towards the FAD. You need to really load the rod to turn them. The end of the fight is signalled when the lactic acid in their bloodstream turns their skin a brilliant brassy gold. They don't give in easily. They appear to recover quickly as well.

Well with 65 species taken on fly I now need others to add to the bucket list.

