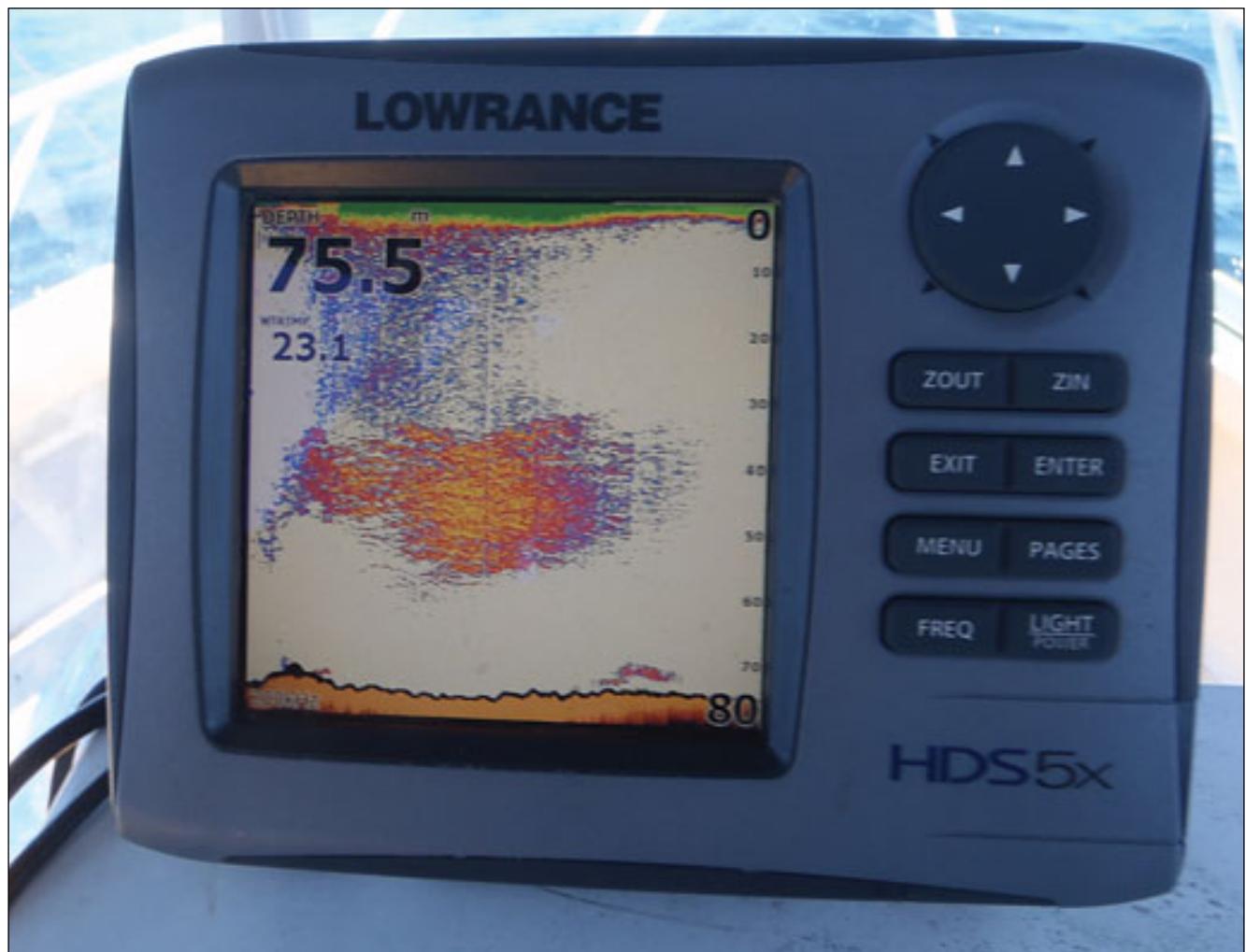


Getting The Best Intel From Your Depth Sounder

The Downrigger Shop's Andrew Hestelow spends more time studying his fave Lowrance HDS5x somewhere off North or South Head in Sydney, than most of us spend staring through a windscreen at the 'parking lot' ahead as we drive to work . . . so we asked him how HE interprets all those colourful little thingies on the screen of his typical, modern and remarkably accurate Lowrance 'sounder . . .



Above: The image shows a large school of bait in open water some five miles east of North Head in summer 2014. Dropping micro jigs to 30 metres proved these to be large slimy mackerel. Fast moving sea birds marking the surface showed the school was in transit, heading southwards. A large predator of unknown type can be seen on the bottom, possibly a shark.



Fishing the 12 Mile, east from the Heads . . .

Above: This image is taken at Twelve Mile Reef, being that distance from east of Sydney Heads. The image shows the importance of tuning the colour palette on your sounder. Like many other deeper reefs, Twelve Mile has a problem with leatherjacket infestations at times. There are all sorts of old wives tales about, saying they will bite at shiny swivels and brass rings, or the white mark between colour change braid, or where the line has been touched by bait scented hands. Take it from a bloke who has fished this spot hundreds of times – they will bite at anything.

But there is one way to, if not defeat them, then to substantially reduce tackle losses. That is, by tuning your sounder so it can discriminate between fish species. On a Lowrance, select a palette which gives you rich, ochre type reds and yellows. Adjust gain a little stronger than shown here to maximise returns. In the case of this image, I had the gain backed off,

because a short time previously the sounder on another fishos boat was interfering with ours. When that happens you will register vertical broken dark lines from the top, to the bottom, of your screen. When it all comes together small fish on the bottom - like pinkie snapper, juvenile morwong and nannygai - show as red. Large kingfish will show mid water, often around 80 metres deep as irregularly shaped blue blobs. The blobs are their air chamber. But most importantly, the leatherjackets will appear as schools and show as yellow on your screen. When that happens, instantly notify the crew to wind their jigs up fast. We now do this as soon as any yellow appears in the mid-water, on the right hand side of the screen. That's saved us a lot of money. As to kingfish, on one memorable morning we spotted six blue blobs around 75-80m deep, some 150metres south of the main hump. Four fishos aboard, and four jigs sent down. Result, four out of the six kingfish boated.