



The Ultimate Catch:

Luring Your Lady Into Fishing!

For more than 30 years F&B contributor Mike O'Neil has employed devious means to draw his wife Adele into a fishing relationship. His intentions were purely honourable, so he says. He wanted her to experience "the enormous beauty and excitement of Australia's



fishing environment" and, F&B suspects, pave the way for more trips and updated tackle. In this issue he shares with readers Adele's new passion in life – lure fishing – and explains the circumstances leading to her transition.

This is the fish that started it all: Adele's obviously chuffed at her first spin-caught rainbow trout.

Let's face it, I'm a tackle shop junkie in desperate need of rehab. I'm the sort of bloke that can't walk past a lure shop without breaking into a cold sweat.

For instance . . . take my '96 barra trip to the Top End's Daly River. The barra were biting their heads off on fluoro offerings. I had none and my mate had

for fishy things – rods, reels, books, boats, bait, four-by-fours – nor my burning desire to fish all corners of this great country of ours.

She did, however, after gentle initiation, learn to love camping out and she took to bushwalking and leisurely sunset strolls along secluded beaches like bass to cicadas. But angling was a



Above: 'Mmm! I know you said it was going to be a quick camp... but this is a bit Spartan'. Adele contemplates the night's lodgings at Lake Windermere.

Facing Page & Left: Adele takes to fishing like bass to cicadas: it's taken 30 years but she has finally arrived and is pictured here with the results of a good session lure casting the snag-strewn waters of Lake Windermere.

different kettle of fish altogether . . .Not her cup of tea.

Sure, she didn't mind being there . . .and on beach outings even managed to hold a rod for a few minutes ... but only if the fish were thick and bent on suicide.

"Can't stand sitting around waiting for something to happen," she would say. "This is boring," and she would head off up the beach, Labrador loping in pursuit, looking for ambergris or some other sea-spawned treasure.

Needless to say, her collection of shells and driftwood grew over the years as I fished throughout New South Wales and Queensland.

As the kids got a little bigger, it opened up a whole new window of opportunity. Realising it was a lost cause putting all my efforts in getting Adele into fishing, I concentrated on the

kids – and they were naturals, naturally.

This ensured Del's involvement – getting daughter Tamika and son Danny ready for estuary excursions in our small tinny; packing the canoe for a backwater bass attack; or making up beds in the back of the old Landrover so the kids were comfortable on an overnight beach trip chasing jew. And mum, of course, had to tag along to make sure the kids were not left by themselves while Dad wandered off in a fishing-induced time warp.

Well, the kids have done what all good kids do – grown up and moved on to their own lives. Both, I am pleased to say, are keen fishos.

While at home my situation remained the same . . . me fishing and Del lamenting being hooked up with a tackle shop junkie. That was, at least, up until the opening weekend of trout season last year.

Not content to sit at home while I headed into the New England ranges with three fishing mates, Del decided to tag along "just for a camp".

"But make sure you put in an outfit for me too, just in case I decide I want to break the boredom," she says. "Something that I can throw those 'saltas' with."

"That's *Celtas*," I correct her, realising instantly I should have let the misnomer ride. Who cares about pronunciation . . . *she's talkin' lures!*

We had access through private property to the Wollomombi River (it's actually a creek) and when Del and I arrived just after dark, Mick, Dale, Russ and son Glen, already had the camp established.

It was cool night and an even cooler, crisp morning as we rose with daylight. We serious fishos donned our fly vests, decked ourselves out like Christmas trees with paraphernalia hanging off us in tackle shop proportion. There were automatic extending landing nets attached to snaplock rings, spare reels for wet and dry fly fishing, wet weather gear, cold weather gear, warm weather gear, cameras and a fish carry bag (you just can't have too much equipment).

To my surprise, Adele was right there beside me: "You're making so much noise I can't sleep," she says. "Mm, breakfast smells pretty good."

In contrast to we serious blokes, Adele stuck a plastic bag in her pocket and a spare 'salta' in her cap and headed for the long, shallow hole in front of camp. She was using a Pro Qualifier

only one. We cleaned a Darwin tackle shop of fluoro patterns in one quick sweep and I was lucky to escape without signing off on a whole truckload of gear.

Full marks to the efficiency of the plastic system, the statement beat me home.

"It's true. I can't help it. The Devil made me do it," I confess as Adele, my wife of 30 years, challenges the expenditure . . . It's so difficult for non-fishing wives to understand a true addict's needs.

Since our early courtship years, Del has never really understood my passion

spin outfit loaded with 5 kilo gel spun (my flathead spinning gear). "I'll have a few casts here before the sun gets up too far and see you when you get back in camp," she called over her shoulder as we headed off in opposite directions.

Back at camp around 11am and very serious about having a coldie, I realised Del was nowhere around.

"Hey Russ, seen Del?" I ask.

"Yeah, about two hours ago. She came whooping and hollering up the bank with two bloody good rainbows. She'd bled 'em and scaled 'em so I gutted 'em for her. Then she grabbed a drink and took off again, headed upstream."

I was left pondering Del's knowledge of bleeding fish to improve their eating and keeping qualities.

It was late evening when next I saw her red jumper and brown and blue Whitewater Rafting cap bobbing around between the tussocks below camp. She was having a late flurry, spinning the long hole below camp. The tiny Celta was being worked overtime, cracking the mirror-like surface of the Wollomombi.

I was on my way back from fishing downstream and I watched her clamber up the bank and slump exhausted into the first camp chair available.

"How'd ya go sweetheart? Do any good this afternoon," I asked.

Without batting an eye, she dragged



Mike and the six kilo yellowbelly that fell for a Knolls Native deep diver in green, black, yellow and a splash of red while fishing windy Windermere. He needed the fish in a big way too, to stop his wife bragging about how she outfished him!



from the esky the two rainbows she had caught during the morning and one more she had grassed early afternoon. "Russ gutted the first two for me but I did the last one myself. But I need a proper knife for this type of fishing. You know, something that I can fold up but with a longer blade than my little pocket knife.

"And I need some more 'saltas', some different colours and maybe some just a little bit bigger because these tiny ones you gave me are a bit hard to throw when the wind blows up."

Yes m'am . . . (Strike !)

Following her successful weekend on trout, I had little trouble convincing Del a two-week impoundment fishing cum sight-seeing holiday in September would be way better than a bus trip to Bali.

With the promise of big water, big fish, we headed for Lake Glenbawn, near Scone. It's a magnificent impoundment and is home to some real thumper bass and golden perch. Big Murray cod are also taken from Glenbawn's snag-strewn waters.

Despite being hampered by blustery conditions and more than the occasional downpour, Del had her first taste of lure casting for our bigger native fish.

It was worth the 30-year wait to see her excitement as she boated yellowbelly to 2.2 kilo.

We left Glenbawn, its beautiful sunsets and sparkling clear water and headed south for Lake Windermere, near Mudgee. In contrast, Windermere was sepia-toned and algae-pocked and true to the phonetics of its name. But that didn't stop us fishing. We spent two days exploring, whenever the wind died enough for our 3.9-metre tinny, and

Hard to take: What better way to introduce your wife to the joys of impoundment fishing than this stunning campsite on the foreshore of Lake Glenbawn ... and not another camp in sight.

found some productive backwater spots.

For a few hours spinning each day we were rewarded with some solid goldens – Del accounting for several around the two and three kilo mark. And, thanks to the Big Guy above, a six kilo golden smacked my green, red and black Knolls Native deep diver instead of Del's lure because up until then she was kicking butt in the catch stakes.

From Windermere we headed to Lake Burrinjuck State Park, located some 34km south-west of Yass, for a few days and then up to the Frying Pan on Lake Eucumbene, near Cooma. Although dogged by miserable weather, it was a memorable and enjoyable trip - despite some of the somewhat "rough camps" thrown up for overnight stays.

Back home, Del's initiation into the fishing scene is complete. So much so she now talks about the type of lures she is using and even casts a practised eye over the river as we head to work each day, checking out our regular fishing spots.

On several recent outings chasing flathead, she has bagged some beauties, the best going 5 kilos . . . and she regularly outfishes me.

Del's introduction to lure fishing for me was like a superannuation contribution . . . an investment in the future. I've now got more than half a chance of leading a fisho's gypsy-life post retirement.

I can see us now, small van in tow,



“How’s this?” Mike’s wife Adele may be a fledgling fisho but she’s no slouch when it comes to plugging flathead on the myriad sandflats in the Nambucca River. This whopper went 5 kilos.

boat on top and following the seasons . (that’s barra season, trout season, cod season . . !)

So what’s the upside of Del joining angler ranks?

The Upside:

- More fishing trips
- A fishing mate who always packs thermos and tucker
- Someone who never forgets the sunscreen
- No more getting in trouble for not



The beauty of Lake Glenbawn is graphically illustrated in these late evening to dusk shots taken with a Minolta XGM fitted with a Sigma 35mm to 300mm zoom lens. Film is Fuji colour and the shots (hand-held) were all taken at f11 at the appropriate shutter speed to maximise depth of field.



This ‘monster’ redfin taken in Burrinjuck Dam is only marginally bigger than the lure. . . but contrary to popular belief, size doesn’t matter – in this case it put Mike one fish ahead of his wife in their family catch comp!

coming home at the agreed time

- A more sympathetic ear when dipping into the family coffers for new fishing equipment

The Downside:

- Regular fishing buddy miffed because Del has taken his seat in the boat (he’s now bought his own boat).
- Plastic meltdown in tackle shop (buying for two)
- Being outfished by your missus
- Your tackle box ratted
- Being outfished by your missus
- Being forced to eat fruit while fishing (I’m a beer and beef man)
- No shared running costs
- And being outfished by the missus

F&B