



Target Species

Pacific Sailfish - *Istiophorus platypterus*

Where to fish

Pacific sailfish inhabit tropical and temperate waters between 24-28 degrees Celsius. In Australia they are more frequently caught between Carnarvon WA northwards to South West Rocks NSW. They are often found close to the coast and around offshore reefs and islands, but are not restricted to these areas. Sailfish will never be far from bait, so focus your efforts around bait grounds and other areas of abundant food supply.



Sailfish Aerobatics,
Displays like this are not uncommon

How to target

There are many different ways to target Sailfish from the shore and by boat. Here are 3 ways to target them by boat: 1) Trolling lures (least preferred method), 2) Slow-trolling whole fish baits, 3) Switch-baiting. This method is dynamite and involves trolling teasers with no hooks, pulling them in when a Sailfish is raised, and presenting the fish with a live (preferred) or dead whole fish bait bridled with a circle hook. Once the fish has taken the bait engage the reel and let the circle hook pin the fish in the corner of the mouth. Don't strike to set the hook, this will just pull the hook clear.



A Need For Speed,
Sailfish are speedsters of the ocean



Sailfish



▶▶ Hints & Tips

Pacific sailfish are usually caught in close proximity to bait. They inhabit warmer waters close to the coast and around offshore reefs and islands, as well as oceanic waters. Anglers target them with many techniques but switch-baiting has to be one of the best.

- 1 Troll with a good set of teasers to mimic a school of baitfish. Examples include daisy chains of soft squid or chandeller shaped sailfish dredges.
- 2 When using circle hooks never strike to set the hook. Simply engage the drag and allow the fish to hook itself.
- 3 When switch-baiting remember the fresher the bait the better. If possible use live bait.
- 4 Stitch a 6-10" piece of belly flap of mackerel, tuna, or other pelagic fish inside the skirt of your teasers. The sailfish will get a taste and follow it right to the back of the boat.

Rod & Reel

There are a variety of techniques used to target Sailfish but the following information specifically refers to switch-baiting.

For a threadline outfit a 6-7 foot 15kg rod matched with a Shimano 6000 or Daiwa 4500 sized reel is ideal. As far as overhead setups go a TLD15-25 size reel with a 5-6 foot 15kg game rod will be fine, there's no need to over do it.

Line and leader

- Mainline: 15kg mono is preferred. Braid will work but is better suited to visually sight casting surface lures.
- Leader: 2m+ wind-on of 80-110lb hard mono.

Terminal Tackle

- Size 8/0-9/0 Owner or Gamakatsu circle hook.
- Stainless crimps and thin plastic tubing.

Best Lures

Soft-headed skirted trolling lures such as the 6-7" Mold Craft Softhead.

Best Bait

Obviously live baitfish of whatever the fish are feeding on at the time. But among the favourites would have to be: Large Sea garfish, Sardines, Herring, Slimey mackerel, Yellowtail, Queenfish, and Mullet.

Filleting

Sailfish are usually regarded as catch and release sport fish. This philosophy is encouraged.

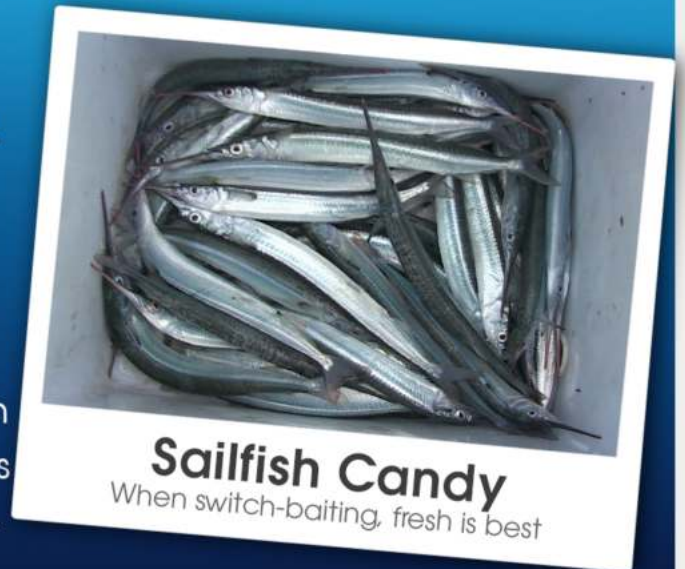




Sailfish

RIGGING FOR SWITCH-BAITING

Targeting Sailfish using the switch-baiting technique is quite productive. A standard rig consists of a 2-3m, 80-110lb wind-on leader and 8/0-9/0 circle hook. Crimp the hook on, but not too tight that you restrict movement. Slide a cm or so of thin tubing over crimp and the loop for abrasion protection. Connect double wind-on leaders to mainline with a Bimini Twist and single wind-on leaders to mainline with an Albright knot or similar. Rig bait onto the hook with a small rubber band bridle.



Sailfish Candy

When switch-baiting, fresh is best

RIGGING FOR TROLLING

The same rigging method applies here as that mentioned above, the only difference is you are using a lure and straight eye hook in place of the circle hook. Hook choice and ways to correctly rig a trolled lure vary and we suggest you consult your local tackle store for more information. One thing to keep in mind is that single-hook rigs, as opposed to double-hook rigs, have a high success rate, impart more action in the water, cause the fish less harm and are safer when handling the fish boat side.



Trolling Lure Rig

Single-hook setup