



Target Species

Red Emperor - *Lutjanus sebae*

Where to fish

Red emperor inhabit marine waters generally between the depths of 10-140m. Juveniles are typically found in shallower nearshore and offshore waters while mature adults tend to inhabit deeper offshore rocky and coral reefs and adjacent sand areas. When targeting mature fish look for deeper isolated reef and coral structures, small rises and rubble bottom.



David Fox,
17.0kg Fraser Island, QLD

How to target

When targeting Reds offshore you have the option of drifting vs anchor and berleying, depending on the conditions. Either way, locating fish then presenting large baits to them close to the bottom is key.

When targeting big reds its best to try to overpower them. Those who make regular big fish captures fish heavy with 50lb mono and 80lb leader or 80lb braid with a long 10m 80-100lb leader. Heavy gear may seem unsporting but reduces bust offs, long drawn out fights and the inevitable loss of good fish to sharks.



David Fox,
17.2kg Fraser Island, QLD



Red emperor



▶▶ Hints & Tips

Red emperor are generally caught on offshore reefs from South-East Queensland and North around to the mid Western Australian coast. Anglers often drift or fish at anchor using heavy outfits and large baits while targeting red emperor.

- 1 Reds are demersal by nature and will rarely rise to a bait, so it is important to get a big bait on the sea floor and keep it there.
- 2 Deeper isolated structures, small rises and rubble bottom are the favoured haunts of mature reds.
- 3 When targeting big reds it's best to try to over power them. Fish heavy for big fish.
- 4 Heavy gear may seem unsporting but reduces bust offs, long drawn out fights and the inevitable loss of good fish to sharks.

Rod & Reel

Red emperor are targeted by recreational anglers using overhead or threadline rod and reel setups. Those targeting larger fish generally opt for an overhead combo for sheer stopping power, for example a TLD20 sized reel matched to a jig or stroker type rod such as a Live Fibre-Textalium.

If treadlines are your style something with brute strength is recommended.

Terminal Tackle

- 50lb mono mainline & 1-2m of 80lb leader, or
- 80lb braid mainline & 10m of 80-100lb leader
- A single dropper paternoster rig or a running ball to gang hooks. If using a swivel choose a quality, high breaking strain crane.
- 3 ganged 7/0-8/0 mustard 7766 hooks or 2 snooded 7/0-10/0 octopus style hooks.

Best Lures

Red emperor can be caught on large soft plastics and demersal jigs, but the preference of the experts is fresh, large baits.

Best Bait

The best baits for reds are large fleshy fillets such as mullet, tuna, scads, pilchard or any locally caught reef fish. Alternatively whole squid, cuttlefish or octopus work well.

Filleting

See the 'Fillet Emperor' video for the correct method of filleting Red emperor.



Juvenile Red Emperor
 Note the distinct red/white banding



RIGGING FOR DRIFTING

This method involves drifting big baits over deeper isolated structures, small rises and rubble bottom. Use a single paternoster style dropper rig with a set of three gangs or two snooded octopus style hooks and a lead heavy enough to hold bottom. It's important to get your bait on the sea-floor and keep it there. Increase lead size or keep feeding out line if you have to. A double dropper rig is unwise as two large reds on a single rig usually ends in disaster.



RIGGING FOR FISHING AT ANCHOR

This method involves anchoring over a lump or piece of ground likely to hold good fish, berlying (if the conditions prevail) and sending big baits down the berley trail. A basic running ball rig consisting of a set of three gangs or two snooded octopus style hooks, running sinker, leader and crane swivel (as pictured right) is simply tied to the mainline. Bait up with a full mullet fillet or similar and you're in business. This technique is also dynamite on other species both demersal and pelagic.

