

# “Downriggers – Changing Tactics”

When talking fishing, downrigging seems to be one topic where there is no middle ground, fisho's are either proficient with them or have never had the opportunity to use one. In many cases downrigging is seen as just being too difficult, but once you have used one you will be pleasantly surprised.

Downriggers differ greatly from outriggers. The principle of outriggers is to allow a greater number of lines to be towed behind a boat without tangling, especially so when running a trolling pattern involving turns. Outriggers allow an angler to swim a greater variety of lures or bait to targeted species at varying distances behind the boat, thus, utilising the windows in the waves created from the boat's wake.

## What is Downrigging?

The purpose of a downrigger is to target fish at depths that can't be achieved by conventional trolling. The downrigger is designed to take the bait / lure to the desired depth with more accuracy than provided by a paravane. Then, when a fish strikes, the line pulls free from the downrigger and the angler can then fight the fish without the burden created by a lead line that greatly impedes the fish's fighting ability.

## What is a Downrigger?

Put simply, a downrigger is a reservoir for wire or heavy mono that is used to lower and raise a trolling weight to a desired depth. Attached to the trolling weight can be a single or double release clip, also known as a stacker, it is this release clip that the angler attaches their line. Varying with different models the depth of a Cannon Downrigger can be ascertained by using the visual depth gauge on selected models, or where as by one complete turn of the handle equates to approximately 30cm of cable, this enables you control when placing bait in the desired position.

## Why use a Downrigger?

Like most styles of fishing you have options as to how you achieve your objective, and as with all options there are always positives and negatives. Different methods of getting your bait or lure to greater depths can be aided by adding additional lead weights (barrel sinkers) at various intervals or by using a lead line. Disadvantages that these different styles can bring is the additional weight put onto the line, this affects the fighting ability of the fish and greatly reduces the sporting aspect. Pulling larger weights, and in the case of lead lines increased diameter, through the water dictates the angler must use a heavier

class of rod and reel due to the increased drag. With a lead line you will also require a dedicated rod / reel combo, preferably a drum style reel as to avoid line twist. Taking this extra rig set up cost into consideration may afford you a superior model when making a downrigger purchase while still being able to use your current gear.

There are a variety of paravane's available on today's market that can be rigged in a number of different ways, one of the more popular is to rig the paravane directly to the main line via a snap swivel. Then, connect the lure to the paravane with a heavier mono / wire leader depending on the species targeted. This has its drawbacks, including increased drag, the need to use a heavier line class and the inability to gauge a specific depth as well as the need to remove the rig from the water to change the point of tow angle for variance in depth. Another factor to consider is the boats speed, it is critical to the depth at which the rig will operate at, which in turn, will have an impact on the number of different lures you can swim to gain maximum action.

## Points to Remember

When you first use a downrigger you will notice a strong humming sound emanating from it, Downriggers do take a bit to get used to and like all new things you try there will be some trial and error but the secret is to be patient as it will pay off in the long run. I can remember one of the first times I used my Cannon Mini Troll, I had set the line too deep into the reverse clip with the end result, after checking my rig, was one very dead Tailor being towed by my Rapala CD9. Poor thing looked like it had been kissing an air compressor. Still tasted fine though!!!

As with any lure or bait you are going to send out to the abyss, ensure that it is swimming correctly prior to connecting it to the downrigger bomb and

lowering down into the water, as it is impossible to know its actions without pulling the bomb up. The length of line between the lure / bait and downrigging bomb will vary depending on the species you are targeting and the depth at which you are trolling at. Remember that if you are trolling a bibbed lure it will still dive to its normal depth below the point at which it is being pulled. This depth will need to be taken into consideration when setting the depth you desire, this will also have a bearing as to the distance from the bomb to the lure.

Speed and length of cable are defining factors to the final depth the bomb will run at and quality sonar is a useful tool when downrigging as you can see the depth the bomb is operating at on the screen. Due to drag when being pulled through the water a bow is created in the downrigging line causing a bomb to ride higher in the water, this is commonly known as blow back.

## What's right for me?

Once again this is dependant on what you are going to target and the depth at which you need to reach that target. I have owned a pair of Cannon Mini Troll's for over 10 years now and they have accounted for a number of different species from Trout to Spaniard's. I attach my berley bombs to them when fishing for Bream and Whiting in rivers and quite often dead Squid in heavy tidal areas when targeting Jewies. A few mates of mine are also having great success targeting Barra in some of the deep dams in SE QLD and Central QLD and another mate down south who is cleaning up Trout around the Jindabyne area.

The Cannon brand of downrigger offer a large range to suit all levels of budgets and set up requirements with different models coming in both manual and electric powered. Units can be purchased with varying boom lengths that offer clearance over most

transom or duckboard set ups. Cannon downriggers can also be easily removed for added security when not in use and when travelling.

One manufacturer, Humminbird, have been at the forefront of developing their sonar's to help cater for the downrigging market. Their latest model upgrade due for release in April, will incorporate a menu system in the sonar unit that enables Cannon electric downriggers to be controlled by the sonar's menu system and even set the unit to raise and lower the bomb to the contour of the sea bed. •



Let out the required amount of line and place the line into the quick release clip.



Simultaneously release the downrigger clutch and fishing line to the required depth.



At the correct depth wind up slightly on the fishing line so the rod bends putting tension between the rod tip and release clip



When the fish strikes remove the rod and fight the fish if possible have your crew wind up the downrigger

