

CATCHING TARAHIHI - April 2020

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(these techniques and info will also work for snapper and other species)

Tarakihi are pretty much the best quality fish you can catch all around the Wellington area (and nationwide) virtually all year round. They are great eating and give a good fight on the end of the line. You can catch them off the shore and in the boat from 5mtrs down to over 100mtrs. They are probably my favourite eating fish.

FIND THE FISH - Tarakihi seem to live and feed right on the edge of a reef and sometimes out onto the sand a bit. After dark they come into sandy beaches and feed close to shore so landbased anglers can catch them. Most reef structures around the Wellington coastline will hold tarakihi. It's just a matter of finding where exactly they are and getting your baits down into them. They are pretty easy to see on the sounder - lots of small chunky bits on and of the bottom sitting on, or right next to a reef structure (sometimes out on the sand. If you find a rock in 50-100 meters there will probably always be BIG tarakihi on it at some stage of the tide (normally an hour or two either side of the turn)

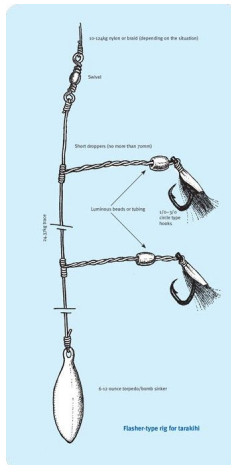
Boatfishing

BAITS - Small strips of squid, salted blue mackerel or bonito, fresher the better (5mm x 10mm). Hook the bait through once through one end and let it hang off the hook. If your baits are bigger than a fingernail then your probably not going to catch them.

BERLEY - A berley dispenser right on the bottom when anchored up is very effective. Good quality minced paua gut, kina, bonito, pilchard, cray or crab bodies. Make sure the berley pot is weighted enough to get to the bottom, the orange cray snifter pots are good with 2 – 4 puka sinkers attached and 4mm cord. Give the pot a shake every now and then to get/keep the fish biting.

RIGS -

Ledger rig (sinker at bottom looped on, dropper loops or longline knots for droppers, loop or swivel on top). I have found recurve hooks the best for lip hooking fish and a positive hookup. Flasher rigs and sleeve swivel traces both work well. 30Lb trace is good for shallower non snaggy water, 50lb trace is a good average weight and 80lb trace for 80-120mtrs where there's a good chance you may hook something bigger and don't want it to get away



1/0 recurve flasher rigs have to be one of the best rigs to catch tarakihi, particularly white or pink colours. My favourite charter rig is 2 x #17 or #19 mutsu recurves on 50lb trace for shallow water or in the harbour (15-25mtrs) and 2 x #19 or #21 mutsus on 80lb trace for the 60-100mtr mark (where theres a good chance of a school puka or big kingfish.

TIDE

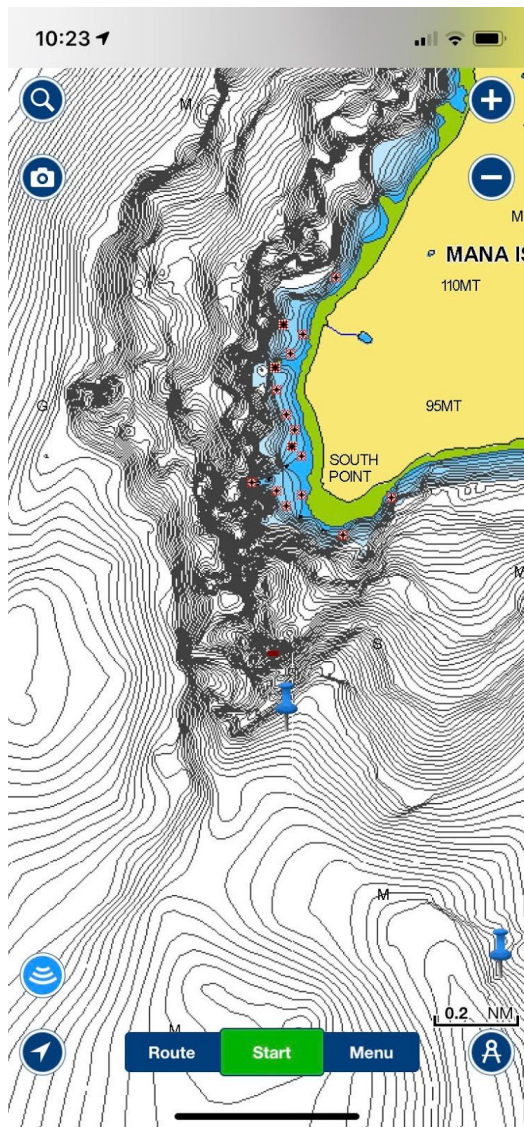
On the south coast the outgoing tide runs from the east going to the west, the incoming tide runs from west to east. Sometimes the tide doesn't do what it's supposed to do or turns early or late. Sometimes you get different tidal flows with particular spots. Off Karori and island bay the tide can be 1.5 to 2.5 hours early. On the west coast the incoming tide runs from south to north and the outgoing tide runs from the north going southward. The Wiraka rise tide at Pukerua bay can be 1 hour late, the Ohau and Makara tide can be 1 hour early. The bridge at Mana tide can be 1 hour early. Remember the tide doesn't always do what it's supposed to do. Be careful when the tide runs against the wind as it can be twice as rough

moon Just after the full and new moons the tide is extra large. Just after the 1st and last ¼ the tides are small. This can have an effect on how much time you have around the turn of the tide to fish and how rough the water can be with wind against tide



SPOTS

The key factor is finding the edge of the reef and where the tarakihi are feeding or hanging out on a particular day. You may have to move slightly a couple of times before you get onto the fish but once you do it can be amazing. Both drifting in the deeper water or anchored up in shallow or deep can produce the goods.



Good tarakihi ground on the south end of Mana Island - 30 to 50mtrs (left). A bin of cod and teris is like bread and butter for Wellington anglers (right)

The best way to find spots is downloading the Navionics AU + NZ boating APP. It shows heaps of good reef area with either 'sonar' charts (more detail) or depth charts. I've marked a couple of good teri spots with blue markers on the left hand pic. The more lines together mean a sharper dropoff.

South coast - back of Island bay (40mtrs), Turakerei head (50 - 70mtrs), Airport reef and the edge of the marine reserve (40-45mtrs), the 100mtr mark behind 5 mile reef and homes rock are good xos teri spots with puka and kingis on the cards.

Harbour - Falcon shoal (13mtr), east of Ward Island (18mtr), the wreck, Shelly bay point

West coast - Verns and Hunters (70mtrs), south end of Mana (30-50mtrs), Makara fenceine (25mtrs)

BOAT TACKLE

Rods - 5 to 7ft rods are preferred with a medium or flexible tip. Ratings on the rod range from 6kg up to 15kg depending on what line you are using.

Reels - Anything will do. It depends on personal preference. Daiwa sl30h, Shimano tld15, Penn fatham, Tica st16 are all good reels

Braid & nylon - These days many anglers are using braid instead of nylon because it has little or no stretch, is half to a third of the diameter of nylon and it's got high anti abrasion qualities. When using braid you need a flexible rod tip to act as a shock absorber and also you may need to use a bit heavier line (I use 50lb braid like I do 35lb nylon) than you would if you are using nylon. Knot strength is not usually as good in braid as it is in nylon but if you double up when tying the knot it's pretty good. Nylon comes in a thin or thick diameter, soft or hard, low or standard stretch, so it pays to spool up with the right kind for the right job. Thin diameter is good for fishing deep water off the boat or for distance casting off the shore, hard thicker diameter (hard) is better for narly rock locations.

Many people start with 10-15kg nylon or 15-24kg braid and then experiment with lighter stuff depending on conditions and the size of fish around.

Light tackle is good to catch 'cagey' fish as they don't see the line and it appears more natural. Breaking strain of about 3 – 6kg is classified as light. Medium tackle (6 – 10kg). Heavy tackle for big fishing rough ground is 10 – 15kg or even heavier.

Hooks There are two main styles of hook these days. The self setting hook and the striking hook. Recurve, circle or mutsu hooks are all self setting and normally hook the fish in the corner of the mouth. The other style of hook is the beak, octopus or suicide hook. Sometimes these hooks will gut or gill hook a fish, especially with a two hook rig. For smaller tarakihi I use a 1 or 2/O recurve hook and for bigger fish a 3 - 4/o recurve (or #17 - #19 mutsu).

Sinkers 4oz to 20oz depending on how much tide is running. An average weight for 15-30 mtrs on the coast is 10oz and in the harbour around 4oz. When the tide picks up you just change up to a heavier sinker.

SOFTBAITS

Teris love softbaits but only small ones - the nice little ½ to 1 inch mullert and roe are good as well are bits of old softbaits that have been bitten off by other fish. Use a ledger rig or a small 1/0 - ¼ or 1/8oz jighead.



DRIFTING

Small rocks by themselves particularly in the deeper water (70-100mtrs) may be better to drift fish. Generally you will get better tarakihi fishing when at anchor with a few exceptions. If there is too much tide running or wind blowing then drifting is the way to go.

Start your drift up current or wind from the fishing spot, drop your lines down and keep in touch with the bottom by frequently letting out line. Once you have passed the spot or stop getting bites, wind up, reposition the boat and try again. Sometimes running a sea anchor (parachute) or reversing into the wind will slow the drift down and help you catch more fish.

ANCHORING UP

Anchoring can be tricky to do when you start your boating career but worthwhile and safe if you do it right. Pick the right anchor for the job - kewene for rock/sand, danforth for sand, grapnel for reef. You need approximately the same length of chain for length of boat

- 4mm chain, 6mm rope, 6mm grapnel for a 2.5 to 3.5mtr boat
- 6mm chain, 8mm rope, 8mm grapnel for a 3.5 - 5mtr boat
- 8mm chain, 10mm rope, 10mm grapnel for a 5 to 7mtr boat
- 12mm to 16mm chain and rope with a big plough or kewene, for 7mtr to 15mtr boat

It's advisable to have twice the anchor rope than you are trying to anchor up in. Survey the area you think the fish are in (normally on the edge of a reef), go up current of the mark and deploy the anchor.

When it holds tight, dispatch the berley bomb on a separate 4 or 6mm rope and weighted to get to the bottom. If you don't catch good fish in 30 minutes let some more rope out or re-anchor in a nearby spot. Use the 'easy lift anchor system' when retrieving the anchor (with a sliding buoy).

Be careful anchoring up in windy or tidal conditions. A Grapnel (left) is the best anchor for hooking into the reef.. It bends out if it gets stuck. The Danforth (right) is the perfect sand anchor



Boat techniques and tips

- Make sure your sinker is on the bottom.
- Strike or wind fast to set the hook when you get a good bite.
- Sometimes a couple of winds up off the bottom may catch the fish if there are too many 'picker fish on the bottom.
- If you are not catching fish try a smaller hook and lighter trace.
- Good berley, turn of tide, fresh baits will all help you catch more fish (at anchor)
- Net a big fish rather than see it fall off the hook at the boat.
- Fish somewhere comfortable where everyone on board is happy
- Its alot easier to catch them while anchored but you must be in the right spot.
- Drifting is the best option when fishing 100mtrs plus

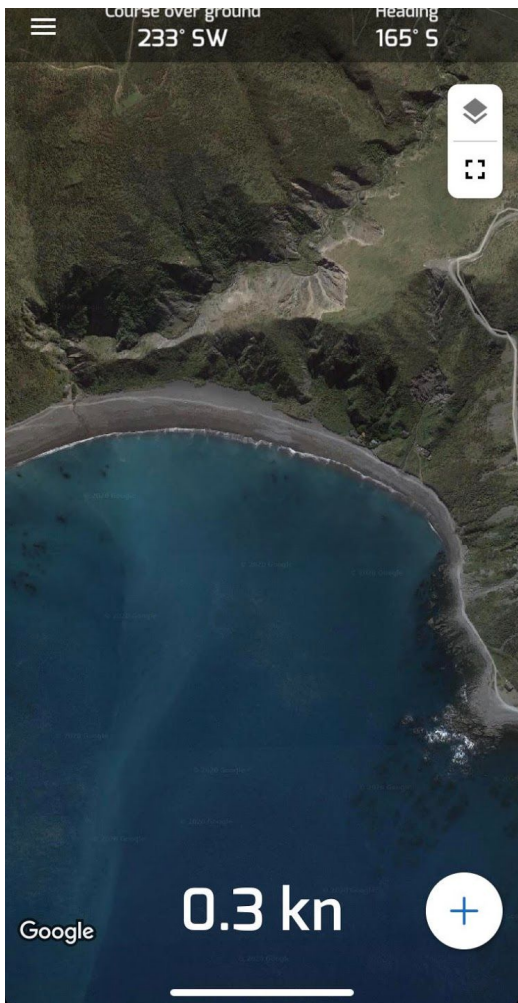


Land based techniques

Most of the tarakihi get caught off the shore after dark or around the turn of light. These fish come into sandy bays, sometimes with a bit of reef structure or a weed bank as well. You can catch them on a long or a short cast depending on where the weed banks / reefs are. The important things are small hooks, good quality bait like mussel, prawn, squid or skipjack tuna fillet. Ledger rig is the main rig used and they hit hard often hooking themselves. Most anglers use a 12-14ft rod with 6-10kg nylon or 30lb braid to maximise casting. It doesn't matter on some of the sandy bays along the south coast where the teris come in really close

Places to fish - Mahanga bay, Shelly bay point, Longbeach, Karori stream beach, Karori light beach, Ohau, Opau and Makara beach, Boom and Armchair rock, sugarloaf bay

High tide can often be a good time on a beach but low tide is the time to fish the southern end of Makara beach and some other similar rocky outcrops.



Long beach around from Red rocks is a good shore teri spot using short casts, small hooks and throwing handfulls of berley out every so often. If you use mussel or prawn tied on with cotton, you've got a good chance of a blue moki as well.

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