Discovering
Mallacoota Inlet
Bob Couper
A Cruising Guide for Trailable Boats
Discovering Mallacoota Inlet

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Black Duck Texts
Somers, Vic, Aust
An Estuary Cruising Guide

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Important Note:
The information in this cruising guide has been derived from various sources and believed to be correct when published. All information should only be taken as a guide as the waters of Mallacoota Inlet are under constant change. Positional fixes were the best available at time of production but could include errors.

Any maps and charts are not drawn to a precise scale and are only intended to be used as an aid to navigation.

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General Information

Mallacoota Inlet is located in SE Victoria near Genoa on the Princes Highway. The inlet area comprises two tidal estuarine lakes and a number of interconnecting waterways, fed by over 10 rivers and streams. The main cruising area stretches through the Croajingolong National Park, from Gypsy Point to the inlet’s ocean entry at the small bush township of Mallacoota (population approaching 1000).

Almost 30 square kilometres of its sheltered waters provide excellent cruising opportunities for trailersailers, powerboat cruisers and other shallow drafted craft. The waters support a rich marine life offering excellent angling opportunities for both beginners and experts. The fringing country varies from salt marsh to mountains and rainforest gullies, providing widely diverse habitats for the enormous range of wild life and bird species for which Croajingolong is famous.

History of area

Mallacoota Inlet is a drowned river valley, the result of the seas rising after the last Ice Age. During the last 50,000 years, sea levels were almost 130 metres lower than those of today as a result of a Glacial/Inter-Glacial period. Australia’s continental shelf including Bass Strait were all dry land. It was probably around this time that aboriginal people using the natural land bridges first populated the area. As the world warmed up over the last 10,000 years, the glacial ice sheet retreated and the seas rose over 100 metres. This cut the land bridges inundating many areas to form the coastline as we now know it, including Mallacoota Inlet.

The surrounding area was originally the home of the "Bidwelli" aboriginal clan. Cook is credited as being the first European to sight Gippsland in 1770 but it wasn’t until the 1790’s that groups of opportunists known as Straitsmen begin arriving. These included sealers, whalers, wattle-bark gatherers and people from the many ships wrecked whilst using Bass Strait. During the 1830’s settlers began penetrating Gippsland from the north and west and Port Albert developed as an important shipping and trading port for Gippsland during the 1840’s. At the same time, European settlement at Mallacoota commenced when whalers including Ben Boyd and the Imlay brothers began operating in the area. Early pioneers also harvested wattle bark for use in tanning leather.

Increasing numbers of commercial ships began plying the Gippsland coast and Gabo Island lighthouse was constructed in 1862 to lessen the risks for them. The 1880's saw Mallacoota Inlet become important as a commercial fishing centre until the intensive fishing decimated the fish stocks. Gold was discovered in the 1890’s and mining began at the Spotted Dog mine on the eastern side of the Bottom Lake. The mine got its name after a falling tree killed a spotted dog. Although short lived, the mine supported the initial development of the Mallacoota township on the east side of the Bottom Lake area, with the only access being by boat down the Genoa River from Genoa.
Forty square kilometres around Mallacoota Inlet was set aside for a National Park in 1909, permanently reserved in 1956 and linked with other reserves to form the 86000 hectare Croajingolong National Park as we now know it in 1979.

The Country Roads Board constructed the first road to Mallacoota down the western side of the inlet in 1914 stimulating growth of the settlement on its present site. At the time, the road from Bairnsdale was still not linked with the tracks coming down the NSW south coasts. This did not occur until the 1940’s. During its later years, Mallacoota became an important tourist destination and base for commercial fishing including abalone divers.

Other points of historical interest

‘Mallacoota’ could have been derived from a number of aboriginal words including “mulla” – meaning good, “malla” – salt and “goota” – water. In addition there are many place names around the inlet that owe their origins to early settlers or other events including:

- ‘Croajingolong’ is most likely taken from an aboriginal word meaning ‘Men living in the east’. It could also have been derived from the aboriginal clan "Kroatungolung" who occupied much of the land covered by the park.
- **Gippsland** was originally known as Gipp’s Land. Gipps was an early Governor in Sydney to whom the Victoria’s Governor Latrobe reported to.
- **Gypsy Point** probably got its name from the schooner "Gypsy" which berthed there with other ocean and coastal vessels trading in local products at the end of the 1800’s.
- **Stevenson’s Point** near the ocean entrance is named after an early whaler, Captain John Stevenson, who built a bark hut residence there.
- **Smellie Inlet** at the entrance of the Genoa River into the Top Lake is named after James Smellie, a Mallacoota pioneer who lived on its shores during the late 1800’s.
- **Cemetery Bight** derives its name from the nearby pioneer graves.
- The telegraph pole standing on the south bank just inside the entrance of Howe Crk, is a remnant of the original telegraph line to the **Gabo Island lighthouse**.
- Two historic boats regularly ply the Inlet's waters, the 100 yr old "Irene" and the 86 yr old "Loch Ard".
- Early visitors to Mallacoota included Arthur Streeton, Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson.
The Natural Environment

Marine life
In its natural state it was quite common for a bar to be formed across Mallacoota Inlet’s ocean entrance. Water from the inlet’s tributary streams would build up in the inlet until its sheer weight would burst through the bar. The location of the actual breakthrough varied depending on the sand drift patterns set up along the coast by tide and wind whilst the bar was in place.

The entrance would then remain open until the water level in the inlet dropped and the bar began to form again. This natural cycle allowed the inlet to play host to a rich marine life in a diverse range of habitats.

Best known is the legendary huge Dusky Flathead (Platycephalus fuscus) approaching a metre in length. Other fish eagerly sought include Silver Bream (Acanthopagrus australis), Mulloway (Sciaena antarctica), Australian Salmon (Arripis trutta), Tailor (Pomatomus saltatrix), King George Whiting (Sillaginodes punctatus), Luderick (Girella triscupidata), Trevally (Pseudocaranx dentex), Sand Mullet (Myxus elongatus), and Southern Garfish (Hyporhamphus australis).

Also sharing the inlet and its tributaries are some very large Long-Finned Eels (Anguilla reinhardtii). These can be caught at night around the weed fringing many of the inlet’s jetties.

Birds
Nearly 300 species of birds, almost a third of all Australian bird species, have been recorded in the Mallacoota area. Some of the birds that you are most likely to see in the area include:

- **Water Birds**: Black Swan, Pelican, Oyster Catcher (Pied, Sooty), Purple Swamphen, Black Duck, White Egret, White-faced Heron, Spoonbills, Ibis, Cormorants (Little Pied, Pied, Black faced, Little Black, Black), Terns (Common, Crested, Little, Fairy), Sandpiper, Dotterel, Stint, Stilt and the ever present Silver Gull.

- **Soaring**: Whistling Kite, Sea Eagle, Wedge Tail Eagle, Spine Tailed Swift, and Welcome Swallow.

- **Canopy**: Rainbow Lorikeet, King Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Galah, Pied Currawong, Magpie, and Kookaburra.


Less common but often seen birds include: Azure Kingfisher, Nankeen Night Heron, Superb Lyrebird, Rufous Fantail, Restless Flycatcher, Red-Browed Firetail Finch, Gang Gang, Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo, Stilts, Stints and a wide range of migratory wading birds.
Birds of the Shoreline

- White-breasted Sea Eagle
- White Egret
- Black Swan
- White-faced Heron
- Bur-tailed Godwit
- Masked Lapwing
- Caspian Tern
- Crested Tern
- Red-necked Stint
- Red-capped Dotterel
- Straw-necked Ibis
- Green Shank
- Curlew Sandpiper
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
- Silver Gull
- Pied Oystercatcher
**Shoreline flora and fauna**

Croajingolong National Park which surrounds most of the inlet is a designated "UNESCO Biosphere Reserve" supporting many rare and significant plants. The slopes and ridges abutting the waterways are mostly covered in dry eucalypt forest with small pockets of rain forest in the gullies. The eucalypt species include stringybarks, grey gums, silvertop ash, bloodwoods and the rare Mallacoota gum. A mature specimen of the latter can be seen behind the shops in Maurice Ave, Mallacoota.

Scattered around the forest understories are patches of smaller trees such as banksias, she-oaks, paperbarks and wattles. The latter are seen at their best in late winter. The rough-barked apple tree that is erroneously taken by many to be a eucalypt, can often be found around the shoreline. It can be picked out in summer on the slopes by its lighter green-yellow foliage.

The harsh climate closer to the coast favours the growth of lower heathland plants. This landscape is at its best in the period from late winter to late summer when the correas and heaths bloom. These areas are also known for their small winter-flowering orchids. Many of the forest areas surrounding the lake areas display an amazing diversity of wild flowers during spring.

Probably the best known Mallacoota reptiles are the Goannas. A trip to the inlet would be incomplete without a visit to Goanna Bay for a picnic BBQ and close encounter with some of these monoliths. Other resident reptiles include Tiger snakes, Black snakes and the Eastern Water Dragon in the rivers and other tributary streams. The latter are often only noticed when they slip off their basking positions on banks and rock platforms like those at the Genoa Falls.

One feature of Gypsy Point is the mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos that comes out of the surrounding bushland at dusk to feed on the pastures around the old hotel site. Unfortunately the spectacle has recently been considerably diminished by housing developments that followed the demolishing of the old hotel.

Platypus are commonly encountered in the upper reaches of the Wallagaraugh and Genoa rivers whilst anchoring at a secluded jetty at night can bring special treats. Wallabies are often heard and seen at dusk crashing through the forest to get to fresh green shoots along the water’s edge. Large Brush-tailed possums and the smaller Ringtails emerge from their daytime sleeping hollows and small bats can be seen seeking insects in the air along the forest at the water’s edge.

The “brushies” often board boats moored to the jetties at night to make a mess of any food left in the cockpit or around the picnic tables. Likewise, the nocturnal food-gathering activities of echidna, bandicoots and wombats often leave areas such as the shoreline flats west of the Captains Crk jetty resembling a bombsite.

![Brush-tailed possum](image_url)
Other Information

Maps, and Information
The best map of the surrounding area is the Survey & Mapping Vic 1:500 000 topographic map – Mallacoota 8822-N, 8823-S (Part). This also carries a 1:25000 inset map giving good detail of the Bottom Lake.

Details of the Top Lake and other inlet waterways are shown on the 1:50,000 scale map "Mallacoota Inlet including Gypsy Point" published by Larkin (Copyright 1989).


Some of the best spots to visit in the area around the inlet are the Betka River and Quarry Beaches, Wave rocks, drive/climb Genoa Peak (elev 488 metres), Genoa Falls, Shipwreck Crk, and the 5 town nature walks. The Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources offices at the c/r of Buckland and Allan Drives have displays and further information on the area.

Launching Ramps
The main launching ramps serving the inlet are located at:

- **Town Area** - adjacent to the town wharf at the bottom of the shopping centre hill. Concrete ramp, all boat sizes, medium sheltered. Parking with little security, towns water, toilets, and all shopping facilities adjacent to ramp. The nearby camping ground allows casual use of their showers and laundry for a fee. Ice and bait available from Rankine’s office on the town wharf.
- **Karbeethong** - adjacent to the jetty at south end of the beach. Concrete ramp, boats to 6 metres with deeper drafts possible at high tides, less sheltered from the north and east than the town ramp. Toilets, sewerage disposal ("Loo with a View"), town water, and parking with little security adjacent to ramp. No shopping facilities.
- **Gipsy Point** - adjacent to jetty and site of the old Gypsy Point Hotel. Concrete ramp, boats to 7.5 metres, excellent weather protection. The parking area adjacent to ramp has virtually no known history of vandalism or theft.

All ramps can be busy over holiday periods, particularly Easter. The Gipsy point ramp is the most picturesque and sheltered but leaves you with a 3/4 hr motor downriver to the top lake. It gives immediate access to many sheltered anchorages including limited jetty space and adjacent bank space that can be useful if you arrive late afternoon.

The Karbeethong ramp enables quick access to town by car and is central to both lakes. The town ramp can be difficult to get to during strong wind periods if you have to cross the Bottom Lake. Strong east winds require careful planning when retrieving.
Boating services

**Drinking water** is available adjacent to the town ramp, some National Park jetties (tanks fed from the toilet roofs). The town water can develop brown algal growths in summer if stored in containers which allow light to reach it. Using fully opaque containers and pipelines on your boat will avoid the problem. The town water makes a notoriously bad cup of tea!

**Sewage disposal.** The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources request that marine toilets containing chemical inhibitors not be emptied into the toilets at the various jetties. Their rangers patrol the inlet and a trip to their Mallacoota town offices is well worth the effort for the amount of information they can provide.

**Rubbish** is not collected from the jetty areas. Rubbish must be placed in the rubbish disposal facilities at either the Gypsy Point or Mallacoota town wharves.

**Safety Equipment**

The Victorian Boating Regulations specify the minimum safety equipment that must be carried by different sized boats whilst boating on enclosed Victorian waters. These regulations are rigidly policed and include:

- Personal Flotation Devices
- Manual propulsion equipment
- Bailers
- Fire extinguishers
- Waterproof torches
- Anchors and warps

Further details can be obtained from Marine Board of Victoria, 16th floor, 589 Collins St Melb, Telephone (03) 9619 6651

**Speed Limits**

A number of the inlet's waterways have zone speed limits including the Mallacoota township channel and the Genoa River at Gypsy Point. These are clearly sign posted.

**Boating Regulations**

**Boat Registration**

Motor powered vessels must hold a current Victorian registration unless they carry special exemption or are exempted under reciprocal state arrangements. Further details can be obtained from VicRoads, GPO Box 1644N Melbourne 3001, Telephone 13 1171.

**Boat Drivers Licence**

A licence is currently not required in Victoria to drive a motor driven pleasure vessel. However safe boating regulations including blood alcohol levels are regularly policed.

**Weather forecasts**

Weather reports for East Gippsland, Bass Strait and the Southern New South Wales coast are broadcast daily by **Mallacoota Coast Guard** at 0710 and 1710 hrs. Weather transmissions are called on 27.88, VHF 16 and 72 and transmitted on 27.90 and VHF67.

The seasons at Mallacoota do not follow the standard European three monthly cycles. In general, summer conditions apply during January and February. These months are usually hot and dry with average temperatures 5° cooler than Melbourne. The best summer sailing conditions usually occur when the centres of high-
pressure cells pass over the district. This situation usually provides light morning winds, afternoon sea breezes and still nights. As the high moves further eastward during subsequent days, northeast winds commonly build up quickly during mid morning giving strong, gusty (20 - 25 knots) and uncomfortable sailing conditions. A cold front with rain and colder south or southwesterly winds soon follow, marking the start of a low-pressure cell cycle.

Autumn covers the four months March to June (incl). During this time of the year, the weather is more stable, cooler (50 - 200 C) and less windy. Nights are generally still and clear often causing fogs and heavy morning dews. The most severe weather occurs during the four-month winter - July to October (incl). Even so, like most of the Gippsland coast, Mallacoota has more milder winter temperatures compared to Melbourne with average temperatures 50 higher. Spring is short generally lasting through November and December. This period features heavy rainfall periods in quickly changing weather patterns.

**Tidal Information**

As a general guide, the tides times at the Mallacoota Inlet Entrance are approximately half an hour earlier than those at Fort Denison (Sydney) and two and a half hours earlier than Port Phillip Heads (Melbourne). When the Mallacoota entrance bar is fully open, the tide times for Karbeethong and Gypsy Point jetties lag the entrance times by approximately 1hr and 2.5hrs respectively. The tidal rise and fall in the bottom lake area, is normally less than half that of the ocean and less again in the top lake and river reaches.

When the bar is closed, water levels in the lake areas can vary depending to incoming river flows. Although any changes are most likely to occur slowly, particular care should be taken if floodwaters are expected to enter the inlet area from the Genoa and Wallagaraugh Rivers.
Cruise Destinations

The Entrance Area

Mallacoota Inlet’s ocean entrance is no longer dredged and prolonged low river flows have resulted in the channel partially silting up making passage into or out of the inlet virtually impossible. Trailer-boats wishing access to the open ocean should use the Bastion Point ramp.

Even when the ocean entrance is mostly closed, strong currents can make passage on the ocean side of Captain Stevenson Point dangerous for underpowered boats such as trailer-sailers and manually propelled boats. It is far better to view the entrance area from the special viewing platform at the end of the 1.4km Pittosporum Walking Track, which starts from the town centre.

When the entrance is fully open, the ocean bar is extremely hazardous and only highly experienced skippers should attempt a crossing. Before doing so they should have:

- Sought and obtained the necessary local knowledge on the safest procedure,
- Checked that the tide and weather conditions will be right when they expect to both leave and return across the bar,
- Checked that their boats is suitable and properly equipped for the conditions likely to be experienced,
- Checked that all crew and passengers are wearing lifejackets and,
- Reported in to the Mallacoota Coastguard on both departure and return.

Town Wharf

Vessels visiting the town area can often berth for short periods at the Town Wharf or the adjacent Slipway Jetty. Strong tidal flows require a cautious approach. When tying up, allow for possible tidal falls/rises and reversals. Leave room for the larger tourist launches and commercial fishing boats that also make use of the facilities.

The wharf tends to be preferred by most skippers because it places boats along the axis of the tidal stream, allowing them to better cope with changes in current direction. A short strip of sandy shore between the ocean end of the Town Wharf and the adjacent pile berths can also offer a short bow on shore stopover during crowded periods. Rubbish, sewerage disposal facilities and town water are available adjacent to the wharf area.

Coulls Inlet

This inlet can provide a sheltered anchorage for longer periods when visiting town. Enter inlet with navigation marker No.2 (FLR) to starboard, proceed west towards moored boats, then swing to port towards the shoreline between point and first jetty on the east side of the inlet. When water levels are high it is sometimes possible to reach the shoreline and tie-up to one of the trees on the bank making allowance for tidal differences. Prawns and live baitfish can often be trapped on the sandy shallows around the point.
The Bottom Lake Area

The best sailing can generally be found in the Bottom Lake area. It can however blow up rough when strong winds blow, particularly from the south or north.

John Bull Light

This navigation mark (37° 32.3S, 149° 46.4E) and light (Fl.W), acts as the main navigation aid for the Bottom Lake area and its position should be noted and memorised. When entering the Bottom Lake from The Narrows, it can be difficult to pick up during the day. Steering 100° magnetic as you exit the Narrows should enable it to be easily located.

The channel into the township from the John Bull light is clearly marked with navigation marks from this light. Its width and depth after the N 010 (port) and N09 (starboard) channel markers make it difficult to sail right into town. Skippers of larger boats are advised to drop their sails and start the motor before passing this point.

Rabbit Island Channel

At normal water levels, weedy shallow water and sandbars prevent an approach west of Rabbit Island to the main town channel. However during periods when very high water levels exist in the Bottom Lake it is possible to take a short cut to the Narrows through these normally shallow areas. The deepest channel will be found in a direct line from channel marker No.5 and the centre of the flat top mountain due north.

Goodwin Sands

The Goodwin sands dominate the Bottom Lake serving as a feeding and resting spot for hundreds of wading birds including sandpipers, knots, stilts, pied oyster catchers and the more common black swans, plovers, terns and gulls. The sands are marked by piles on their northwest (37° 31.56S, 149° 45.64E), southwest (37° 31.85S, 149° 45.7E) and most northerly (37° 31.45S, 149° 46.2E) points. Best access points for a walk in the shallows is in the east, on the north side of the sands (37° 31.62S, 149° 46.9E) where they narrow near "Lake View". Anchoring tactics should allow for freshening of the wind and direction changes that can occur quickly, swinging the boat through 180° to leave it stranded in shallower water.

Shallow drafted boats (less than 50cms) can often obtain passage over the narrowest section of the weedy shallows near "Lake View". It should however be approached with caution and attempted on a rising tide to reduce the risk of stranding. There is no defined channel and it is advisable to have the anchor ready to prevent being blown onto the sands if the outboard stops or becomes choked with weed.

Howe Bight

The best time to explore this area is during calm weather or N to NE winds. To miss the shallow water areas in the bight when sailing from John Bull Light, steer 45° magnetic from the light until Lake View Point and Lees Bluff to the north line up. Alter course to 80° magnetic which will then allow you to reach the anchorage basin
(37° 32.1S, 149° 47.84E) near the entrance to Howe Creek at the eastern end of the bight.

Extensive weedy shallows at the creek entry will bar access to it except by very shallow craft such as canoes or tenders. Once over these, the creek holds a deep channel that enables it to be navigated to some fallen trees around 0.5 nM from the entrance. The upstream creek area is an important rookery area for ducks, swans and other **water birds** so should be avoided during nesting times.

Access to **Howe Flat Track** can be gained by landing at the sand spit on the west side of the creek entrance, walking back west along the beach until reaching the higher trees behind the beach and then walking north through the narrow band of coastal tea-tree and eucalypt forest for approximately 100 metres to reach the track. The track passes through very attractive forests of mature trees that provide heavy shade making for a pleasant walk even on hot days. A walking track to "**The Big Dune**" branches off the Howe Flat Track approximately 1Km to the east of the creek entrance (just before the track swings off in a northerly direction to join the Lake View Track). The top of the dune provides a vantage point to view an impressive vista of ocean coastline including Gabo and Tullaberga Islands.

**Bakers Bight Inlet**

An attractive swinging anchorage on a firm silty-mud bottom in the almost fully enclosed inlet at the head of Bakers Bight (37° 31.0S, 149° 45.19E) has no facilities but provides good holding and excellent shelter from all winds. Best approach is from the direction of The Narrows entrance on a course of 30° magnetic keeping the shallow reefy water of the **Eight Foot Bank** to starboard and the shallows along the NW shoreline of Bakers Bight to port.

As you enter the inlet, a small sandy beach on the east side of the entrance falls quickly away to deep water providing an excellent picnic or swimming spot. The best swinging and bank anchorages are at the western end of the inlet. The inlet is tidal so take precautions to avoid stranding or hull damage when mooring to the bank. **Bait fish** are usually available in the inlet over the sandy shallows halfway along the south bank. The sandy shallows on the NW shoreline of Bakers Bight can provide good **prawning** in season.

**Refuge Cove**

The cove (37° 31.2S, 149° 45.95E) provides safe shelter from most winds on a swinging anchorage with a good holding on a firm silty-mud bottom.

The anchorage is more exposed to southerly aspect winds but Goodwin Sands provides reasonable protection. Best position is in line with gully half
way in on east side of inlet. Weed begins at end of inlet from prominent rocks on east side further down from this anchorage point.

**Allan Head**
Jetty (fireplace, picnic tables, and toilets) provides excellent shelter from South, West and East winds. North winds set up an unpleasant chop. When fishing from jetty, cast straight out (or up to 20° east) about 20 metres to clear weed beds. A number of resident brush tailed possums regularly appear from the trees around the jetty at night. Some can be very large and persistent, frequently boarding boats moored to the jetty. Make sure food supplies are well protected and watch your exposed toes if you feed or approach them on the bank. Allan Head seems to consistently have more mosquitos than other anchorages at Mallacoota so don't forget the repellent. Despite this, the jetty is placed superbly to catch the sunrise reflected on still waters.

**Harrison's Crk.**
Situated at the NE corner of Cemetery Bight, this tributary is navigable some distance upstream to the MLC camp. Access is over an extensive shallow (50 cms), weedy mud bar which is best negotiated at high tide. The deepest channel over the bar starts near the east bank side of Cemetery Bight (37°30.25S, 149°48.0E) and is marked with sticks at the trickiest part near Dowell creek before it deepens further upstream.

A spur lagoon running off the east bank approximately 1nM up the creek from the entrance bar is an excellent all wind anchorage (37° 29.2S, 149° 48.7E). The narrow lagoon is surrounded by swamp tea-tree and is a haven for ducks and swans. Anchor by tying up to the trees lining its banks.

**Cemetery Bight**
Unless the wind has a high easterly component, this jetty (fireplace, tables and toilets) can be subject to choppy conditions. It does however provide access to the Pioneer Cemetery and Spotted Dog Goldmine walks. The latter walk is the better of the two. The National Parks have erected markers at the mine site and provide information leaflets in a box where the track leaves the beach. Both walks start by walking along the jetty beach until you reach the National Park signs directing you inland.

The jetty is a popular destination for day visitors so can be busy. It is also a popular water ski area. Weed extends some distance out from the jetty reducing its value as a swimming spot. For the fisherman, nippers and sandworm bait can be collected from a small sand beach on its southern shore.

**Dowell Crk.**
Dowell Crk (37° 29.60S, 149° 48.15E) is a small creek running off the NW bank of the Harrison's Creek estuary. To access it, proceed down the Harrison's Creek estuary till you can look directly down Dowell Ck. Turn and cross the channel at right-angles. Once across the channel and entrance bar, the creek deepens quickly allowing access for some 100 metres. The grassed, reedy SW bank immediately after entering the creek offers a very protected all-weather bank anchorage.
Little River (Teal Crk.)
A mostly unknown, hidden, very seldom visited river running into National Park Forest which provides some of the best secluded bank/bush anchorages available. Access is via the large inlet between Lees Bight and Totem Point. The inlet is deep enough to allow sailing for around three-quarters of its length before it shallows out and becomes weedy. Because of its high exposure to any wind having a northerly or southerly component, the inlet is not often used for overnight stops. However the west shore of the bight, between Kangaroo and Totem Points, can be a useful lunchtime anchorage and swimming spot for wind directions with a high westerly component. The east shore of the inlet under the lee of the "Fairhaven" property can provide calm water and protection from easterlies in its two biggest bights.

When the inlet becomes choppy with S to SW winds it can be a bit daunting approaching the extensive shallows as a lee shore when trying to enter Little River. First timers may feel more comfortable attacking it on a calm day, or a day with winds having a northerly aspect.

Drop the sails as soon as you encounter shallow water and continue under motor with a bow look out. The deepest part of the shallows are on the easterly side (37° 29.85S, 149° 46.5E) when approaching the head of the inlet on a NW course. At the head, the entry to the river is hidden behind a treed point on the east side. The channel that abruptly turns to the NE becomes clearly visible as you round this point.

Once past the point, the channel deepens quickly to between 1 and 2 metres. The island just after the point should be taken to port where the deepest channel lies. The shallower channel on the other side of the island is often navigable with high water levels but it is safer to take the deeper one. As you go around the island the channel swings to the NW to form Little River proper. Care should be taken to keep clear of a tree trunk forming an underwater obstruction as you approach this turning point.

The river is around 15 metres wide, weed free and can be navigated easily for at least 1 nM through diverse National Park forest before fallen trees make it impassable to trailer sailors. A sharply defined rock ridge across the bottom of the river just before a bend and the entrance to a small tributary creek on the west bank around the 0.5 nM mark, can be easily cleared with normal water levels.

However caution should be exercised if water levels are very low (eg water depth on the entrance bar to the river is less than 50 cms). The small creek junction provides a secluded, completely sheltered overnight anchorage. At dusk the trees around the anchorage are commonly packed with roosting cormorants which provide constant entertainment as they compete for space.
Navigating Little River

Morning mists, Quambie Point
Kingfisher Point
The jetty (fireplace and table) here is mainly used as a picnic spot and to obtain shelter from west winds. The point can also give surprisingly good protection from south-west and even south winds due to the proximity of the Goodwin Sands.

Karbeethong - Mirrabooka
This area of the Bottom Lake provides excellent shelter in south and south-west winds. New toilets and sewerage disposal facilities have been constructed adjacent to the Public Works jetty and ramp at Karbeethong. Towns water is available from the toilet facilities. Although water depths at the end of the jetty are usually suitable for boats drawing up to 1 metre, most of the remainder of the jetty lies in shallow weedy water. The jetty is best approached from an easterly direction and in direct line with it. During the summer period, the Mallacoota Yacht Club conducts its operations from this area.

Two smaller jetties to the north of the Public Works jetty have less depth of water but can usually be reached by boats drawing less than 50 cms. The cluster of jetties in the southern-most corner of the area are used by the professional fishing boats that work the Bottom Lake and have 1 metre approach depths.

Allen Head looking north towards Harrison's Creek
The Narrows

This stretch of water provides a good test of sailing skills with its constant changes in wind velocity and direction. This must be one of the only spots in Australia that you can hear lyrebirds at close quarters in rain forest gullies whilst sailing. A truly unique experience!

Both the northern (37° 31.08S, 149° 43.68E) and southern (37° 31.76S, 149° 44.5E) entrances to The Narrows are marked by flashing light beacons. Small fishing boats can be hired at Bucklands jetty located at the southern end of the Narrows.

The Narrows Inlet

A jetty - 37° 31.3S, 149° 44.3E - in the inlet (picnic table and fireplace) provides one of the best all weather anchorages available. There's room for 1 to 3 boats at the jetty with more room on the surrounding banks for bow-to-bank anchoring. The inlet also provides a good holding, silty-mud bottom for swinging anchorages. The weed free water around the jetty makes it an excellent swimming spot. There are some large rocks (with barnacles) on the bottom along the jetty face that may touch lowered rudder blades or motors at low tide. Shoes or thongs are advisable if walking on bottom, even in mud and shallow gravel sections to avoid cuts.

The jetty is a popular destination for day trippers but is quiet at night. Bream and flathead can often be caught at dusk from the jetty whilst prawns and baitfish frequent the shallows at the end of the inlet. The steep track leading up the hill behind
the jetty soon peters out. However for the intrepid explorers, a long bush bash to the South East from the end of the track will take you over two ridges and two rain forest gullies to Snapper Point. A better walk is available up the rainforest gully at the head of the inlet. This gully is also resident to a family of lyrebirds who commonly come out to the waters edge near the jetty in the evening. Other wild life including goannas, wallabies and wombats appear occasionally.

Top Lake Area

Double Crk Arm

Although the entry to Double Creek Arm is usually deep enough to sail it with the keel down, it pays to wait until you can look up the arm before turning to enter it. The shallowest water tends to be along the south bank of the entry. A small gravelly beach on the south side of Quambie Point just after entering the arm, provides an excellent picnic/fishing spot, or even a reasonably protected bank overnight anchorage for some wind directions. A stern anchor should be set to avoid mast/rigging damage from getting snagged in trees if the boat is swung towards the shore by "bullets".

A shallow water, treed point further down the arm on the south side, obscures the full view down the arm. The point is marked by a navigation marker that must be taken to port. The full view of the arm and Genoa Peak that dominates its western end, spectacularly opens up after rounding this point. Because of the topography of the surrounding countryside, winds from many directions tend to channel down Double Creek Arm. This means that although on a map some bights may appear to give shelter from particular winds, in reality they may not.

The Captain Crk jetty - 37° 31.60S, 149° 41.90E - (fireplace, table) adjacent to the Captain Creek bight gives excellent shelter in all weather. In strong W and SW winds it pays to tie up to the jetty as close to the bank as possible. This jetty provides a perfect vantage point to view colourful sunsets over the arm and Genoa Peak. Approach depths are normally around 2 metres at the end of the jetty. If swimming at the jetty is restricted by weed, tying up to the end of jetty with the bow shorewards, can allow you to avoid the worst of the weed by entering the water over the boat's stern.

A track leading up the hill behind the fireplace provides access to the Bucklands Jetty (5 hrs return) and Double Crk (2 hrs return) bushwalking tracks. One shorter walk option is to take the Bucklands Jetty track around Captain Crk bight to the point visible from the jetty and have someone pick you up in the boat to return you to the jetty. Bushwalkers commonly use the tracks to the jetty so take security measures if leaving the boat unattended. It is worth remembering that even secluded spots in the lake system are subject to the arrival at any time of other boats and bushwalkers, so don't leave valuables around. Good fishing is often available at dusk and early morning in Captain Crk bight east of the jetty. A twenty-metre cast is required to clear weed and reach deep water.

The many little bights running off Double Crk Arm provide a number of secluded bush anchorages. Three of
Sunrise at Captain Creek jetty

Sunset at Double Creek Arm
these bights on the N bank provide the best shelter in most winds. The first in Big Bight to the NE of the jetty was home to a pair of sea eagles that built a nest in the NW corner, high up in a white trunked gum. Although the nest now appears to be derelict, the large tourist cruise boats regularly feed the inlets resident sea eagles in the bight, the northern end of The Narrows and in the Top Lake at the entrance to the Genoa River.

The second, the small bight to the NW of the jetty, straight across Double Creek Arm, is also a recognised bream hole.

The best overnight bank anchorage is by the large fallen tree on the west side, in line with the jetty and the bight's east entry point.

The third one is the last bight on the north bank before Double Creek Arm ends in weedy shallows. A highlight of this anchorage is the nightly fly-in of Black swans to the shallow flats marking the entry of Double Creek.

The shallow water, mud and weed of Top Shot at the head of Double Creek Arm prevent trailer-sailers having direct access to Double Creek. However the shallows may be crossed by tender or canoes giving access to a delightful passage up the creek to the Mallacoota-Genoa Rd. Alternatively, landing on the creek's south bank at the entrance gives access to a walking path along the creek leading to the nature walk starting at the Mallacoota-Genoa Rd.

Two other anchorages on the south bank of Double Creek Arm are located in the bights immediately to the east and west of the jetty. The east bight is fully navigable expect for a shallow section at the end where Captain Crk and a smaller stream enters it. Because of its N-S orientation, this bight can be subject to strong winds flowing up it reducing its value as an overnight anchorage. Tenders and canoes can cross the shallows into Captain Crk and navigate it for a short distance. This creek entrance often features huge numbers of juvenile fish in its shallows. The forest surrounding the east bight is the home of lyrebirds who are most active just before dusk.

The bight to the west of the jetty ends in a semi rainforest/swamp area and can offer better protection.

A good bank anchorage is located immediately after the live tree lying in the water some 20 metres down from the reeds on the west entry point. A fallen dead tree trunk just before it looks tempting but is not as good as the live tree to tie up to.
**Isman Inlet**

Isman Inlet is a deep, well-sheltered inlet located adjacent to the junction of The Narrows and the Top Lake. Even when west winds funnel up it, a calm anchorage is available around its first bend (37° 30.93S, 149° 44.3E). An ideal picnic and swimming spot.

**South West Arm**

This arm is best entered from the Top Lake via the channel between Palmer Bank and Campshot Pt. Although a channel through Palmer Bank offers a short cut for boats coming out of the Genoa River, it is relatively narrow, difficult to find and somewhat shallow. It is much safer to navigate around Palmer Bank taking the navigation beacon to starboard before turning west for the arm. The waters between Palmer Bank and South West Arm are relatively shallow, particularly inshore between Campshot Point and Pipeclay Point. Keels may require partial lifting if entering under sail.

A small beach in the bight at Sandy Point (fireplace, toilets), on the arm's south bank, provides a pleasant beach picnic spot or an overnight anchorage. Being accessible from the road and good for swimming, the picnic spot is popular and busy during holiday periods. Further down, the arm splits into the inlets of Sword Grass Creek and Coolwater Creek. The former is shallow with a number of rock outcrops and is best avoided. The creek itself is navigable in high water periods by canoe or small tender, but fallen trees make even this unattractive after only a short distance.

The South West Arm jetty (fireplace, toilets) is located on the south bank at the start of the Coolwater Creek inlet. This jetty is also accessible from the road but unattractive for swimming due to heavy weed growths. Consequently it tends to be less crowded than Sandy Point but still draws a constant stream of sightseers and is popular with family fishing groups during the day. A cast of around 20 metres is required to clear the weed.

The jetty (37° 30.53S, 149° 41.62E) provides shelter from all wind directions including easterlies. The later tend to flow down the Sword Grass Creek inlet rather than past the jetty. A fireplace is located up the bank behind the jetty on the long path which leads up the hill to the car park, toilets and additional fireplaces. The path and gravel road which connect the car park to the Genoa - Mallacoota road, provide a pleasant walk through National Park Forest.

The Coolwater Crk inlet can be navigated with care to the creek entrance, particularly if water levels are high. Small boats can often clear the weedy shallows at the end of the inlet and penetrate a considerable distance up the deeper creek channel. The first reaches of the channel and shallows provide a nursery grounds for many fish species which at the right time are there in their hundreds.

**Smellie Inlet**

Four swinging anchorages and a bank anchorage are available within Smellie Inlet’s coves. The first in the cove at the NW top of the inlet, is not suitable in winds with a high southerly aspect. The best anchorage is in 1.5 metres of water with a firm mud bottom, 50 metres out from the tea-tree at the end of the cove. The shallow creek running into the inlet by the tea-
tree is navigable for 100 metres in small shallow drafted vessels.

The first small cove to the east of this anchorage is unsuitable due to its size, rock dangers and depth. However the next cove to the east provides a suitable anchorage in 1.5 metres of water and gives good protection for all winds except those with a high southerly aspect. Enter the cove on its west side to avoid a shallow rocky shelf on the east point. Anchor just inside the entrance to the cove. The adjacent small cove to the east offers similar shelter as well as a bank anchorage just inside the east point. The last anchorage is in the larger most easterly cove. This provides shelter from winds with a high easterly aspect in 2 metres of water on a firm mud bottom.

Goanna Bay
A busy, popular picnic spot exposed to winds having a southerly component. Jetty (fireplace, tables, and toilets) provides shelter from winds having a major northerly component. It is seldom used as an overnight anchorage due to its exposure to southerly winds. A prominent feature at this jetty are the mature rough apple bark trees on the slopes behind it. These large trees are not a member of the eucalypt family but are often mistaken for them. The trees are home to a number of large goannas who cadge food from visitors, even stealing meat directly from the hotplates and tables.

McKenzie Bight
A small attractive bight to the East of Goanna Bay Jetty provides excellent shelter from winds lacking a southerly component. Its entry is marked by Davis Point on the west side and an unnamed gravelly rocky point on the east side. The gravel and rocks extend out from this latter point in shallow water that can appear to be only weed and should be given a wide berth. The bight is best entered holding a north east course closer to Davis Point. A firm mud bottom gives good holding and the weed free water provides good swimming and a suitable picnic spot.

Point to Point Bight
Although the Top Lake shallows out in this bight, its most northerly corner can provide shelter and a calm picnic spot from strong easterlies and northerlies. Anchoring on the firm mud bottom before the weed begins allows weed-free swimming and a suitable overnight anchorage. A medium size creek flows into the head of the bight through a fairly well hidden entry point.

Although the shallow water over the bar at the entry normally prevents access, high water levels sometimes allows smaller shallow drafted trailer sailors to enter and anchor to the bank in a deeper hole just inside the entry. Tucked in behind the entry points, this anchorage provides shelter from all
wind conditions but can suffer from the presence of mosquitoes.

Like many others around Mallacoota Inlet, the shallow sandy creek entrance forms a nursery for many fish species and is well worth a visit. Once over the bar, the main creek has a narrow but well-defined channel clear of trees for at least 0.5 nM. This is worth exploring in a canoe or tender as it winds its way through banksia and river gum stands to open grassland banks. A smaller creek flows into the west bank of the main creek about 100 metres from the anchorage. This quickly becomes un-navigable due to fallen trees.

**Dead Finish**

The jetty (no facilities) on the NE bank between Point to Point Bight and Dead Finish can also as a useful anchorage in Easterly winds but is exposed and subject to short chop with strong Northerlies. This jetty is often used as a base by water skiers operating in Dead Finish. Their wash invariably causes constant problems to any boat moored at the jetty.

**Gravelly Point**

A navigation marker marks the end of the rocky, gravelly shallows and must be taken on the seaward side when approaching or leaving the Gravelly Point jetty (coin BBQ, tables). Its position gives excellent protection from all winds except northerlies that leave it open to an uncomfortable short chop. The shallow water on the west of the point can provide small quantities of prawns in season.

A small inlet to the South East of the jetty provides an alternative anchorage on firm mud and weed during southerly weather. However, the protection it offers from southerly winds is not as good as at the jetty due to funnelling of valley winds. The inlet is a popular feeding and roosting spot for black swans that often provide a noisy spectacle as they fly in at dusk.

**The Rivers**

The best approach to the Genoa River entrance from the Top Lake is a direct line up the river. A navigation mark (Fl.W) on the shore opposite Lyrebird Point provides the necessary reference point at night. This central course avoids the shallows of the Palmer Bank marked with a pole at its SE limit (37° 30.38S, 149° 42.65E) and the extensive shoal water (unmarked) lining the north bank of the Top Lake between Goanna Bay and the river entrance.

Wind patterns in the river area are heavily affected by the surrounding topography. The best sailing conditions in the river normally occur between the Top Lake and Cape Horn. This same stretch of water consistently produces some of the best tailor fishing available at Mallacoota.

**Genoa River Jetty**

Situated just upstream from the rivers entry into the Top Lake, the jetty – (37° 27.91S, 149° 42.11E) - has good facilities (fireplaces, tables, toilets, tank water). During summer days, the jetty is heavily used by water skiers operating in the surrounding river area. The wash from passing ski, fishing and
tourist boats can make life unbearable. In addition the jetty can also be reached by road making it a popular picnic spot for non-boat owners. As the busiest jetty on the lakes, it is not highly ranked by those who seek peace and quiet.

The water supply comes from the toilet roofs to a tap on the external wall of the toilets. The water can become tainted and coloured from gum leaves, but otherwise is potable. As its supply is limited, it should be used with discretion. When tying up at the jetty, make allowance for unexpected wind gusts that can come from any direction even in calm conditions. Moor with both stern and bow ropes and place fenders to protect the hull from boat wash action.

Genoa Fire Trail Inlet
A small inlet in the west bank of the Genoa River just upstream from the Genoa River jetty. This inlet provides an all-weather swinging anchorage in 1.5 metres of water in a picturesque rain forest gully setting. Hold closer to the north bank when entering to avoid the shallower water around the inlet's south point and bank. Best anchorage in centre of inlet.

Lyrebird Point Inlet
This inlet is usually unsuitable as an anchorage due to its shallowness (less than 1 metre).

Muddy Inlet
The deepest water in the inlet is on the east side whilst the west side is covered by extensive shallow water (less than 0.5m). There are two main positions to anchor. The first is just inside the inlet entry in 2.5 metres of water and the second is in the south east corner in 1.5 metres of water. The south east corner anchorage gives excellent protection from SW winds. Take care when anchoring to avoid underwater snags close in to east bank.

Cape Horn
When nearing Cape Horn from the Top Lake, keep to the centre or southern side of the river to avoid a mud bank (normally covered by shallow water) which extends out from the north bank for some 200 metres downstream from Cape Horn. A jetty at the beach on the apex of Cape Horn services the picnic facilities there (table, fireplace).

The SW corner of Cape Horn Bay provides an excellent swinging anchorage in water over 2 metres deep. The anchorage gives excellent protection from winds with a southerly aspect. Traffic noise from the Mallacoota - Genoa Rd that passes close by the anchorage, reduces its value.

Gipsy Point
The ramp and jetty (37°28.75S, 149°40.86E) at Gipsy Point, adjacent to the site of the old Gipsy Point Hotel, approximately 3nM up the Genoa River from the Top Lake, has no other facilities. The outer section of the jetty running parallel to the bank should be left free for the tour boats that call in. Overnight mooring should be restricted to the two end sections and adjacent river bank areas. Over the years some large flathead have been taken from the jetty at night using live bait.
A huge sea eagles nest is situated in a tree on the west bank about 0.5nM upstream of the Gypsy Point ramp. The tree is one of the last gums before the bank vegetation drops to a low level near the junction of the two rivers. The nest may be also reached via a walking path through the National Park area on the point. The path starts at the carpark by the river at the end of the Gypsy Point Lodge Rd.

**Wallagaraugh River**
The lower reaches of the Wallagaraugh River are usually accessible to trailer-sailers under motor. However it has many shallow bars and is difficult to navigate unless accompanied by someone with local knowledge.

A better option to see the rainforest area and other highlights of this beautiful river, is to take one of the tours Neil and Carry Rankin offer in their boat "Discovery" which has been purpose built for the job. Their Wilderness Tour normally passes through the inlet waterways, following the Wallagaraugh River as far upstream as the Vic/NSW border. In the process it visits, the **Bull Ring** (so named because of the stories told by fishermen who camped there), **Maiden Hair Bend** and the Rain Forest area.

Upstream of the junction, the Genoa River quickly shallows and can only be navigated by shallow draft vessels. From the junction, the deepest channel lies against the west bank. It then switches to the other side just before the private jetties are reached. The jetties are marked private but if there is space nobody would probably mind if you tied up for the night. Upstream of the jetties, the Genoa River passes through some very attractive country including a feature known as the rock wall. Few trailer-sailers would be capable penetrating this far upstream.

**Genoa River**
An alternative overnight mooring to the Gipsy Point jetty can be found upstream at the junction of the Genoa River and Wallagaraugh River. There are two options; against the sand bank on the SW bank, or directly opposite adjacent to the Speed restriction sign on the point separating "The Backwater" from the Wallagaraugh River.

Cruising Hints
If you have a **tender or canoe**, they are well worth taking to explore some of the shallower backwaters and creeks not accessible to trailer sailers. On shore **cooking equipment** is recommended to make best use of the excellent fireplaces and picnic facilities provided at the jetties. Remember that the wood supplies left by the National Parks rangers at the various fireplaces during Xmas and Easter periods are intended for day-trippers rather than overnighters to enjoy a roaring fire.
If the entrance to the inlet is blocked for a long period, Algae is occasionally present in the weed around the edges of the inlet. Contact with it can cause skin irritation and itching for some people. The problem is best avoided by swimming in open water and wearing waders when working in the weed (eg launching boats, prawning). Waders will also provide protection from sharp objects in the water such as barnacles and broken shells.

For extended cruises, take along a stiff brush on a long handle to scrub the hull down whilst you are having a swim. Doing this every 3 - 4 days helps prevent the build up of marine growths making packing-up to go home easier. Polishing the hull before leaving home will also help to reduce growth rates.

In general, the National Parks appear to have got it right when they positioned the jetties. They can be expected to give good all-round protection except for one or two notable cases (eg Goanna Bay and Kingfisher Point) where specific wind directions can make conditions extremely uncomfortable. Remember that camping on the banks is prohibited in the National Park.

The jetties are constructed with vertical rubbing strips. This makes a fender board a necessity if you want to avoid damage to your hull. Locate two fenders around a metre apart at the point of your boats maximum beam and hang the fender board horizontally on the outside of them. Locate the boat so a vertical rubbing strip on the jetty is in the centre of the fender board and secure the boat to the jetty using bow and aft warps in conjunction with springers.

The mud from the bottom of the lakes and inlets etc, consistently rates in the black, clings to everything category. A small washup brush can be used to scrub mud off the anchor chain whilst it is being lifted aboard and scrub off any leftovers. After washing down black mud deposits off a fibreglass surface, you often find that a shadow of the stain remains. An ammonia based kitchen cleaner such as Jiff, will normally remove these stains easily without damaging the fibreglass surface. Don't forget to wash off with fresh water after using it though.

When navigating river sections, the deepest water can generally be found on the outside of bends, with the shallowest water off points and the inside of bends. In wide stretches, shallow banks commonly form in the centre with the deepest water in a narrow channel against one bank or the other. In long straight stretches, the preferred bank for channels to form tends to be either the bank that continues the outside of the upstream entry curve or the bank that is the most steeply sloping.

Many of the bank and jetty areas of the Mallacoota waterways are accessible by car or walking tracks. It is wise to take security precautions when moored in these areas on the assumption that there's likely to be people around.

Mosquitos are not normally a big problem but must be taken seriously because of the risk of contracting health problems such as Ross River Fever. They are occasionally encountered in localised annoying numbers that can make life particularly difficult at dusk. Moving to another spot can often provide the answer. A special set of stormboards having large holes covered with mosquito netting
can also help to provide the necessary ventilation and cabin mossy proofing at night.

Plankton and other minute marine animals commonly cause the waters in the inlet to exhibit **phosphorescence** at night. Activities such as moving the hand through the water, casting stones into the water, or fish swimming can create exciting lighting effects.

**Fishing**

A **fishing licence** is required unless you are under 16 or qualify for an exemption (eg Seniors Card). The main fish species that can be caught include: Dusky Flathead, Tailor, Bream, Mullet, Garfish and Eels. Other species include Trevally and Leatherjackets from the town jetty, whilst an occasional Mulloway is hooked along the edges of the river channels.

Apart from a few trailer-sailer skippers who are serious fishermen, most yachty/fishermen will get their best results and satisfaction by trolling for tailor or drifting for flathead in the lake. A bream line over the side at the nights anchorage may also fool the occasional fish.

The estuarine nature of Mallacoota Inlet means that water temperature and salinity changes over the seasons and also depends considerably on rainfall, tidal movements and the extent that the ocean entrance bar is open or closed. This results in the fish moving around the lakes and up the rivers accordingly. Obtaining local advice on where they are biting can make a huge difference in your success rate.

Although most lures will attract a **tailor** at some time or other, one representing a gar fish works extremely well. Preferably it will be cigar shaped around 10cm long, be in silver and blue colours. If you tend to troll when sailing, the lure should have a fast action at trolling speeds around 2 - 4 knots and troll at a depth of 2 metres or less. Lures that float to the surface when not being trolled are better than those that sink to the bottom and get snagged everytime you tack or the wind drops.

Live bait such as small mullet or prawns work best with **dusky flathead**. If you haven't got the means to catch or store live bait, this means buying packet bait. Catching bait can be more fun than catching fish, particularly if you have children on board.

There are a number of locations that you can pump for **Ghost Nippers** *(Callianassa ceramica)* around the inlet. These include small sections of Cemetery Bight, Bakers Bight, Coulls Inlet, Captain Stevenson’s Point and tidal flats around the ocean entrance. Larger concentrations also can be found along the Betka River tidal flats.

For **bream**, use light lines (6kg max), and if possible, no sinker. Sand worms, shrimps, prawn, or nipper baits give the best results. Running a fine mesh net through the ribbon weed fringing the shorelines will get you enough fresh shrimp for 3 on a hook at a time.

With **mullet**, sand worms are an obvious choice. Alternatively a dough type bait made from mince meat, rice flour and curry powder can do the trick. Use a gar rig with a float and you
could end up with either mullet or gar and the kids can see what's going on. Occasionally berley around your float with a handful of mush made up from white bread, bran, sand and water. If you fish after dark amongst the weed with dead bait, it's highly likely you will end up with an eel. Some of them are of considerable size and capable of pulling in any rod that's not fixed to the boat in some way.

Catching prawns for bait or eating can provide a lot of fun for all members of a family. Pick a dark, no moon night, put on the waders or sandshoes and walk the shallows with a torch to locate them. In the beam of the torch, the eyes of any prawn will glow like two little red neons. A dip net can then be used to trap and lift them from the water. The best time to strike with the net is when they are stationary on a sand bottom, moving their legs to try and bury themselves. Under these conditions, the net can even be slowly moved through the sand under them.

The sandy shallows around Captain Stevenson's Point often provide the best prawning area in the lake. However, when the bar is open, the strong currents in the area make anchoring extremely hazardous. Best visited on foot.

Fresh prawns can be kept alive for quite long periods folded up in a cloth, kept constantly damp and stored in a cool place. Alternatively they can be kept alive in a live bait drum until required.

The best live bait drum for yachtyes is a large plastic drum with a screw top lid such as a canoe drum. Drill a lot of 10mm holes through the top half of the drum sides and screw top cap. Tie a rope through the handle on the lid that allows you to lower the drum over the side. Water then circulates through the holes to keep the baitfish, prawns, crabs, etc alive.

When you lift it on board, the holes in the upper half of the drum lets the water level drop making scooping out bait easier. The water remaining in the bottom half also means the bait survives whilst you sail with them in the cockpit. The holes in the lid allows fresh water to be occasionally poured in to freshen up the water in the drum without taking the lid off.

Short pieces of electrical conduit, fixed to the pushpit frame with hose clips can provide rigged rod storage, keeping the rods out of the way of people and yachting equipment. They can also be used to hold rods whilst trolling or fishing.
Emergency and Medical

Emergency

The Mallacoota Coast Guard maintain a communications watch and weather forecasting service for the area between 0700 and 2130 hrs, 7 days a week on 27meg, VHF and HF.

Marine radio reception and transmission (27 Meg and VHF) between boats remotely spaced is not possible from some areas of the lakes system due to intervening landforms. In such cases it is usually possible to contact an intermediate ship or Mallacoota Coast Guard who can pass on a message.

Boats operating in the Mallacoota lakes and waterways including the tourist boats "Discovery" and "Loch Ard" together with the Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources workboats, generally maintain a listening watch on Channel 90, on the 27Meg band.

Seaphone is serviced by a tower at Eden on VHF Channel 86 but due to the landforms between the Inlet and Eden, connection from a boat in the inlet is most unlikely.

Mobile phone reception varies considerably with many dead spots across the areas covered in this guide. The best reception is in the town and bottom lake area as the tower is located on the hill at Karbeethong.

Telephone Numbers:

Emergency – Fire, Police, Ambulance…………….000

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<td>(03) 5158 0263</td>
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<td>Shopping Centre</td>
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Further Reading

"Stepping Stones - A guide to Mallacoota and the Wilderness Coast"
Friends of Mallacoota Inc, Third Edition
ISBN 1 86252 739 3
Available from Friends of Mallacoota.
C/- Mallacoota Post Office, Mallacoota 3892.

“Creeks and Harbours of the Gippsland Lakes and Eastern Gippsland”
Richard Hawkins,
Salt Water Publications, Mt Martha (1994)
ISBN 0 9592578 6 1

“The Settling of Gippsland – A Regional History”
Patrick Morgan
ISBN 0646338579

“The Coast and Hinterland in Flower”
I.R. Mc.Cann,
A National Parks Association booklet
ISBN 1 875100 05 9