

Fly Fishing for Scalie

By

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I embark on this task with some sense of trepidation as I cannot claim any expertise when it comes to fishing for this species. My pursuit of the scalie is limited to the winter months when the rivers are clear and the black mamba is asleep. Call me timid, but bhudu basing in the middle of summer through the front yard of the world's most dangerous snake has never appealed to me. Nor has nymphing rivers so brown a Texan would call them coffee. So here I am, a neophyte of less than ten scalie fishing trips (at least three of which blanked) passing on advice on how to catch these critters. But judging from the paucity of information on the internet this may be enough to qualify me as an expert. So here goes. If you agree and want more, click [here](#).

What is a scalie?

This is the slang term for the KZN yellowfish or *labeobarbus natelesis*. It is found in a KZN rivers south of the Mkuze river from about 1500m to just shy of the estuarine zone and it is not the least endangered, even around trout. They live in shoals preferring warmer water and are by and large bottom feeders feeding omnivorously on algae insects and crabs.

Where and how do you fish for them?

The do live in Dams but unlike there Sterkfontein cousin the labeobarbus aeneus are predominantly targeted in rivers by anglers in this province. When the water is warm they can be found anywhere smaller specimens being found in abundance in fast flowing riffles. In winter one finds them where ever the water is warmest and there is also a food supply. This makes the run below a large shallow pool a reasonable bet most of the time.

Like most KZN flyfishing nymph fishing seems to be the order of the day, the more heavily weighted the better. Jig hooks are accordingly popular as you tend you hook up less frequently which is a boon especially if you are fishing more than one fly. The most popular techniques in winter are to wade deep and Czech nymph or stay dry and fish upstream and across.

As regards flies, almost any sparsely tied nymph will work, and in all colours. Be sure to have a decent selection of Zaks, Ptn Nymphs especially the orange hotspot, green nymphs and the GRHE in your box. One is bound to work. You can also go with scud patters but again keep them sparsely tied. Barbless works best and scalies do like a bit of bling so a touch of flash goes down well though not to much.

A three weight rod is more than enough. Leaders are long and don't go too light on the tippet if you can avoid it. You will lose a lot of flies to the bottom if you go any lighter than a 4x tippet. Fluorocarbon is best and a strike indicator helps a lot. The pools are not that deep so a sinking line is not required.

Oh and as I said scalies like warmish water so there is no need to arrive at the crack of dawn!