

April 2009



Australian Bass, *MACQUARIA NOVEMACULEATA*



THE BRONZE BATTLER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It seems only last week that I allowed myself to be re-elected. We have had a very productive year with new events to attend and a couple of new places visited by members. The club has grown with 4 new members which is very pleasing. Unfortunately, through no fault of our own, we have not been able to organise any new plantings but we have been busy with other things.

The Parramatta Weirs project is powering ahead ably fronted for Bass Sydney by Alan Fowkes, and with any luck all the fishways will be operational sometime next season. We still need to fulfil our funding obligations at Parramatta by attending the carp fishouts (none caught yet) and other possible activities. Our next calendar has an event on the Parramatta River, we intend to run this like a Bass catch and record all info, we have fished upstream before and caught nothing, so an informed decision can be made regarding future possible stocking.

We were informed at the Lane Cove event, by NPWS staff, that the repairs to or should I say the revamping of the fishway there was to start immediately. I also received news on the Hawkesbury Nepean Weirs project where all the weirs on the H/Nepean will have modifications made to them to allow for environmental flows and fish passage. We are having a presentation at our next GM on the project and members wishing to know more should attend the meeting, there will be 3 DPI staff attending so a good rollup is called for.

There is still no news on the Audley Weir Fishway, I think it will be all too hard. Our Bass catch events were well attended, the registration via the web site seems to be a success, we will need to advertise again early next season.

BS members attended two other clubs Bass catches this past season with members driving to Wingham for the Manning and to Clarence Town for the Williams. The catch rates seemed to be down at all events, maybe the rain has allowed the fish to disperse further upstream.

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Our Streamwatch testing is running better than ever with Milton acting as co-ordinator, with regular testing on the Georges & Lane Cove Rivers and on South Creek.

I will NOT be standing for the Presidency again this year, due to business commitments, and would like to thank the current committee for their effort this past twelve months and I am sure that the current VP will make a good President, especially if enthusiasm is taken into account.

Alan Izzard.

LANE COVE BASSCATCH

It was a very hot and blustery afternoon at the Lane Cove River on Saturday 7th February.

Members met at the fish-way to clean out accumulated debris, inspect the weir and take the opportunity to look at the lower saltwater exit area as the tide was out.

We also inspected the large leak on the saltwater side. This leak is only visible at low tide, but it is very apparent that a large volume of fresh water is lost every day. In times of fish migration during low water levels this leak robs the fish-way of flow.

Apart from that the fish-way was quite clean, no large logs this time.

Don't get too excited, but we found two Barramundi above the weir (centre photo below). Both were released just prior to us arriving, but unfortunately they were both deceased.



We all relocated to Cotton Woods area 13 meeting Andrew Duffy, the Lane Cove Area ranger. Andrew gave us a brief on the fish-way modifications that were planned to commence the following week.

Most of us hit the water about 4.30pm ever hopeful of a reasonable catch result by 9.30pm. Members spread out from end to end, but the results were disappointing again. Fourteen members fished for 53 hours producing just seven fish.

The interesting thing was that Garnet caught five fish (130, 155, 157, 165 & 172). Alan Izzard caught a very powerful 372 whist Neville Lelo bagged a 210. Past catch data revealed a distinct lack of smaller fish so it was very encouraging to see the fish sizes caught by Garnet. By the way a small gold Taylormade lure did the trick.

By about 9pm we all decided to pull the pin and call it a night.

I think the conditions probably did not help, a very hot day, high winds, low barometer, warm water and low oxygen levels.

Maybe we could consider early October as a better time to have this event.

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ROPES & SOUTH CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT LAUNCH

Greening Australia, Australia's largest non-government environmental organisation announced the official launch of the Ropes and South Creeks Environmental Project on Friday 13th February at Mamre House.

This project is a partnership between Greening Australia, NSW Environment Trust, Penrith City Council, Blacktown City Council and Hawkesbury River County Council.

The project includes restoration/re-vegetation, weed management and community engagement components all designed to deliver environmental improvements to the banks and open spaces surrounding the Ropes and South Creek sub catchments of the Hawkesbury Nepean River and create sustainable managed scenic parklands for the residents of the Penrith and Blacktown communities..

More than 500 hectares will benefit from the program, consisting of six individual sites within the catchments, three each on Ropes and South Creeks with the planting of more than 150,000 native trees and the removal of weeds including African Olive, Privet, Green Cestrum and Blackberry.

Greening Australia's River Recovery Nursery at Oxley Park will be open two days a week to support the project and provide a tangible way for interested residents to participate with field trips and training on bush regeneration techniques, seed collection and plant propagation.

Plants propagated by local volunteers will be donated to local Bushcare and landcare groups and local schools.

Greening Australia is also supporting a schools education program that trains students to assess the health of local waterways and develop action plans to assist the remediation of environmental issues.

Greening Australia has been delivering sustainable environmental outcomes in Western Sydney for more than 20 years and is pleased to continue this work through the Ropes and South Creek Project with state and local governments and the local communities.

Greening Australia

Rowan Wood, Greening Australia River Recovery Program Manager welcomed all then introduced Peter Dixon, Manager Environmental Funding Programs from Department of Environment & Climate Change.

Peter advised that one billion dollars would be spent on the NSW environment with two million dollars earmarked for Ropes & South creeks.

Others to speak were the Mayor of Penrith Council Jim Akin, Mayor of Blacktown Council Charles Lowles, David Butcher CEO of Greening Australia and finally Dania Blanch, team member of Green Core. Green core have been propagating seeds, removing rubbish, invasive weeds, planting many areas and caring for the environment.

BASS SYDNEY BASSCATCH

I'm sure all active members were looking forward to the February Basscatch. Everyone was making plans to fish here, to fish there, to camp here and to camp there, then suddenly the heavens opened and the big wet set in.

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This event changed a few plans, but did wonders to the river. Most of the Salvinia has gone and there was a good flow. It was really a pleasure to be on the water, but for us plan A did not eventuate.

We had decided to camp Friday and Saturday nights at the Nepean River Caravan Park just upstream from the Penrith weir on the Emu Plains side.

Alan had arranged a key for the Russell street gate which would give us access to the river from the Emu Plains Correctional Centre all the way down to where Jacksons Lane once crossed the river. A nice reach probably not fished all that often.

Jim kindly picked up the key from Penrith Council just prior to the Basscatch and to be sure of directions and check the track condition entered through the Russell street gate and drove down to the water. It was a bit rough towards the end, but not too bad. Suitable for two wheel drive provided the rain stayed away.

Because the Caravan Park camping area was very wet with pooling water we opted to meet at the Russell Street gate at 7.30am on Saturday morning and spend a big day fishing downstream. Things looked a bit ominous heading out on the M4 as the rain became heavier & heavier. Not looking good I thought.

New member Ashley Thamm, Alan, Garnet, Jim & I rendezvoused at the gate as planned and proceeded down the track all keen ready to fish somewhere new. At the first fork someone had dropped a large pile of earth right across a branch track where we needed to go. Now who would have done that we thought. We all hoped out in the rain and looked for a way past, but no luck. Bugger. We can only assume someone saw Jim in there the previous Thursday and decided we were out of bounds!

Plan A was out the window, so time to think about plan B. Plan B ended up being Devlin's to Yarramundi. We finally got on the water at 9.30am, two hours late.

As mentioned the river looked great, so lets go get em. Hmmmmm, sounded good in theory, but the Bass were on hold. Situation normal.

Garnet went downstream whilst the rest of us went up. Met Wayne Bennett and Rob Lauterbach upstream, they had 28 between them, we had one.

Ok, let's head down to Adrian Devlin's place for lunch and meet Garnet. Not sure of the tally at lunch, but it wasn't pretty. Maybe six.



lunch



salvinia & water hyacinth



water hyacinth

One thing we noted was the increase in water hyacinth. This noxious weed completely blocks all access and in some areas the infestation will grow up the 0.5 metre high. This will be a huge problem in the long term maybe even worse than Salvinia because it is such a robust type of plant.

After lunch we just fished hard all the way down both sides of the river. Garnet & I were tail end Charley's so we just potted along catching the odd Bass during intermittent showers. We were totally engrossed and didn't notice how dark it was getting. One thing with polarized glasses, when there's no sun you don't get a real perspective of the situation.

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A huge bolt of lightening followed quickly by a big clap of thunder suddenly jolted us into reality. Shit, I think Garnet said, we better get out of here. Let me tell you it's no fun paddling like the clappers in a big thunder storm when your paddle has an aluminium shaft. When we entered the narrow running section down to Yarramundi the heavens opened with such ferocity it was almost impossible to see. Forget trying to keep dry, just paddle as fast as you can and get off the water. Garnet and I now hold the paddling record from Kooringal St (river access between Devlins and Yarramundi) to Yarramundi Bridge. Grant Kenney would have been left in our wake.

While all this was happening Al & Jim were nice and dry enjoying a coldie in Al's truck out of the storm. Some people.

Jim and I loaded up my kayak, got drenched again and hit the road back to Penrith and to Jim's place. The storm between Yarramundi and Penrith was unbelievable. The rain so heavy it made driving almost impossible. It was almost extremely difficult to see the road. Most stopped and waited. Luckily no hail.

It was a very eventful day, enjoyable except the last bit. Both Al and Jim were frustrated due to the lack of Bass.

By the way that famous saying is true, Bass always bite well prior to a thunder storm. Sadly we left them biting their heads off to save our skins.

Catch results: Garnet 21, Milton 11, Alan 4, Ashley a PB and sadly Jim lucked out.

BASSCATCH FEBRUARY '09, SUNDAY 22/2/09 **(Reach 3B & 3A)**

For weeks it seemed like it was either heat waves or cool fronts and rain, rain, rain. I was totally ready for the Feb BassCatch this year. I had only been bassin' 3 times since being back in Oz. The Oct BassCatch was really fun while my last bass outing, at the LCR was fishless. The week & a half of rain leading up to the BassCatch had me, and I suspect a few others, anxiously poring over BOM forecasts and river conditions. The event was cancelled, postponed to another date and then reverting back to the original timings when we found that the river had not been very strongly affected.

I was meeting up with Neville and new member Anthony, Nev's brother-in-law. I thought I was helping bass virgin Anthony to his first AB, but his bass cherry was popped the day before when he & Nev fished a few hours around Devlins. *Just as well, as it proved later!*

We met & launched at Wallacia and were on the water by 0730h. My old yellow kayak almost looking dull next to Nev's & Anthony's colourful craft! Conditions were overcast & cool and even though the water looked fine, the coolness of the air had me a little worried. And so it proved, with only Neville landing 2 fish for the next 4hrs. According to Nev, water temp was ~23° C which doesn't sound that low to me. By 11am, all of us were feeling discouraged and we decided to turn around to return to the launch point where I thought we'd have a stretch and a bite to eat, before continuing down to the weir and below.

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Nev with his 1st fish of the day (Betts spin)

In the half hour or so on the way back to the starting point, the sun finally peeped out and things warmed up slightly. The boys had motored along ahead of me while I was encouraged by the warming conditions and did a little fishing on the way. It had seemed to rev things up - cicadas were buzzing, bell birds ringing and I thought I detected a slight increase in bass activity level. We all had short strikes all day, but I seemed to get a few more hits in that period. I finally landed my 1st and only fish so far, a whopper of 110mm!! So, one tiny fish for nearly 4hrs work! I was starting to think an early mark, with some lunch on the way home, was starting to sound attractive!

When I caught up with the boys at our launch point at Wallacia Bridge, Nev had had enough. Anthony had zip and I had the one tiddler at this stage. After a 10 minute stretch & lunch break, I left the boys to pack up and get on their way. Restored by the invigorating effect of the high glycemic index and fat effect of peanut butter & jam, I was back on the water. After all, I had a leave pass today to fish and I was gonna stick to it! A couple of minutes later, under the bridge, I got my 2nd, another whopper of 108mm. *Things are looking up, or were they just getting worse ... ??*



Nev & Anthony about to pull the plug @ lunchtime (wimps!!)

Fishing my way down to the weir, I picked up another 3 fish. The weather continued to alternate between sunny breaks and overcast conditions. It wasn't a feeding frenzy, but the post-lunch session was definitely an improvement on the morning session.

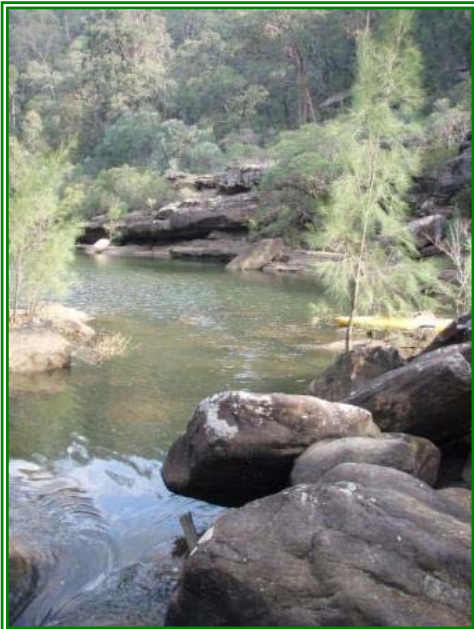
As usual, the black Crickhopper was the most successful lure on the day.

I lost a good fish early in the morning session when a perfect cast deep into & under cover was rewarded with a topwater hit and a flash of a 300mm+ bass. Via a combination of surprise, slow reflexes and a minor equipment malfunction (bail arm has no spring & can flip back open); it wrapped me around a tree root and got away. When I recovered the lure, I found that the whole rear hook assembly had torn out from the Crickhopper! I always modify my Crickhoppers for bassin' by removing the front treble and replacing the rear treble with a larger one. It was a pretty old lure, I guess it's just worn out!! This was the second Rebel Crickhopper to be lost in recent times,

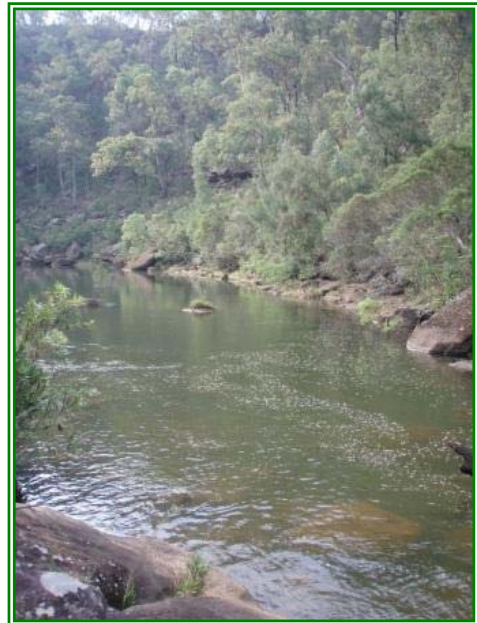
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having lost one on the Georges R. Luckily, I received a clone/knock-off as a raffle prize during the last BS meeting, so I had another "Crickhopper" ready to go. This one however, had the original small trebles in place. It annoyed me all day with its tendency to foul itself on the leader and the trebles tangling with each other. *That's why I modify them!* I was to lose this too, but only after it had done its job for the day and is now, annoyingly, stuck in bush on the track leading up from the water under the bridge. After 12 hrs on the water, I was in no shape to start looking for a tiny lure stuck in vines & sticks! The knock-offs work fine and as I'm Crickhopper-less now, I'll need to re-stock before my next outing!

The water below the weir was flowing well and the river was up & easily navigable. Water was pouring down the old fishway as well as going over the weir. Water colour was even better than above, with water temperature feeling about the same. It's quite narrow & gorge-like below the weir and I enjoyed fishing the moving-water scenario which is less frequent in Aussie Bass fishing. I was wishing I had fished below the weir all day now, but would it have made any difference to the morning session? I guess we'll never know. I had the whole place to myself after lunch - from the bridge to the weir and below the weir. The sun kept appearing more often in the arvo and conditions were really pleasant.



Below the Weir



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Most importantly, the bite was definitely better below the weir in the arvo. Possible contributing factors were: air temperature going up, sunnier conditions, shallower water below the weir warming from the sun & conditions ?? I worked the water under the weir for about 10 mins, but got nothing there. I thought maybe there were schooled fish below the weir, but not this time of year I guess. Not a lot of shade available in the gorge country with the sun still being high, but the fish still hugged the shade among the rocks and eddies off the main current. I landed 7 fish below the weir in 3 hours, including a fighting fit 314mm specimen who took my small black spinnerbait and gave me a good fight, even though it was taken on my heaviest combo, the baitcast outfit. It was taken from a side eddy with a bit of shade while the yak was in some fast moving water. I also got the largest AB of my summer so far, a 332mm specimen which fought very half-heartedly, even on my UL spin.



332 mm



314 mm spinnerbait muncher

I got back to the weir and dragged my yak up and over it and was back in Reach 3A by around 6:30pm. Paddling back to the bridge took me another hour with some more fishing thrown in. I was to finish with the last fish of the day, from just downstream of the bridge. Total: 13 fish for the day, with 12 coming after lunch; 12 hours' effort. The total number of lures used, 16, with only 2 being successful. Cost: 2 x Crickhoppers and pair of polarized sunnies. In spite of the S-L-O-W start, I enjoyed my BassCatch. *Now, I better look for some cheap Crickhopper clones before I get out again!*

By: HS Tham

MANNING RIVER BASSCATCH

Seven very keen Bass Sydney members rolled into the Wingham traveling stock reserve and began setting up camp on Friday afternoon. One member was so keen he traveled all the way from Queensland. That shows enthusiasm.

Camp chores completed we checked the Manning river flow at the Charity Creek bridge just to be sure it was safe for the following day. There was a fair bit of water coming down, more than last November so this was a little concerning.

Back at camp it was happy hour under Nev's gazebo as the rain started. Hmm, looks like a typical Bass Sydney weekend approaching. Somehow the beer and cheer helped keep our spirits up and believe it not the sky was clear on Saturday morning. You beauty!

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The plan was to split into two groups, Alan, Garnet, Gordon and the Ed would fish Killawarra bridge to Abbot Falls whilst Anthony, Chris, Nev and Les would fish Abbot Falls to Wingham.

The reach down from Killawarra bridge was new to us so we started with much enthusiasm, but it wasn't long before we realised that it was going to be a tough day at the office. The river had a bit of colour after the recent floods but the Bass were in shut down mode. Gordon's barometer told the story. Never mind, just keep casting and stay positive.



some nice looking Bass water



Gordon with his Bass before the storm

Lunch was declared at the big bend and rapid where Dingo Creek joins the Manning. We were advised to portage around this rapid, we all pulled aside and walked about looking for a safe passage, not Al, he just lined up the best spot and went for it. As we know once committed there's no turning back and as the drop offs appeared I'm sure Al suddenly had second thoughts. No drama apart from a little water on board, the good old Bass kayak did the job. Needless to say the three chickens found a way around and gave it a miss.

After lunch a developing cloud mass began to look and sound very ominous so we stopped fishing to don wet weather gear. Luckily we missed the main fury of the storm but decided to keep on the move and not fish as the wind was at our backs. They always say Bass bite well just before and during a storm, but we didn't test the theory. Maybe next time.

We fished the long pool down to Abbot Falls as the rain eased and the sun reappeared. Our concerns about the river flow wasn't an issue after all.

Results: Al three, Garnet five, Gordon one and the Ed four. Believe it not my catch included one Bream, way up in the fresh.

After shuttling cars it was back to camp for a cold shower, followed by cold beer, not bad after a long hot day. Shame though, no PB's were broken as the big girls stayed home.

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Anthony, Nev, Chris and Les had a tough day (?) although Anthony lost a big fish right under his kayak. He comment was, this will make me hungry for more.

The boys from Wingham Anglers arrived about 8pm to cook us a Barby, so it was a nice way to finish the day although a bit late and we were all too tired to socialise late into the evening.

For more of a story and some great photos of Nev, Anthony, Chris and Les on the Abbot Falls to Wingham reach please see the separate article emailed with this edition. I could not successfully insert it into this Battler as it was a pdf document.

HNF Williams River Basscatch

The first BassCatch I ever went on was in fact, on the Williams R way back in Spring 1996. I had just joined Bass Sydney and this was the next event on the calendar. I turned up with an old friend who lived in the Hunter. We fished around Clarence Town and downstream, around Glen Oak, off his fiberglass B-Line canoe with an electric motor. My friend Neal was the person who first filled me with stories of 'perch fishing' on the Macleay R. It was Neal who took me to catch my first ever bass, out of the Macleay, way back in 1993! He showed me how to catch the shrimps out of the weedy riffles of the Macleay and use them to good effect on the Macleay bass and tandanus catfish. I was with Neal when I returned to the Macleay the next year with a canoe and he was on board when I caught my first ever AB on a lure (Rooster Tail spinner).

I last talked to Neal & his wife Helen over 4yrs ago when I dropped in after the Karuah R trip in Oct/Nov 2004. I never kept in touch while we were in the US, but I never thought much about it – Neal is a man of few words and besides, when its someone you've known for over 25 yrs, it usually doesn't matter, does it ? When I was going to this March's HNF BassCatch on the Williams R, I finally decided to call Neal & Helen. I wasn't going to be calling in to their place in Branxton that weekend, but it was enough of a trigger for me to make contact & catch up. I called up on the Thursday before the HNF weekend and was stunned to discover that Neal passed away about 18 months ago !!

On that mental note, I arrived at the Clarence Town camping ground late Friday evening. I rushed to set up the tent before dark and was soon settled into some sausage sangers, courtesy of the HNF Club. River reaches were soon decided to ensure adequate and even coverage. I requested to fish an "upper stretch" of the Williams as I've not been and I'm well aware that there have been some years when great fishing was experienced up there. Luckily for me, I was allocated to fish the Xxxxx to Xxxx Xxxx reach (HNF Reach 3) with Geoff, the DPI/Fisheries representative and Ashley, a new Bass Sydney member.

We got on the water 0735h and the water was quite coloured and I was a little discouraged, but I thought (hoped?) it was going to be OK, with lure visibility around 12" or less. Nothing I can do about that now I thought - I'll have to adjust accordingly depending on what happens in the next hour or so. I was

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the last of our trio to land a fish, a tough THREE (3!!) hours or so before I got my 1st fish for the day, a healthy little bass of 202mm on a small, black spinnerbait with a gold blade. I started with 3 outfits on board – the small black spinnerbait on the baitcaster, small buzzbait on the L spin and small crankbait on the UL spin. I actually had a couple of slurps on the buzzbait, but no hookups. I soon removed the buzzer for other lures.



Breakfast, early Sat morning.



It's not snowing, but the camera flash catches the fog and moisture in the air



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Well before I caught my first fish of the day I was delighted with the beauty of this stretch of river. It looked so similar to my (ex-) home smallmouth stream in Alabama – plenty of moving water, rapids, rocks, woody snags and mucho overhead cover! Lots of riffles and rapids interspersed with shallow runs and deeper pools. Classic river fishing, a little bit of whitewater adrenaline mixed with great scenery

amidst the faint smell of bass on fingers & gear.

The morning fog hung around before finally burning off around 11 am. Along with the coloured water, it was often hard to tell if you were casting into 6 inches or 6 feet of water. I think we all knew it wasn't going to be an easy day.

The dispiriting 5½ hr pre-lunch session ended with 6 fish for me, most around the 200mm mark, largest going 248. The others scored about the same. We all reported many short hits and several dropped fish. I certainly tried a few different lures – small firetiger spinnerbait/silver blade, popper, Jitterbug, buzzbait, Hocus Locust, SP worm, larger spinnerbaits, jerkbaits and so on. My fish were caught on the small black spinnerbait and a small surface paddler. I was cursing the lack of a black Crickhopper. Still, I thought it was a glorious stream and a soul-soothing treat for this Sydney angler. I must point out this was “work” for Jeff. He told us that he was wearing his PFD in strict compliance to the DPI's OH&S rules as he was working & not just enjoying a recreational paddle, casting lures. *Awwwww!!* Jeff's and Ashley's fish were similarly landed on a mix of surface lures (a small black “Bat” was especially popular) and “hard bodies” or what I just call “crankbaits” now. *A tiny bit of America rubbed off on me after all!?*



Jeff, on the job & Ashley with one

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On many streams in the US, it is considered a sign of a healthy waterway to have a thriving population of (native) mussels. Though not nearly as abundant as I've seen in the US, there were a few mussels, scattered about by the recent floods, at the spot we stopped for lunch. I thought it was a good sign and a few were massive!



After lunch, we were back on the water around 1:30pm. None of us had run this stretch before and soon started to nervously glance at the time. We didn't want to shoot the last rock bar before the take-out in the dark as we'd been warned that it involved a near-90 degree turn mid-way through. *Actually, I think I annoyed my float partners a bit for the rest of the day by displaying little inclination to "hurry along"! What a bastard I am! Heh Heh!* We made it well before dark!!

I discovered that both Jeff & Ashley had Minnow kayaks, but Ashley's was a little different in shape and at 15 yrs old, obviously an early model, in great condition. *Ash even had the right colour! ☺* The coincidences didn't stop there! We then found out that all 3 of us are or have worked as Food Technologists! How about that one – 3 Food Technologists on a small stream together!?

The next 2 hrs went just like the morning session with plenty of lovely river in all its rippling forms, but few fish. It was then that I saw a lure in my HB pack, a never-used, relatively new, baitfish pattern CD-5 Rapala, a sinking minnow/crankbait which I never had in my Aussie Bass pack, but (in other colours) probably my 2nd all-time favourite lure for trout. I threw this lure in with the Aussie Bass lures in the tackle box as it was, in latter years, Neal's go-to lure for bassin'. I introduced him to this lure by getting him on to stream trout fishing. He surprised me later by using what I thought would be a highly snag-prone, sinking lure in gnarly bass fishing country. He'd try to put as good a cast to a target as always and let the CD-5 sink in front of the target as long as he dared and then wind it back. It worked for him. I simply never bothered to dice with snags that way when I could use much more user-friendly lures like spinnerbaits. On this day, in memory of Neal, I tied it on with a loop knot on the L spin.

Almost straight away I started catching fish on the Rapala. I had to get it TIGHT to cover, let it sink and then twitch it out, but we already knew that we had to be right on the money to have a chance of a hit. It's the 2 trebles waiting to clutch at anything that was the worry, but in just over an hour, I landed 10 fish, all on the

CD-5! Its not the sort of crankbait we normally associate with AB's, with its tight shimmy as opposed to the wider sway of Aussie native lures. The fish included a couple over the 300mm mark with a healthy 338mm fish my best of the season so far. This fish gave me heaps! Ashley was nearby when I hooked up and I'm sure it looked excitingly out-of-control with a very bent rod,

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drag going off in bursts and furious one-armed back-paddling. I managed to stay connected and dragged it clear. *Thank you Neal!!*



338mm



329mm

The last hour or so was spent mainly paddling to the take-out spot. Jeff & Ashley kept going ahead with the occasional "hurry up!" to me. When I got a rapid with a near-90 degree left turn on it, I thought we might be close to the end and so it proved when I heard jubilant cheers from ahead. Talking rapids, I was delighted with the number of rapids that I was able to shoot or at least bump-&-grind down. I think I only had to portage 2 or 3 rapids in total. Jeff & Ashley were much more responsible and gentler on their yaks and portaged most of the rapids. I (or my knees at least) was grateful for the water level because if the water level was only 1 or 2" lower, I would have had to get out for many more rapids than I did. Still, some clearer water would've been nice! Actually, there was one rapids where ALL 3 rods I had on board, with lures attached, jammed straight into some vegetation on the way through. I remember thinking, "Uh oh! I'm going to break at least one rod...", only to see all 3 outfits pop straight out, undamaged! Lucky!!

I added only another 2 fish in this last 2 hrs, taking my total for the day to 19. Back at camp that night, my total was around average – some caught more and some caught bigger specimens. The tally from Jeff & Ashley for Saturday was 11 for Jeff and 7 for Ashley. Hard luck story – Ash hooked up big time early in the day; I can see the rod had a serious bend in it only for it to come off halfway to the yak. We never saw it, but it was a goody! I don't

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know who got the Big Fish of the day/weekend, but our Chris G's 345 might be close. My smallest was a 98mm fish on the CD-5 which is roughly half the size of the little bass! It was a long day with around 11hrs on the water.

By the time we did the shuttle and got back to Clarence Town, it was nearly time to eat again! The HNF BassCatch is well organized and always a nice event on our Aussie Bass calendar. Our thanks and appreciation goes to Harold and Hunter Native Fish! Dinner, followed by a couple of beers, a hot shower and I hit the sack. I planned to just fish around CT on Sunday morning and break camp around lunch time & head home.

I put in 4½ hrs effort around CT & only scored 4 fish for Sunday morning, all below 160mm. Whatever! HNF's Harold went downstream to Glen Oak where he caught over 30 fish for the morning! The water around CT had clearly been flogged to death the previous day and before I got out with several boats on the water. Continuing the "trout lure theme" I also tried an old Celta spinner which caught a couple, including another 98mm fish. All 4 fish on Sunday were caught either on the CD-5 or the Celta.

Breaking camp, and saying my goodbyes saw me on the road south by around 2:45pm and home before 6pm. Funny ol' weekend! A beguiling weave of sad memories, coincidences, tinges of guilt, traffic, fish, white water, brown water, lovely early Autumn weather and the success of more 'unusual' lures.

HS Tham

Ashley's first HNF BassCatch

Having left a very understanding wife with two small children I was feeling pretty lucky as I started driving on Friday morning. Being new to the Bass game I am also new to sticking my head out of the car window every time I cross a bridge, scouting and making mental notes for future exploration. With my kayak on the roof, all my fishing gear in the car, and a weekend to myself, it was nearly impossible to keep driving.

After setting up camp I was onto the river quickly to see what it had to offer. The water was not as clear as I had hoped, it had rained recently, however I was still hoping for some clearwater fishing, something that you don't get in the Lane Cove. After a few casts with no luck, trying a few different lures I soon realised that I was going to have to work just as hard for the these Bass as I did back home.

After meeting everybody, and then forgetting everybody's names just as quickly, i turned in for an early night.

Saturday morning we awoke to thick fog, which made for a beautiful mornings fishing as the sunlight glittered off the water and the fog

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swirled around its surface. Fishing was slow, if that's the right word? We couldn't find any fish, but from what I've read bass don't like the cold. Neither do I so I was hoping they would start getting active when the fog lifted. This took til around 10:30.

As predicted the fishing started heating up when the weather did, with a few fish around the 200mm mark being taken in quick succession.

I learnt my first valuable lesson for that day, as I lost my hardest fighting fish and possible PB by giving it a split second of slack as I reached for a net. That's all the time this Bass needed and she jumped straight off my hook. Next time, stuff the net!!

Most memorable fishing of the day came from the mouth of a small creek that looked incredibly bassy and sure enough first cast with a Kokoda bat - 'strike'. Thinking he probably wouldn't go for the lure again I started the retrieve and had an additional three strikes before my lure was back in the boat. It took 5 casts to hook that fish with multiple strikes each cast and it was very satisfying getting him in the boat.

It was good seeing Tham having success with spinnerbaits, as i had previously used them without success, and watching Jeff patiently working the surface until it paid off, seeing him getting surface hits in the middle of the day made me swap lures a few times and landed me more fish than the diving lure i had been using.

So at the end of the day I had landed 7 fish, dropped countless more, broke a cheap reel I'd bought for the trip, travelled around 14km, flipped my kayak for the first time, seen some incredible country, and learnt a couple of new tricks to take home and practice. A good days fishing!!

Thanks to all involved for being so generous.

Ashley Thamm

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**Next Meeting is the AGM
Tuesday 14th April**

GUEST SPEAKERS

Please note: our guest speakers at the AGM will be:

- (1) Tony Collins – Director, Metropolitan Water Plan - Sydney Catchment Authority.
- (2) Scott Nichols – Conservation Manager DPI.
- (3) Holly Langler – Senior Community Engagement Officer, Sydney Catchment Authority.

We need a big roll up to show numbers, so please make a huge effort and turn up. It will be much appreciated by the committee. Even bring along a visitor. Bass Sydney will lose cred if we have three speakers and six to eight members.

Don't be put off because it's the AGM. All the major committee positions have already been filled, so come along for an interesting evening.

Thank you.

FISHING DAY CHANGE

Please note - due to lack of interest the Patonga day on the 18th of April has been changed to Berowra Creek. You can choose either the 18th or 19th.

Turn right into Somerville road off Galston road Hornsby Heights, then at the end you will enter Crosslands. You can fish either fresh or salt. For more information please talk to Garnet.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I will not be standing for the Editors job at the AGM. I need to step back and take a breath.

May I say thank you to all members who were only too happy to write articles and send photos. It makes the job a lot easier - please keep it up and support our new Editor.

Milton Lazarus.

PO Box 136 NORTHMEAD NSW 2152

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