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President's Message

February already!!? This season seems to have flown by and its already nearly time for our second Bass Catch of the season. It's been a productive Summer so far with members catching some memorable fish from both local waters and further afield. The last 2 or 3 years of high rainfall combined with the revamped fish ways, now in their third season of operation, has made a big difference to the bassing. As always, we encourage all members and their friends to participate in the BassCatch. Just don't forget to return your Catch Cards!

We are also approaching our AGM in April. We have reached a juncture in time where some of our most long-serving, productive and committed Committee members are well... getting old and would like to do less and enjoy their "Golden Years". With the club being in the healthiest position in many years and with a high profile, it's a good time for our younger &/or newer members to step up to the plate and take on some roles that we need to keep our club moving forward. As per our Constitution, I will step down as President after holding that position for the last 2 years. ALL Committee positions are up for grabs and I strongly encourage members to consider what you can or like to do to keep the club vibrant and relevant.

Feel free to speak to me individually or any other Committee member if you want to know more about any position.

Happy Bassin' !

HS Tham

Manly Dam

The forecast for the 19th of December was not looking promising. The hottest day in Sydney's history the day before saw the barometer plummet below 1000, but the cool late change had helped the pressure get back around 1010 by the time we launched at 4:30am.

The first lure to be tested out today was a new Wildfire surface lure that I had acquired the day before. The Wildfires are based on old Peter Newell designs and I have been impressed with the ones I have tried recently. A small bass nailed it right at the launch on the second cast so the lure definitely did the job, well until it started sinking.....

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Time to try something else and it was back to the trusty soft shell after a fruitless hour testing out some new divers I had made up. I had one good hit on my divers, but unfortunately it didn't stick to the single hooks.

By now the others had started trickling in so I headed over to the gate to hand out a few gifts generously donated by our newest sponsor, Pro Lures Australia.

Members were given a choice of a blade or a pack of soft plastics and it didn't take our newest member Peter long to hook up to a Bass on a Pro Lures Blade.



(Photo courtesy of Pete)

Meanwhile I had snuck over to the lily beds and was getting a few small fish on the soft shell. There were bigger fish in here, so I switched over to a Dreamfish weedless frog hoping to coax one out of the deeper cover. It took all of 5 mins for it to be inhaled by a mean 350mm Bass that absolutely belted the frog as I hopped it over the top off a lily pad.

Pretty darned excited I paddled over to Josh who had also switched to the weedless approach. Unable to find decent gaps in this new patch of lilies for the lure to actually get to any water we switched to fishing the frogs deep in the reeds, looking for any tiny gap to throw our lures. It didn't take long for Josh's frog to be treated in the same manner by another good fish and Josh got to find out how fun it is actually extracting a fish from that deep!

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(Photo courtesy of Josh)

The wind started howling so I packed up leaving the others to troll around in the deeper water. In total we ended up with 27 Bass (and 1 redfin) between 10 members, not a bad effort for an unproductive day.

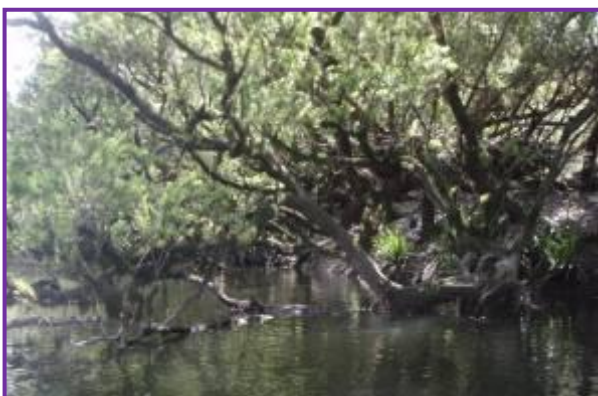
Season 2012/2013 north coast bass trips with Shayne

October 2012 trip

Shayne Alexander and I spent two days in October on a mid north coast river on what was my first trip of the season. Catching EPs in local estuaries doesn't rank with a wild river bass. The river was as low as it's been for > 6 years and I knew there'd be far more rocky rapids and runs than at normal level. This also meant that there would be less fishable water. I always try to do these trips in the dark of the moon, but there would be some moon on this trip. My unproven theory – based on observation from many freshwater trips – is that:

- a) the moonlight switches off the night time action; and
- b) it's not only the light on the water but also the 'gravitational' effect on the fish through the water column.

Arrangements for Paul, a good mate in the area, to drop us off upriver were set and we left my place at 5.30 am full of anticipation. I'd fished this system many times, but it was a first for Shayne. I had the trusty Minnow and Shayne had a sit-on that I suggested would be less stable in the rapids. This was my first outing for the season, whereas Shayne already had some numbers on the board.



Paul dropped us upriver and



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brought the car back to his place, where we'd get it the next day. After the drop-off, we set off and started casting 300 m from the put-in. We tossed lures into shade under bankside trees. Shayne flicked his Betts Spin around rocks in fast mid-river water and, just after I said 'They'll be unlikely to be there... ', he pulled in two nice fish in the high 30s. I flogged the banks without success and Shayne continued to pick up fish.



Light rain and a cool breeze before we got to the wet and cold enough to want to change into dry up camp on a friendly farmer's property (he lives is only on the property every 3-4 weeks) where several times. This is on a section that that has numerous good fish.

Before dusk, we paddled back up to the rapids at long home pool and Shayne scored four fish in on his home-made Katharsis paddler (photo below). I continued to fall behind on the score sheet - not that we were keeping count.

It wasn't until around 2.00 pm that I got my first hook-up for the season - at last a fish! A 3" green worm on a Betts Spin flicked deep into a snag in a backwater was grabbed by a fish that peeled drag off the little Stradic and looked like burying me in a snag on the other side. It was good to feel the weight of a good fish and the tip of the 2-3 kg rod was pulled into the water a few times. When she came to the kayak, I could see that this was one of the big local mummies I hadn't seen for three years. She went 51.5 cm FL on Shayne's measurer (photo below) and would be a hard act for me to follow for the rest of the season.



campsite made us clothes. We set 200 km away and I'd camped produced

the head of the quick succession



picked up a nice 43 cm.

Back at camp, we lit a fire and dried our clothes while we had dinner. I don't always light a fire on an overnigher and only do so where I know the property owner, when it's safe to do so and there's no fire ban. After dark, we went out for a paddle in the deep hole below the camp, said by locals to be 'bottomless', in the hope that the moon would stay behind cloud. My prediction about the moon being a problem was supported by the fact that we got only one fish that night. It was in the 40s and smashed a black Jitterbug around rock islands in the big hole. When the moon hit the water, the 'fish on' light switch was turned off - there were no mullet jumping or herring flipping - complete shutdown. We went out at dawn and Shayne



The paddle down the next morning was relatively uneventful and we fished any shade on the east side and the eddies. In a massive snaggy eddy full of drowned trees, a good fish took my Betts Spin, peeled 4 m of drag and buried the lure in the snag. The fish spat the jighead before snagging it, which always brings relief that you haven't left a fish with a hook in its gob.

A huge flood in early 2012 had ripped the river banks metres back; with many more trees becoming snags. Too many years neglect and clearing of riparian zones together with cattle churning up soil on the banks is a factor in the loss of these majestic Casuarinas.

My season was starting to look better when I pulled a 45 cm FL fish from dense bankside timber and I was lucky to extract the big girl into



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open water. Shayne got the majority of the fish over the two days but I'd scored enough to be happy.



At the take-out on another mate's farm, we used their 4WD ute to get the kayaks and gear up the hill to where the car was parked. It is a real privilege to have the friendship of these generous people, who go out of their way to be helpful. Like all my trips away, packing up and driving back south was an anti-climax after the anticipation while driving north at the beginning of the trip.

January 2013 trip that wasn't so easy

This was a follow-up to our October trip, fishing further up the same system; leaving the 4WD upriver and getting picked up around noon the next day.

I told Shayne it was highly unlikely that we would get bigger fish than the crackers he'd scored in western Sydney before Christmas. He'd got a number well into the 40s with one going 52 FL – all taken on one of his Katharsis paddlers! The plan was to paddle five or so km down to the confluence with a river running in from the west and camp a few 100 m up into that river. A low barometer didn't augur well for our prospects with rain and possible thunderstorms forecast.

Shayne had a head cam and shot some video footage of some quickish gravel back road driving on the way up, fighting some fish and some of the rapids we paddled.



The El Niño climate pattern continued, with river level as low as it was on our previous trip and on the two trips I'd done there since October. I'd done this 12 km section solo years back, with the recollection that it wasn't too easy - particularly one of the long, fast narrow sections, where a tree branch too low to duck knocked me over. This time, it soon became apparent that I'd forgotten just how challenging a lot of it is, with narrow & twisting rocky rapids under low tree branches – some just above the water that can grab your head and shoulders.

We portaged some of the trickier bits and enjoyed some of the twisting runs with rocky drops. Shayne had chosen not to bring one of his sit-in kayaks, and had a sit-on that made it tougher for him. With his gear strapped on top, the higher centre of mass added to the challenge and he did well in a capsized to lose only a cap. I managed to capsize while getting in after portaging one rapid, through stupidly relying on my weak right arm (legacy of racing motorcycles) instead of the good one. My battle-scarred Minnow was a bit easier to keep right-side-up in the rapids. However, I had a couple of runs where I bounced off multiple rocks and branches, and was lucky to get through still on board.



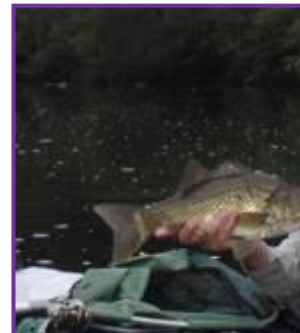
We blamed the barometer for Saturday being slow with little action on a range of plastics, divers and surface lures, without any good fish. When we reached the intended camp site, we found that Google Earth hadn't revealed that the PO Box 136 NORTHMEAD NSW 2152

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river banks were too high for easy access, so we set up camp a km down the main river. Luckily, light showers earlier weren't followed by rain, so we had a dry camp. We went out at dusk and paddled down to the next two holes, where Shayne picked up a low 30s fish.



On Sunday, we broke camp early and got on the water. Fishing picked up for a while and we got some fish in the 40 cm range on WTD lures flicked into deep tree cover. We selected WTDs, as these are a close simulation of the herring that are abundant in the river. Both of us dropped some bigger fish that didn't stay hooked. One that Shayne lost smashed his WTD spectacularly near mid-river rocks and his drag screamed as the fish headed for cover before it parted company with the lure. One that I dropped looked 40+ and completely left the water as it smashed the lure off the top in fast water.



My new Shimano Kayak Raider spin rod, 'Designed by Ian Miller' (really ??) broke in ½ under light load and I was glad I had the Loomis baitcaster as well. The tackle shop gave me a refund after Shimano OK'd the warranty claim on the phone, probably knowing that these are not one of their best products.

Unusually for this system, we saw no platypus, but they are numerous in the area and several are typically seen around dawn or dusk. The last 5 km were a lot easier than what we'd paddled the day before, with straightforward rapids, only a few of which had significant drops. When we got to the take-out, we agreed that we'd found great water that undoubtedly holds a lot of good fish, but with a lot of unfishable hard going in between.



This was definitely 'Tiger Country' fishing, that I'd rank tougher than much of the 'wild' Nymboida. Some mates from the Hunter who've fished this section frequently say that it gets relatively little pressure because of its difficulty. At my age, I'll have a good think before I do this section again.

Ron Rogers
January 25, 2013

Next Meeting is at Northmead
bowling club Tuesday 12th February

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