

February 2019

[www.basssydney.com](http://www.basssydney.com)



<b>PRESIDENT:</b>	Rico Van de Kerkhof	<b>Emu Plains P/O</b>	Alan Izzard
<b>VICE PRESIDENT:</b>	Matt McHugh	<b>Lane Cove Environmental L/O:</b>	Matt McHugh
<b>PAST PRESIDENT</b>	Alan Izzard	<b>Parramatta River Environmental P/O</b>	HS Tham
<b>TRESURER</b>	Doug Chang	<b>Bents Basin P/O</b>	Rico Van De Kerkhof
<b>SECRETARY</b>	Milton Lazarus	<b>Bass Catch and Point Score Officer:</b>	John Stokes
<b>EDITOR</b>	Lyn Lazarus	<b>Raffles</b>	Nathan Horgan
<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@Basssydney.com">info@Basssydney.com</a>			
<b>Battler Submissions:</b> <a href="mailto:lynlazarus@optusnet.com.au">lynlazarus@optusnet.com.au</a> or <a href="mailto:miltonlazarus@optusnet.com.au">miltonlazarus@optusnet.com.au</a>			

happy fishing



### President's Message

Hi all,

Another year done and dusted. 2019 is hopefully my year to crack the code to catch a 400+bass. Some awesome bass have been caught in the last couple of months by our members - see their stories and maybe some hints on how to catch them in the stories in this Bronze Battler.

February is our Bass catch month. Like last year the February edition (16-17 Feb) is going to be at Bents Basin.

Different to other years is that food is BYO this time. There will be a bbq and stove available to cook your food on.

Hope to see you there for a great weekend camping and fishing.

~ Rico Van De Kerkhof

## COD VIRGINS

### Steve Peach 2018

Earlier this year I had a great day fly fishing on the Blue Mountains streams with Aussie Fly Fisher founder and guide Josh Hutchins. I caught a lovely 4.5lb Brown in a small stream, we had a cracking day on the river sight fishing to cruising trout. In the car on the way back to our drop-off point, Josh said to me *"You should come and do a cod day with me some time"*, to which I naturally replied *"damn right I should!"*. So, the wheels were set in motion, I called a mate Matt Hahn to come and fish with me and we booked a day in early December, just after the opening of the cod season. Neither Matt nor I had fished for Murray Cod before, although Matt had caught an Eastern Cod previously while Bass fishing up north. The plan was to fish the Central West rivers where Josh has been having great success on the cod.

A couple of weeks before we were booked to fish, Josh contacted us with a slight set back – he had been called away to film an episode with an overseas celebrity angler for a well-known international fishing show. He suggested we could either reschedule the day, or if we preferred, he could set us up to fish with one of the other guys from his Aussie Fly Fisher operation, Canberra and Snowy Mountains guide Mickey Finn. As Matt had already booked the day off work, we decided to fish the same day with Mickey and chose to fish his home waters in the ACT from his raft. After some research we decided on an appropriate camp site so we could drive down and fish by ourselves the day before, then hit the river nice and early with Mickey on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day.



I spent a bunch of evenings before the trip furiously tying flies, as I discovered that commercial cod flies generally go for around \$20 each! That's standard fare for a lure fisherman, but for a fly guy \$20

is pretty much unthinkable, so I stocked up on 6/0 hooks, rabbit fur and a few chicken's worth of feathers, and started tying. I made some big deceivers in natural / carp colours, some big heavy rattling clousers with rabbit fur collars to puff out and give some profile, some foam head poppers in black and chartreuse, and even a few experimental "mighty mouse" slider patterns that I made up. After some research on the web, I bought a reel of 20lb tough leader. Good to go!

Two days before the trip the weather report started to look a little bit iffy. A slight chance of showers or thunderstorm on the first day, then possible showers of 1-8mm of rain on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. I emailed the guide Mickey and asked whether it was going to be ok, to which he replied *"we'll be fine mate, just bring a rain jacket"*.

Finally, the day of the trip arrived, I picked up Matt around 8:30 in the morning, grabbed coffee and we were off. The trip to the ACT was not too far at all, around 3 hours from Sydney on good roads. The campground when we arrived was right by the river. There were a dozen or so other cars and campervans camped there, and the inevitable kids in the river throwing boulders in and whacking the surface of the water with pool noodles to see how loud they could do it. As a trout angler I was of course horrified, but in retrospect the cod probably wouldn't have minded too much.

We were itching to hit the water, and we knew we had a 4am start in the morning for the rafting day, so I decided I was going to forget about a tent and sleep in the car that night. As the weather looked fine, Matt also decided to forego the tent and just sleep on his inflatable mattress with a sleeping bag in the open. So we rigged up and walked down to the river with basically zero set up for camping - hell we were here to fish not camp!

I rigged up my 7 weight plus Bass rod for myself (probably a bit light for cod, but nice and light to cast all day) and set up an 8/9 weight rod for Matt to fish with. Matt is a seriously talented bass angler on the spin gear and had done some fly fishing before, mainly for trout. He doesn't talk up his fly-fishing ability too much, but actually he is a pretty decent fly caster. Being a great bass fisherman though, what he does incredibly well is observe and read the water, analyze the fish, and figure out what they are doing. So, although he might not have put in that much time on the fly gear, he is actually a fairly formidable fly angler.



The first pool we got to on the river was only about 100 yards from the camp site, and it had some nice deeper sections, reasonable water clarity and lots of rock structure. Almost immediately we saw cruising fish and got pretty excited, until we realized that they were carp of course. But there were some darker fish in there as well which we were not so sure about. Once we got a closer look later on, we realized that most of them were carp too. Matt found a rocky point just below the head of the pool where the water slowed down a bit, got deeper, and swirled around some big deep rocks. Perfect



ambush spot. After a couple of casts Matt yelled out *"he followed it!"*. Next cast, his rod loaded up and the shout came from the point, *"I'm on!"*. I scrambled around the rocks to where he was and grabbed the lip grips out of my pocket, as Matt guided the fish in to a shallow section between the rocks. A solid 55cm fish, 15 minutes in to the trip and we were on the board! Not bad for a couple of cod virgins!

After a couple of quick photos and a release we were off up the river again. Among the ubiquitous carp we spotted some more cod and had some more follows, but they were not taking it as easily as that first fish did. At another big deep pool there was a deep narrow section with a big rock coming out of the water, right in the middle of the stream. In front of it there were 2 more rocks deeper in the water column. Matt was fishing up about 30 metres ahead of me and had a follow off the front of one of the deeper rocks, but after that the fish refused to come up again. He called me over and said *"why don't you come and try this fish, he won't come up again for my fly"*. It was mid-afternoon and the sun was still high, so we were fishing sinking flies. Matt was fishing a big natural grey, brown and white deceiver, while I had tied on an olive clouser thing with a red collar.

I put a cast out about 3 or 4 metres upstream of the rock and let the fly sink, just retrieving enough to keep in contact with the fly and letting it drift with the current onto the front of the rock. This was like upstream nymphing for trout, except with a giant 6/0 clouser with lead dumb bell eyes and half a chicken worth of feathers and fur. The next thing I knew there was a subtle stop of the fly line - it moved about 2 inches forward - and I yanked on the line like no tomorrow and set the hook! A beautiful healthy 50cm cod came up on the end and gave a good account of himself before coming to the bank. After a few photos and a release, I said to Matt *"how bloody good is this fishery!?"*. We had both landed fish within a couple of hours on our first trip!

As the afternoon went on the weather changed and the fishing slowed down, the fish seemed to switch off the bite. We still had occasional follows from fish but they just weren't hitting the fly. On one particularly big deep pool there was a deep, narrow section in the middle of the pool which looked like a great ambush spot for a cod. There wasn't much room to back cast, and you can pretty much forget about roll casting the big lumps of lead that we were calling flies. I managed to get a cast across about 30 feet or so to the other side, let it sink and began a stop start retrieve. About half way across I felt a subtle tap on the line, and I said to Matt over on the next point *"I just got a little bump"*. I continued the retrieve but it didn't hit the fly again. Just as I pulled the fly up right at my feet, a huge head came up under it and a massive fish rolled over at my feet, showing me his large flank, which was a much lighter milky colour compared to the dark smaller fish we had caught. Then he gave his tail a flick and disappeared, leaving a huge swirl on the water. My heart nearly stopped and I shouted out something like *"holy crap!"*. Well that's the PG version anyway. The fish was at least 80cm, possible quite a bit more than that. I quickly threw the fly back in and peppered the spot again but to no avail. So, we headed off up river, planning to try this fish again on the way back down.

We saw a couple more fish further up, but they weren't cooperating. Matt was exhausted and lay down for a kip on a nice river beach, while I entertained myself trying to cast a full line with a big black popper across to a huge sunken tree just on the other side of the river. After a number of hooked up back casts and some suitable cursing I managed to put a few casts around it but no one was home. I also hung a couple of my nice new flies on the timber for some lucky kayak angler to collect later. After a while as the light was getting lower, we started to make our way back down river. I was itching to have another go at the big fish on the surface popper this time, as we were well into the evening now.

We arrived back at the spot and Matt said *"go on, you put the first cast in there"*. So, I threw out the popper to the other side, just in front of where a dead tree branch entered the water from on top of the rocks. I stripped the fly, giving it a big bloop and then let it sit. Nothing. I gave it another couple of strips and let it sit again, mid-stream. Maybe he was still sulking. Without warning the water exploded,

like someone had thrown a bungler into the river, and my fly disappeared into a huge boiling mass of water and cod. I yelled out something which I can't remember (and I'm sure was unrepeatable anyway). The rod loaded up in my hands like I had just cast at a lorry on the Hume highway. And then within a split second it was all over. My leader parted from the fly and the fish, along with my popper, disappeared into a gaping whirlpool in the middle of the river. My hands were shaking and I felt like I need to sit down for a bit to compose myself.

I checked the leader to see if my knot tying skills had let me down, but the leader was cut clean through. I don't know whether the monster had bitten it through, gill raked it, or if perhaps it connected with some hidden rock just under the surface, but it was clear to me that 20lb was not going to be enough here. The fish had cut through it as though it was a tiny strand of cotton. Matt pointed out at the river and said *"Is that your fly?"*. My popper had come floating back to the surface, slowly spinning in the remnants of the whirlpool, and was drifting off down the river, another black 6/0 popper for some lucky angler to collect.

We made our way back to camp without any more action, except for running the gauntlet of a few nasty blackberry bushes. The river rocks were slippery, and although we were wearing proper wading boots Matt and I both struggled with grip at times. Back at the first pool I heard a nasty crashing sound and a loud anguished exclamation, and I saw out of the corner of my eye Matt had come down onto his knees on a nasty piece of rock. Fortunately, nothing was broken, but his knees were badly bruised, swollen and sore. We walked (and limped) back to camp just on dark - weary, battered and bruised, but elated at the fishing we had just experienced and the quality of fish we had seen.

After some sausages, onions and mushrooms, and a good chat with Frank the German traveler in the campervan next to us, I retired to my bed/car and Matt pumped up his mattress and laid it out with his sleeping bag on the grass. Shortly after that the drizzle began. We moved Matt's mattress under the small shelter of the BBQ area and squashed the resident redback spider near the foot of his bed. Hopefully this would be enough for him to keep dry for the evening, so we could arise at 4am to quickly pack up and get to the launch point for the rafting day.

After I retired to the comfort of my self-inflating mattress in the back of the Prado, I noticed the patter of rain on the roof started to become heavier, and the spray was starting to enter the car through the slightly open window and the mosquito net window covers. Then the lightning and thunder started to roll in. The rain continued right through the night until my alarm went off at 4am. I don't think Matt slept too well that night. We awoke feeling dazed, and a little concerned about the day fishing ahead. This was much more rain than the forecast had suggested.

As we had no phone reception, we weren't entirely sure if our guide Mickey was going to turn up at the launch spot - for all we knew he may have messaged us to say *"forget it boys, go home!"*. But we drove our way through the rain, dark and fog to the launch spot at 4:30am and sure enough there he was unloading the raft and gear from the roof tray, his 4wd lit up like a Christmas tree in the pre-dawn dark and classic rock booming out from the car stereo. We got out of the car tired, wet, and feeling pretty dubious about our prospects in the persistent rain. But Mickey was chipper and quickly quashed our doubts - *"don't worry it'll be fine, it's not going to bother the cod too much."*

We lugged the surprisingly heavy 3 man raft down to the river and we were off and fishing! The first couple of hours when we hoped to get a decent dawn surface bite just did not happen. We peppered every snag, rock and eddy we could see with big poppers for zero result, and after giving it a good go the consensus was it was time to switch over to sub-surface flies. After Mickey negotiated the raft down a small set of rapids, at the top of a big pool he suggested that we fish the flowing water at the mouth of the pool using a down and across style retrieve. I was again surprised that the cod fishing

here, while in some parts resembling the bass fishing which I had done a lot of, also had some strong elements of trout fishing when the fish were sitting in the flowing water. After a few casts across, I came up tight with a solid hit. I felt a decent weight on the line and saw the light coloured flank of a reasonable fish across the current from us. Then the fish turned and took off on a big run downstream behind the boat. *"Yep I'm on! This is a decent fish!"* I yelled. Mickey started maneuvering the boat and said *"this could be a trout cod the way he took off."* The fish gave a really good account of himself, but as it came to the net, I saw Mickey's face sour. Still feeling elated at landing a good fish I was a little puzzled until he lifted the net out of the water. *"Bloody carp. I hate bloody carp!"* he said. I didn't hate carp that much at this point. I had certainly never had a carp take a 15 cm 6/0 clouser in a trout lie before, this was nothing like the Sydney carp that I was used to!

After disposing of the offending carp, we continued on down river and we started to get the occasional tap and follow from cod, but they were still only biting tentatively during the brief breaks in the weather. Eventually we hit the big pool that was our ultimate target and the water really looked the goods - just loaded with good structure right through the pool. Mickey assured us that this particular pool was home to significant numbers of cod, several of them over the magic 1 metre mark and many other fish below that size.

About half way down the pool Matt put in a cast to a log beside the bank, and I suddenly felt the whole boat lurch as Matt set the hook with considerable force on a good fish. This was a real fish, and Matt's 9 weight buckled over like a twig under the weight of the beast on the other end. Mickey sprang into action and immediately started backing us away from the bank with the oars, trying to help Matt pull the fish off the structure that he was headed back for. Between them they managed to wrestle the cod out into the deeper water where he circled and dived under the boat a couple of times, then sent a big plume of water flying our way with a powerful sweep of his tail as he lunged for the bottom. On the third attempt to bring him to the net he finally relented and we had a really good fish in the net beside the boat. Matt's arms were aching from the fight (as well as from casting a 10 weight for a few hours), but he still did a good job of holding up the fish for a few photos, even though it probably would have weighed 7 or 8 kilos, I think. It was a solid 70cm fish, and cod are incredibly broad across the shoulders. It looked like it was about 20cm wide!



The fish was released and swam back towards his snag little the worse for wear - they are tough that's for sure. Now that Matt was on the board Mickey focused on putting me onto some good snags to even up the score. About 100 metres down the river there was a sunken lay down tree out away from the bank. We had fished a spectacular piece of structure a little way back which Mickey called the "Cod Hotel". This one he said was the "Cod Bachelor Pad". I put in a cast across the tree and retrieved it fast at first, so that my fly didn't sink onto the horizontal tree trunk and snag up. As soon as I got the fly past the trunk, I stopped the retrieve to let it float down into the structure. Right after I pulled it over the tree trunk, a big angry cod came roaring out after it and devoured my fly, turning straight back and heading for the sticks. There was no nibble or tap on this one, he meant business and he hit it hard. My light little Sage Bass rod loaded up in a way that it probably was not designed to do, but it did an admirable job of hauling this big bull of a fish out of his hole.

My fish didn't quite turn on the same performance that Matt's did, but it sure woke up when Mickey tried to put the net under it a few times, until it eventually tired and was brought to the net. It was almost a carbon copy of Matt's 70cm fish, just a couple of cm shorter. After some photos and video, I released the fish in the shallows, where he gave a big tail splash as I let him go and he took off and hid in some muddy water nearby.







We had a little bit of hard work getting the raft back up a few sets of rapids, although Mickey did the vast majority of it while Matt and I walked around the rapids. We were exhausted and elated. Mickey was a fantastic guide; a great guy and he knew the water backwards – he even had names for the fish who lived in each hole. If you have the opportunity, I'd highly recommend a day with him, you will learn a heap about how to catch these fish, as we did.

On the 3-hour drive back to Sydney Matt crashed out in the car, I don't think he got too much sleep in the rain the night before. I was totally stuffed too and had to stop for a strong coffee and meal on the way home while Matt slept in the car. I was already making plans in my head for the next time I could get down there and fish for these mighty prehistoric beasts again. There is just so much river to cover, so many possibilities! We got back to Sydney sometime after dark that night, tired but triumphant. We had done it, we weren't cod virgins any more.

Cheers, Steve.



## **BASS SYDNEY CHRISTMAS DINNER 2018**

**Milton Lazarus**

After missing out on a Christmas get together last year due to lack of interest, thirteen of us returned to the old haunt at the New Empress Restaurant in West Ryde. A good location with plenty of room, but average food, however it was nice to just eat and talk fishing with all the Club stuff wrapped up for 2018. I think it was a good 12 months for the Club with our current membership at 33 and a core group of 10 to 15 regulars attending most events. A mix of fresh and saltwater outings made for an interesting year overall and of course with our bush regeneration site slowly improving it's been enjoyable.

I stood up to say a few words and had a brain fade, a common occurrence these days, so I'll take the opportunity here to say what I forgot. To the committee for their work and to general members who helped at events thanks very much. To those who made the effort to join us at our weekends away thanks as it made drinking the port, coffee and eating the dark chocolate around the camp fire much more enjoyable. I know, I know the fishing was tough, but I'll blame the drought and early season for that.

To those who exceeded their PB's well done, and a special congratulations to those who landed a Bass over the magic 400mm mark and have now earned a right to join our 400 Club. Our apologies to those who did as the committee didn't give the 400 Club certificates a thought, but don't fear it will happen. By the time you read this early in February 2019 the Bass season will be three months from closure so I hope most of you managed some good Bass outings and the fish were happy to oblige. What's that famous saying, so much fishing to do, so little time.



# Welcome to the club!

The 400 club that is!

At Bass Sydney we recognise people that catch fish of over 400mm in length and have a trophy which is awarded yearly to the person that catches the largest non-impoundment bass. I've been a member of the club for 5 years now and until recently my biggest bass was 375mm. On Christmas Day 2018, Matt Hahn, current holder of the largest bass trophy, sent a note out via WhatsApp to see if anyone wanted to join him on the Colo River on boxing day. When it was clear that there were no other takers, and that the family was happy to have me out of the house, I took him up on the offer.

Matt is a very good fisherman. He has a routine in his little tinny and he fishes hard and for a long time. He casts accurately and quickly, and generally out-fishes anyone that goes with him by two to one. He is also a very generous fisho, putting you into plenty of good locations and really sharing the terrain and his knowledge.

We had a pretty typical Colo day. We fished hard for 6 hours, I just got to double figures and Matt had about 18 or so. Very few fish were over the 300 mark, I got a 310 on an NW Pencil and Matt had a string of high 200s but otherwise the fish were generally small. We covered a lot of ground up to the Putty Road and back. A good day but not a great day for bass, but excellent company and the Colo is beautiful on the worst of days.



Heading back, Matt said he wanted to try one last spot as it was getting dark, a big eddy, rocky banks and deep water and not at all the type of spot I would normally fish. But, Matt said repeatedly that he had turned a good day into a great day at this very spot.

I started to cast a soft-shell cicada around on the rod I had favoured all day and pretty soon got a huge tangle. The leader on this was nicked and 6lb only and as it turned out a very



opportune time to change rods. I tied a cicada on, replacing the Pencil and had a few casts but nothing was doing. I pretty much put the rod in the holster and decided I'd had about enough.

The mosquitos had started, and the sun had well and truly dipped after a very long afternoon. Matt decided to cast one last time at a big cliff where he had pulled big fish before. I thought what the hell, I've got a rod rigged, I've got nothing better to do. I pegged out the soft shell into a sandstone undercut and retrieved, nothing. We drifted a little further and I pegged out another cast in close to the sandstone, retrieving slowly back to the boat. Half way back the cicada got hit in a huge and savage take unlike anything I had seen all day, the fish engulfing it and turning straight away. I knew as soon as I saw the lure disappear that this was a good fish. I now had 8lb leader with a big fish attached firmly in clear water with no chance of burying me in anything.

The rod and reel did their job, Matt did an excellent job with the net. I was shaking from the adrenaline, knowing it was a big fish and that I had smashed the 400mm mark. The tale of the tape, 445mm and easily my biggest bass to date. Welcome to the 400 club in style!

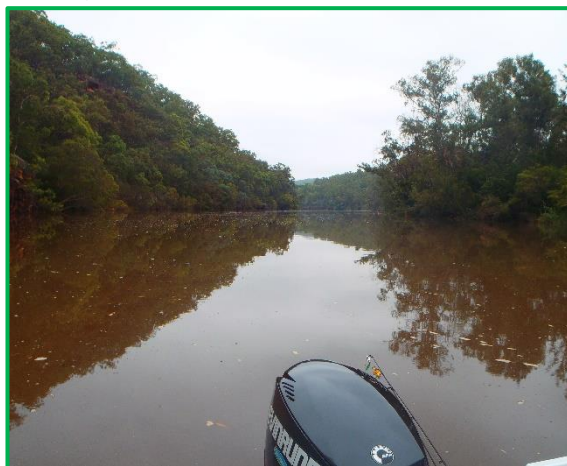
Matt McHugh





## OUR COLO OUTING

On January 20<sup>th</sup> the Club had a day to fish the Colo. Our kayak members Rico and Steve launched at the Putty road bridge whilst boaties Alan, Brian, Matt & I launched from the Skeleton Rocks boat ramp where the Colo joins the Nepean. Some started very early whilst Brian and I decided 8am was the go. Crossing the bridge over the Colo we were very disappointed and puzzled by the water colour, it looked a bit like a strong coffee and that combined with the big morning tide of 1.93 had us very concerned. And, so it was for most with a very tough day on the water.



Brian and I fished all the good-looking spots upstream and down for absolutely nothing, Brian did have a tiny Bass toying with his lure, but that was it. Probably the most unexpected thing of the day was a visit from Maritime Officer Chris Doolin on his Seadoo jet ski. He came along side and said to me are you Milton then asked my date of birth, once confirmed he wanted to see our life jackets, asked if they were tested and the date, our bailing bucket, water proof torch and so on. He obviously entered my boat registration number in his phone and then knew all about me. Scary stuff, so all I can say is make sure all your safety gear is present and correct otherwise it may cost you a bomb. Tham was caught here 12 months ago for not wearing his life jacket whilst kayaking.



Brian re-rigging in desperation



Chris Doolin CEO of Windsor  
Maritime Base

I had been invited to fish the Colo with Matt McHugh on his boat. Matt said he was going to launch at Skeleton Rocks at 5am but would come back and pick me up at whatever time I got there, thank goodness. I managed to get out of bed have breakfast and leave home at about 5.30am, pretty good for me. Was drizzling rain as I left and it continued all the way to the ramp. Bit of a problem on the way, saw 3 of those big illuminated signs saying that the Lower Portland Ferry was closed, "bother I thought what do I do now" I thought, or words to that effect??? Stopped and sent Matt a message and he replied that it was running so continued on, ended up at Sackville ramp, "bother", I had missed the turn off in the rain. Carried on and crossed the river and turned right and ended up where I needed to be at about 7.00. Sent Matt another text and he was there in about 5 minutes. Noticed the river was VERY MURKY, now where did that come from??? No rain had fallen that I knew of recently but nothing could be done about it. Matt suggested we head upstream and see if we could find some clearer water, so off we went, moving upstream several times during the day chasing cleaner water but the large high tide was pushing the discoloured water up as well, could not do much about it. Fishing was difficult, we tried different techniques, lures and places but no luck to speak of. Matt landed 1 reasonable fish and 1 smaller, I landed 1 Bass about the length of my hand. We bumped into Rico and Steve upriver and they weren't doing much better, though Steve had landed some small Bass on fly. Decided to bummer off about lunch time, met Milton and Brian on the way back, they were having even less luck than us, and then went out into the Hawkesbury to see if there were any EP's about and I managed to double my catch rate on Bass landing a nice but very light-coloured fish just downstream of the Colo mouth, we then tried the edge of the ferry crossing and no luck there either so was home about 2.30.



Unhappy faces after a tough day at the office



Happy faces of the OzFish boys, no fish & still smiling

Many thanks to Matt for hosting me on his boat, was good to be able to move about the river and not be stuck trying to paddle about in such horrible conditions. Two fish each only but we still had some fun and probably talked a heap of BS.

Cheers, Alan.

## Steve Peach

Rico and I launched the kayaks just before 5am at the Putty Rd bridge, the plan was to fish downstream as far as we could before the incoming tide carried us back up again. It was pitch black when we first got on the water, too dark to see where I was casting, but Rico threw a few lures and got a couple of hits on the surface, but no hook-ups. So, we pedalled downstream with the tide, which was travelling at a fair pace. As the dawn light started to appear, we began fishing, but it started out slow, and we soon saw the reason - the river was quite discoloured with a muddy brown coffee colour, which generally indicates poor fishing on the Colo.

The night before I had been experimenting with my cicada fly pattern and had made a couple of small changes that I was eager to test out - First I had changed the way the foam back was tied in which allowed me to shape a more realistic tail shape out of the foam, and second I had tied a few in a smaller size than usual, on a size 8 hook. The idea was to find out if a smaller fly and hook would result in a better hook up rate, without losing the attractor benefits of a larger fly.

Soon I started catching fish, and missing the odd surface take on the cicada. The fish weren't big though, some of them were barely 10cm. But by mid-morning I had landed 5 bass, with the best around the 20cm mark, certainly nothing to write home about. The current was very strong which made positioning the kayak difficult, but Rico and I found fish sitting near the bank in eddies out of the current, and under shade cover. This made the fishing tricky as we were being swept along by the current, trying to fish still water in tight cover. This never makes for easy fly fishing of course, I was making some crazy suicidal casts into places where a fly had probably never been seen before, and the result of course was lots of snags and tree tangles. But if you're not fishing where the fish are, then what's the point?

Rico was having a tougher time of it, one of those days where things just weren't going his way. He was getting the occasional strike but not hooking up, and the conditions were making it hard for fly casting. Mid-morning, we heard the hum of a tinny approaching, and soon Matt and Alan appeared up the river, bringing news of dirty water all the way down the river. We were all scratching our heads a little wondering why it was so discoloured, there hadn't been any obvious large rain events. Matt and Alan headed further up the river to see if they could find some cleaner water, and Rico decided to call it a day and head back to the ramp. I pushed on down river for a little bit further to the top part of the straights, then started fishing back up. I only managed one more fish on the way back to the ramp, it was slow going.

Once back at the ramp I decided to push on up-river a bit as I hadn't fished upstream from the bridge before, and was keen to check out Wheeny Creek. A little bit above the ramp I landed another bass about 20cm. Then a little further up I came to a big tree fallen across the river, it's trunk horizontally submerged just below the surface. There was part of the snag downstream as well blocking my progress up to the trunk. So, I cast the cicada up over the front of the trunk a few times and drifted it back over with the current. On the third or fourth cast, a big bass came up and engulfed the fly, heading straight back to his lie under the trunk. He got half way down the trunk before I managed to wrestle him back up over the big tree - phew! But then I realised the further peril, there was a big bunch of snags now between me and the fish! He was fighting powerfully, and there was nothing I could do to stop him from diving in under the cover in front of me, right into the depths of the snag. All this time I was pedalling the kayak into the current and adjusting the steering to try to hold in position, but now I was in a bit of a spot. I couldn't bring the fish out of the snag, although I could still feel him pulling strongly on the end of the line. I could also feel that he was well and



truly wrapped around something and was not coming out. Thankfully I had brought a 12-foot stakeout pole, as I knew it might be handy in the current. I put the rod down and pedalled the kayak up and around the snag somehow, and anchored with the pole just upstream of the snag and the fish. I still couldn't pull him out, and I had tried giving him slack line to swim out, but neither approach was working. So, I lay down on the front of the kayak, and reached will down into the water with my arms following the leader. I grabbed hold of the underwater branch, which thankfully wasn't too thick, and managed to break if off the tree. That was it! The fish was out now, still fighting but tired, and I brought him up to the boat, a beautiful fat 34cm bass! I could have sworn he was 40cm plus by the way he fought!

I revived the fish in the net, got a couple of very quick photos, then revived him some more holding his lip under the water. After a while he started getting eager to go, and I let go of my grip and watched him swim away. What an amazing fish!

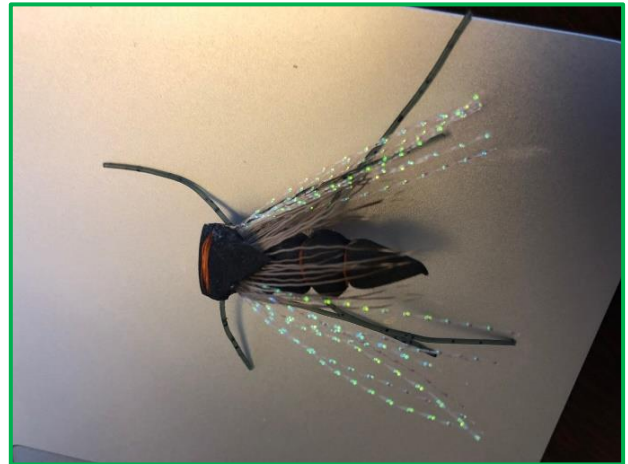
I got up as far as Wheeny Creek and ventured in, although a 12-foot Hobie Pro Angler is not exactly the ideal craft for a skinny snag filled creek like this. There were lots of lily pads, snags everywhere, and almost no current unlike the main river. I wasn't able to find any fish though, and I could only get about 100m up the creek before an underwater snag and a large tree across the creek blocked my way - to be honest I was exhausted by this time anyway! Would like to get back up there one day in a smaller more mobile kayak to explore.

On the way back downriver on the last decent spot before the ramp I caught another bass, this time a nice 26cm fish who gave a good account of himself. I was back at the ramp and packing up at about 4:30pm. It was a long, tough day over all, but it felt worth it for that one great fish. And I had made an important discovery with the cicada fly as well - the smaller size 8 fly seemed to have a significantly better hook-up rate than the larger one, and it didn't seem to come at the expense of less strikes because of the size, the 2 biggest fish that I caught both came on the smaller cicada fly.

Cheers, Steve.



My fish of the day, a 340.



Steve's great fly's which did the business compared to the guys on lures

### **Rico Van de Kerkhof**

Nothing for me on the Colo, a big fat donut again. Had three hits early in the morning at the kayak ramp beside the Putty road bridge, two more on fly, but no fish. Very murky water like last time. Steve had five when I left at 10am. Fished downstream for zilch, some days nothing happens unfortunately.

On my return I couldn't get a bite at all, tried the fly for a bit then my improved frog. The frog floated the right way up and the legs still worked after fitting two stinger hooks, it's a winner so far, so now I just need to get a few fish on it.

The February Bass Catch will be my next fishing day so I hope to see a few of you at Bents Basin.

Cheers, Rico.





Rico's improved frog. It comes with the main hook, but it needs some extras to improve the hook-up rate.

In conclusion, we think the murky water was caused by the major bank and new bridge works at Windsor, unfortunately this together with the big Christmas tides has spread the mud well up and down stream. Fishing may be tough for a while. Thanks all, for your input.

Cheers, Milton.

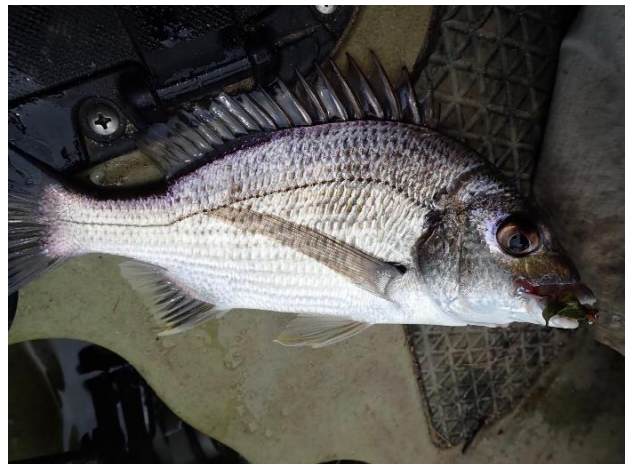


## A DAY ON THE FLY

Steve, our in-house fly-fishing guru, showed his fly-tying skills on a WhatsApp group a while back. He made some nice floating and sinking shrimps. I knew just a spot where we could (guaranteed) get some EP'S on fly, I told him. So, after a week or so of racking up some time in lieu, I had the Friday off to go and catch my first saltwater species on fly.

Steve and I met at the ramp around 4am and after setting the yak up, we pedalled towards a bridge where I caught a few before. Not long and I was on!! An EP made it almost to the net. Just lost it before I could scoop it out of the water. Not long after Steve lost one too. Both were of the surface. Another few casts in a different spot and we both got our first EP on a surface fly, both around the 350 mark.

Great stuff.





We kept moving upstream and we each caught a few more EP's on the incoming tide. After a while I changed to a heavier sinking fly and my first bream and flathead were in the yak. Flatty was undersized and bream barely legal, but its good fun on a 5wt rod!

My arm started to get tired so I switched over to my spin outfit, for another small bream. A bit about my fly gear. The rod is a Berkley 5wt rod, bought in the Netherlands over 20 years ago, the reel and line bought about 7years ago from internet site in Tassie. No brand on it. The backing and fly line: haven't a clue, whatever they spooled it with. Bought it for around \$50 (cheap stuff, I guess)? Wasn't planning on getting into fly fishing that much. The leader is just 6lb fluorocarbon for a sinking fly. I just used a small perfection loop for leader to fly line and a small lefty's loop-knot for fly to the mono.

So, my comment here is if you wish to dabble a bit with a fly outfit it's not necessary to spend a lot, the main thing is to select the correct weight rod for the type of fishing in mind. I'm sure Steve will be happy to offer some advice should you need it.

Thanks, Steve, for the hints and tips and for letting me try out your prototype Shrimp fly's. They got the 👍 from me,

Cheers, Rico



### **A MINI SESSION ON THE LANE COVE**

Well...I didn't set the world on fire this afternoon either. Launched at River Ave around 1615h & it was just about dead low tide. Started with an Atomic K9 walk the dog & 2"grubz. Persisted with surface for quite a while. 1st cast a tiny tailor not much bigger than the w.t.d lure then nothing. A few slurps but no hookups. Finally got to Doug's favourite EP cliff where I landed a sub-legal bream on the Grubz. Didn't go below there & worked my way back to the ramp. I tried other top waters as well - popper, Hurricane lures bent minnow & Sammy...nothing. Lost a couple of SPs then tied on an Atomic crankbait. Landed 3 more bream on it, another sub-legal, a tiddler & a just legal. That was it. The last couple of Bream put up a good fight on 1-3kg outfit & 6lb leader. 3hrs fishing. Went quickly! This was a quick trip as I couldn't spare a whole day to fish the Colo, probably a good call considering the way the boys went.



Cheers, Tham.



## MALLACOOTA ROAD TRIP Part 1

With some pre-planning I was lucky enough to be able to make a 4 day dash to Mallacoota less than a week after my wedding. This is an annual event for a group of guys mostly from the Nowra/Shoalhaven area. I was invited through a mate for the 2017 trip and was lucky enough to be invited again for the 2018 trip. It's a great trip with a broad cross section of guys who share a common interest in fishing. There is always some friendly competition around fishing results, plenty of banter and laughs over beers around the evening bonfire and some impressive backyard cook ups. On this trip there would be 22 guys and 11 boats, up from the 17 guys that made the trip last year.

To maximise fishing time while minimising my absence from work, I organised to leave work at lunchtime on the Thurs, pick my brother up and head south as far as Moruya in time to get an afternoon session in. I could get 3.5 days fishing in at 'Coota and be back at work on Tues.

I'd only fished the Moruya River once before many years ago and had never fished upstream of the highway bridge. We launched the boat at the highway bridge at 5.30pm with the plan to chase some EPs. I'd done my research on google earth and the tide was on the ebb so was pretty confident we could find a few. My brother was well prepped and had all his outfits rigged but as I'd packed in a rush, I had nothing rigged. There was a couple of moored boats just downstream of the bridge in good flow so I motored over slowly so my brother could cast at those while I rigged up. With a lightly weighted soft plastic on one rod I rigged the second with a light cranka crab so I could flick a few casts around the hulls and bridge pylons before we moved upstream. I moved the boat into position and lobbed the crab in right under the bow of the boat and let it waft under the hull in the current. I must admit I was surprised when the line quickly changed direction only a few seconds later and I set the hook on a nice fish. Expecting a bream, the fight felt strange and I assumed the second treble may have pinned a decent bream in the gill plate, so I got quite the shock when a beautiful big sand whiting came into



view. As it slid into the net, I could see instantly that it was quite a lean fish but at 41cm I was pretty pleased with the first cast of the trip. We spent another 15mins or so prospecting the hulls, a lone fallen casuarina and the nearest two bridge pylons for no result before we decided to make the most of the light left and head upstream looking for perch as planned.

After some slow navigation through extensive shallow sections, some light rain, and about an hour of fruitless casting to likely looking areas, we came to a section that just had to hold perch. I commented to my brother that if we couldn't find one pretty quickly in this stretch that we'd call it an afternoon and get back on the road to Coota. This section had undercut banks with several fallen casuarinas, some slightly deeper water (4.5m), and a few significant boulders below the surface deflecting the flow. After only a couple of casts my brother hooked up on a

soft plastic sunk into one of the casuarinas and a healthy EP in the high 200s came aboard. With about 40mins until full darkness, the bite intensified quickly until it there were hits every cast. Most of the fish were quite small with the best going low 300s, however I did get bricked in quick fashion by a solid fish hooked right behind a boulder. After 21 fish in a frantic 40min bite, they switched off in an instant right on dark when hordes of small tailor moved in. Pretty happy with our start, we turned on the spotlight and made the slow motor back through shallow water to the ramp.

## DAY 1

Day 1 at Mallacoota on the Friday brought magic weather. It was warm with almost no breeze. In the weeks leading up to the trip there had been much theorising and planning on what we wanted to target and where we thought the likely areas would be. I had already made the plan to launch at Gypsy Point and fish upstream in both the Wallagaraugh and Genoa rivers to target black bream and EPs. Nearly all of the others intended to focus on either the top or bottom lakes, but one other boat headed upstream with us. While most of the guys had fished Mallacoota dozens of times over 6 or 7 trips, I had fished it on 2 previous trips: for 3 days during the 2016 Southern Bream series and in 2017 for 4 days on my first trip with this group. I'd had some good results on those trips but also some tough sessions with some lessons learned.

Despite having at least had a look at a fair portion of the system and fished several parts of it, the big difference on this trip was that the system had closed a few months prior after the lack of decent rains. Despite good falls of about 100mm the week before our trip, the entrance had remained closed and the water levels were higher than what I had seen previously. Mallacoota is such an extensive system and it can certainly be daunting when "Plan A" doesn't come off. Thankfully, on the first day after a short drive to our first spot in the lower Genoa, we had 6 nice black bream to 36cm fl in the boat in the first 45mins. We were casting shallow muddy edges with interspersed fallen trees and weed-beds and we had seen literally a few hundred nice bream and sight cast to dozens but they were certainly fussy. The first 6 fish were taken on 5 different lures. Content with our start, we moved to our next chosen area which was in the lower Wallagarugh to cast shallow banks and fallen snags.



We worked our way slowly upstream but results were far from consistent. We landed another 6 black bream to 36fl but the highlight was the hiding my brother copped from a very solid fish. We had stopped to cast at a very likely looking area at the entrance to a small tributary. One thing I'd observed on many previous trips to south

coast systems was that black bream love snags that they can hide under rather next to. Because of this they show a particular preference for the bushy tea trees which line large sections of the system's shoreline. Many of these trees overhang the water and in times of high water, many of them are partially submerged, creating dense shady tangles and plenty of ambush points for both bream and EPs. There was a decent hole on the bend where this small creek entered and a deeper section right between two large tea trees which were only about two metres apart. Although slightly tannin stained, the water was very clear in this section. We could clearly see the bottom in about 4m of water and a tightly packed shoal of miniature baitfish shimmering against the bank. I flicked a lightly weighted plastic into this gap snug to the right-side tea tree and watched it sink slowly, giving it the odd enticing twitch but to no avail. Once I had retrieved my brother cast his plastic in tight to the left tree and gave the rod tip a few quick shakes just as it was slowly sinking into the shadows. Just at that point a fat



bronze flanked black bream that looked every bit of 42-43fl tore out, scooped the plastic without slowing down and burrowed into the tree snag on the other side. It was all over in less than 3 seconds.



After the action slowed considerably in the lower Wallagaraugh we decided to head back into the Genoa and push into the upper reaches in attempt to find some EPs, as we knew this system held some beasts. Despite fantastic looking shady snags and beautiful tannin stained water the colour of cola, we could not find a perch and had to settle for by catch of a few small tailor. At this point I began to wonder if the perch may be further downstream as the system was closed and the salinity would likely be significantly lower than usual in the tributaries. Who knows? I was also surprised that we had not encountered a single bream in this section.



If we got close enough to the fresh sections I had planned to explore for a bass if possible. For this reason, I had packed my hiking boots and a small backpack. We had to be close to where the fresh entered so we manoeuvred the boat through and over several rock bars and until we could tie to the bank and cover the rest of the distance to a short rapid where the fresh was flowing in. My brother was not overly keen on a scramble through the scrub and over the rocks, but when I told him he was welcome to mind the boat as I was going with or without him his attitude changed. I decided that this was not the

time to mess around experimenting with unproven bass lures, as we didn't have too much light left and I was not keen to negotiate those rock bars in the dark. I tied on a trusty 2.5inch Zman grub in motor oil on a 1/8oz jig-head and added a brass beetle spin. This has been a consistent producer for me. I also opted for 12lb leader as I considered us a decent chance of a good fish. That first pool was beautiful. Strong flow from the recent rain, dark tannin water with rocky edges and some overhanging shade. I carefully crept into position without trying make myself too visible to the small pool. The first cast came with much anticipation but unfortunately no result. Cast number two was the same. As the lure came into view toward the end of cast three, I angled it over a shallow rock shelf toward my feet when there was a huge hit throwing water everywhere as the lure was only an inch or two under the surface. Unfortunately, it missed the hook, but it was one of those strikes that scares the crap out of you! I didn't see where the bass retreated to but since there looked to be an undercut on the shallow



rock shelf I was standing on, I guessed there was a fair chance that it had gone straight under there to hide. I lobbed the lure out just a few metres in front of me and let it sink slowly in plain view. Before it had sunk more than a metre a beautiful bass screamed out at full speed and took the lure aggressively before doing a u-turn in an attempt to run back under my feet. Some quick rod work and a heavy set drag quickly stopped it in its tracks and it thrashed around on the surface before a few more determined lunges. My brother was further up at the head of the pool and came running at the sounds of my excitement. "Good fish?" he yelled out. "Bloody good fish!" I replied. I slowly led it into the shallow water and was relieved to take a solid thumb grip on the lower jaw. It was clearly over 400 but I wasn't sure by how much. After a few quick pics I returned her for a swim before I turned to the back pack and the measuring tape. Disaster!! I had left the tape in the boat! Submerging the rod and resting the fish with the tail fork on the butt of the rod, I grabbed a pebble and scratched a small mark into the epoxy at the tip of her jaw. The measure wouldn't be quite exact but it would be very close. We both estimate that she looked 42-43fl but we'd have to wait until we returned to the boat to get a measure. What a start!

My brother was quickly back to casting while I got sorted again and moved a little way up the pool. Just as I passed him, he had a strike near his feet which left a huge boil on the surface and his drag screaming briefly before the hooks pulled. As you can imagine he was less than happy as it was clearly another good fish. My brother had one more hit and then the next 10mins or so provided no action. We had moved up to another pool which looked even better than the first. Making way through the bankside scrub was incredibly difficult and my brother voiced his keenness to turn back a few times, however I was keen to do a bit more casting so he reluctantly followed. He had decided to change to a surface lure and tied on a soft-shell cicada, while I persisted with the already successful plastic. Casting along the bank under some overhanging foliage he soon had a very solid boof but unfortunately no hook-up. I thought about changing to a surface lure but decided against it. My next cast is one I won't forget. On the far bank here was a very narrow gap between two large water gums which lead back about 15 metres into a very dark shady nook below a steep bank. The flow in this pool was a little slower with some floating leaf litter and the water was almost black with tannin. My cast was on the money and the plastic landed about 6 inches from the bank right at the back of the shute. I began the retrieve right on touch down and had completed less than two turns of the handle when I had one of those strikes that you know straight away is a big fish. She took drag instantly and powered to the right toward some submerged branches of one of the big water gums. I grabbed the spool and leaned back on the rod as hard as I dared, hoping that the 12lb leader was enough. Everything held tight, but without taking more drag she bored sideways into the maze of submerged timber. Noooo!! I could feel she was locked in there but could still feel the headshakes as well. I told myself to show patience while I considered what to do next. A few changes of rod angle and some more pulling did nothing, so I stopped without letting the pressure completely off to contemplate my next move. I considered letting the line go completely slack as this has worked on occasion but decided to leave this as my last resort. There was clearly a few branches and she may just swim through another one if she decided to come out. After a brief pause and much swearing, I decided I would swim to the snag in an effort to get her out. I told my brother of my plan, who at this point was still casting and showed no concern for my predicament. "Come get my back pack", I yelled. Just as I tried to shrug it off while maintaining gentle pressure on the rod, luck came my way and the bass decided to swim free of the snag. I threw my backpack and leaned back with as much pressure as I thought safe as I had no idea of the condition of my 12lb leader. She still had plenty of fight in reserve but fortunately the pool in front of me was free of snags and I was able to lead her into view in the shallows where my hopes were confirmed. She was a huge thick shouldered fish that I was sure would go 500. "Is it a 50?" my

brother yells as he waded over for a look. We both marvelled as the size of it as I got my phone out for some pics. Despite the disappointment of forgetting the tape, after a very careful measure against my rod submerged in the shallows and seeing that she comfortably surpassed then scratch mark on my rod from measuring the previous fish, we were both certain she would go 500 and comfortably eclipse my PB of 485. I was ecstatic!



After watching the big girl disappear into the tannin, I passed my rod to my brother with the successful plastic still attached and told him to cast with that if he wanted. I decided to take a short breather to soak up what had just occurred. A minute or so later he had a strike and landed a nice bass that looked to be in the low 300s. As the shadows were lengthening, I soon made the change to a surface lure and we both cast for a little longer. Despite a few strikes from smaller fish, we had no more hook ups and called it an afternoon. We waded, slipped and crawled our way back to the boat, desperate to measure the marks on my rod and reveal the size of both fish. The first mark on the rod was just over 420. And then the moment of truth.....the second mark was agonisingly short of the magic 500 at 490. After a brief pang of disappointment, I quickly snapped out of it. Two magnificent bass in new water and a new PB. What a way to cap our first day!!



My amazing 490

Cheers, Jason. To be continued.

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO DAMIAN, MAI & GRACE**

Mai, I and new big sister Grace had a nice arrival after Christmas with the birth of our new daughter 'Isla Balfour'.

She was born ten days late on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at lunchtime.

She was a healthy 50cm long and weighed in at 3470grams (3.37kg), close to seven and a half pounds.

She was loud from the get-go and fed virtually non-stop for the first three days. Ravenous she was – probably something to do with the extra ten days inside.

We thought we'd been cuckooed and had taken home a baby T-rex instead: if she sounds like a dinosaur and she eats like a dinosaur – she might well be one.

But don't worry, we're keeping a close eye on her forearms, and if they don't grow, staying short & stumpy, we'll be straight onto the phone and having words with our specialist, the paleontologist!





Well done Mr. & Mrs. Balfour

### **GENERAL MEETING TUESDAY FEBRUARY 12<sup>TH</sup>**

A reminder about our next meeting at the NBC Sports Club 166 Windsor road Northmead, 7-30pm in the board room or the main bar area if unavailable.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**



<https://www.facebook.com/BassSydneyFishing>



Follow us on  
*Instagram*

[https://instagram.com/Bass\\_sydney/](https://instagram.com/Bass_sydney/)

Username: @Bass\_sydney

**OUR GREAT SPONSORS:**



**Light Spin to Light Game Tackle**  
Ph/Fax (02) 4739 1542 Mob: 0439 316 781  
34 Bunbinla Ave, Mt. Riverview NSW 2774  
email: anglin1@bigpond.net.au



**Millerods**



**Bass Sydney Fishing Club Inc.**  
BRANCH OF NATIVE FISH AUSTRALIA



Affiliated with  
**The Council of Freshwater Anglers**

