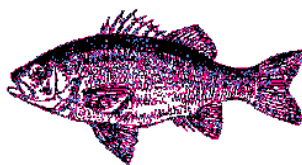




Australian Bass, *MACQUARIA NOVEMACULEATA*



THE BRONZE BATTLER

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday
12th February
GUEST SPEAKER

No guest speaker this month.

Northmead Bowling, Recreation and Sporting Club Ltd.
166 Windsor Rd Northmead.
7.30 pm start till 11pm.

PATRON: Dr Wayne Erskine, PhD

President Domenic Squadrito..9799-1796(H)
Vice President Alan Izzard 9653 2309
Past President Dave Claydon..... 9829-1503 (H)
Secretary Jim Taylor..... 9631 7485 (H)

Treasurer/Membership
Secretary Garnet Noble.....9476-3881(H)
Points score &
Basscatch Officer Geoff Shadbolt.....9636-4340(H)
Publicity Officer Alan Izzard.....9653-2309(H)
Editor: Chris Chosn.....96.36 6896
Event Co-Ordinator Chris Ghosn.....9636 6896 (H)
Project Officers:
Parramatta River Alan Fowkes.....9626-9938(H)
Hacking River Warren Hackshall....9525 0090(H)

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Hi Fellow Bassers's

Happy New Year to everyone. I trust that the wet weather and severe storms hasn't caused too much grief. The up side of this is that the catchment and drought stricken areas of NSW have received much needed rain. Especially with the Sydney water supply reaching it highest levels since 2002. With all this rain some of the rivers we fish have been given a good flushing which will most certainly give the fish and aquatic life an added boost, as well as working and flushing the choking weed that has festered in stagnant pools.

On the 2nd of February the Parramatta River Carp catch was held and even with the rain falling in late morning a good number of anglers lined the river to assist with this great cause. Not may carp were caught or weighed in and Bass Sydney participated with an information stand. Special thanks Alan F for building a feature stand and a thanks to Jim, Chris, Milton, Garnet for being available to educate the people and anglers that attended.

The February General Meeting will be held on Tuesday the 12th at Northmead Bowling and Recreational club (address is on the website) and I encourage all members to attend.

I would also encourage all members to check out the Bass Sydney website as it hosts a great deal of information from General Meeting dates, copies of the Bronze Battler, photos, etc at: www.basssydney.com

See you all at the February General Meeting and those brave enough to venture out in the wet, take care and successful fishing.

Domenic
President
Bass Sydney.

February 2008

HEALTH OF THE HAWKESBURY

The Vice President of Sea Bees Boating Club Inc. Tom Connolly and the club committee organised a meeting at their clubhouse in Carlingford on July 13 to discuss problems facing the Hawkesbury River. There were 6 guest speakers, each having 15 minutes to talk about their concerns for the future. The meeting was very well attended including two Bass Sydney members and our report follows.

The speakers were:

Ruth Williams - Hawkesbury River Catchment Management Authority.
Steve Jones - Oysters Growers Association.
Gary Howard & Geoff Rose - Commercial Prawn Fishermen.
Rolf Norrington - Commercial Squid & Prawn Fisherman.
Peter Coad - Estuary Manager Hornsby Council.

Tom Connolly gave an opening address followed by the speakers.

Ruth Williams:

The Authority was set up & funded by the State Government. Expenditure is split with 50% going to Councils and 50% to HRCMA objectives.

The Nepean's source is basically a dry region and with the explosion of housing developments from Camden downstream, the river receives an excess of drainage and pollutants. Further downstream the Colo has a great natural catchment which to some extent helps water quality when conditions are favourable.

Ruth said a balance is required between development and river restoration. Over the years there has been a huge loss of river land because of dredging & refilling for housing. Estuarine vegetation such as mangroves, sea grass & salt marshes must be carefully managed and expanded to create food and shelter for fish species. In addition barriers to fish travel must be removed.

HRCMA tries to educate people so resilience can be built into the river system to help it survive into the future.

Steve Jones:

Sadly there are only 10 oyster growers left on the river out of 28 and with decreasing water quality everyone is concerned. The Association is developing a new hardier oyster and looking at ways to develop the industry into the future.

Clean water is required for good oysters, a healthy river produces healthy oysters so nutrient escape must be limited. Sewerage outflow and untreated discharge from boats is a huge concern along with road wash from urban development. These areas need to be carefully managed. Toilets are needed in key areas as there are none at present.

The river has not had a substantial flood in the last 16 years to remove the build up of pollutants.

On a more positive note the Association received a grant to remove all the old oyster structure and to date 500 tons have been removed. The old tarred wooden oyster racks have been replaced with plastic and 4 stroke engines are gradually replacing 2 strokes.

Everyone that uses the Hawkesbury are stake holders in the rivers future and we must all be mindful and take care of this wonderful resource.

Gary Howard & Geoff Rose:

The issues concerning the river are water quality and flow, but by far the biggest is sewerage with the equivalent of 7000 trucks per day releasing so called treated water into the river.

February 2008

New housing developments caused by more & more people compound the problem.

Prawn fishermen use the river water to cook and cool prawns before they go to market so it's easy to see their point of view.

The Penrith lakes scheme is a huge undertaking and nobody knows how this system will ever be filled. This will take any excess run off before it even flows downstream.

Rolf Norington:

Rolf used to catch prawns and squid around the Flint & Steel / Patonga area, but at the moment he's only catching squid. The king prawns are not coming into the river as the flow is not there.

As far as Rolf is concerned there are 2 main issues, water quality and flow. He sometimes fishes Mooney creek and has noticed industrial run off from industry upstream.

Rolf also fears the new Brooklyn sewerage outfall (under the bridge) will have a huge effect on water quality downstream. This combined with the Berowra outfall will not allow the river to recover.

Rolf said the greenies, councils & prawn fishermen had come together in an attempt to sort out the issues, but with little effect. They approached Sydney Water, the Food Authority, Minister for the Food Authority & the DPI, but to no avail.

Rolf said the State Government had to do more recycling so there was more pristine water left in Warragamba Dam to regularly flush the river. Things can't live in effluent.

In an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald on August 24 Rolf Norington had another opportunity to express his concerns. Rolf predicts the Hawkesbury-Nepean system will not be producing any deliciously fresh prawns for Sydney within 10 years if society continues to treat it as Sydney's biggest sewer.

The river shouldn't be a sewer drain for the whole of north-west Sydney and he feels the State Government has got no intention of doing anything more than dumping more tertiary sewerage into it. The feds should step in and stop them.

Thankfully the federal government waded into the murky waters and recently pledged \$132.5 million to improve the rivers water quality by upgrading sewerage treatment plants and making more water available for environmental flows through reusing storm water and improving the irrigation efficiency of farmers.

There is \$27 million to improve sewerage treatment in the South creek sub-catchment and \$54.6 million will go towards works that the State Government had already started involving the St Marys, Penrith and Quakers Hill treatment plants.

A new \$250 million plant will further treat sewerage from the three and return it to the river as environmental flow, saving 18 billion litres of drinking water a year in Warragamba Dam that would otherwise be used to flush out the river.

The State Government says it will lead to a cleaner Hawkesbury-Nepean, but Rolf said the infrastructure was being built so there could be more housing in North West Sydney.

This most vivid sign of the rivers ill-health has been the choking growth of the aquatic weed salvinia in the sluggish and dangerously nutrient-rich water.

Peter Coad:

The Hornsby Council's capital works and planning included research monitoring, catchment modeling, compliance monitoring, monthly river monitoring, recreation area monitoring & freshwater creek monitoring. They were also monitoring the boating pump out facility at Kangaroo point and actively promoting this service.

February 2008

Council was also doing food chain research by engaging consultants to identify changes in the river when the new sewerage outflow at Brooklyn is up and running. If any problems occur with this facility Council has to approach the State Government. They are also working with the CSIRO to address issues of climate change. Council needs to be reactive to situations before they arise.

After the guest speakers had finished Tom Connolly asked the audience to respond with their thoughts. Everyone agreed that action needed to be taken, so a sub committee was proposed to begin the long and difficult task of starting some action.

Supper was served and members and guests discussed the issues in more depth.

Sea Bees Boating Club Inc is a non profit social /fishing club whose members mainly fish from boats, hence the name boating club. They are a friendly bunch of middle age guys who spend many of their outings on the Hawkesbury River so they see the problems first hand and felt it necessary to convene this meeting.

It was a very interesting meeting and both Alan Izzard & I were glad to attend.

Milton Lazarus.

PARRAMATTA RIVER CARP FISHOUT

Saturday the 2nd Feb saw the re-scheduled Parramatta River Carp Fishout. You might recall that the event was originally scheduled to coincide with the "River Beats" day in November 2007 – a much larger event involving on-water displays by the Thai community, exotic food stalls, music etc. Unfortunately, that event was washed out by heavy rains that flooded the section of river bank where the event is held.

The weather gods were a little kinder this time and the fishout went ahead as planned. Happening in isolation from the River Beats day I wasn't confident of a good roll up but I'd estimate that a couple of hundred people turned up to fish and there was a steady stream of on-lookers wandering through the stalls. Being held on the stretch of river between the Charles Street weir (where the River Cat terminates) and Church Street this area gets people traffic on any given day.

Stalls included the 7m Sportfish Trailer, Anaconda and Absolutely Hooked (all sponsors of the event) as well as a BBQ tent manned by the Little Eels (good egg and bacon rolls according to Chris and Dom, average sausage sandwiches according to Jim!), jumping castles for the kids (almost as popular as real estate "for sale" signs slid down the hill), a Coastguard stall and a Parra Leagues Fishos stall. NSW Fisheries were intended to be there but were conspicuous by their absence!

Fishing was very slow with no carp caught in the morning session. This meant that the lunchtime prize presentations made by the Lord Mayor, Paul Barber, and Ian McKiernan of Clean Up Australia fame were based on a lucky draw. The presentation was worth attending if only to listen to Ian McKiernan in person who spoke passionately about eliminating plastic bags and bottled water from our lives. Naturally, he also encouraged us to do our bit on Clean Up Australia Day – Sunday 2nd March.

The slow fishing and some showers in the middle of the day discouraged some of the punters and resulted in a little less activity during the afternoon, We did, however, see a couple of carp weighed in during the arvo so maybe people should have stuck around.

Our stand attracted a reasonable level of interest during the day and, apart from providing some education to a number of people in relation to bass and fishways, we spoke with at least a couple of prospective members – let's hope we see them at a meeting sometime soon. Despite some disparaging remarks about an accountant's ability to perform engineering work I was also happy with my recent modifications to the stand – despite all predictions my new stabilizing feet with tent peg securing seemed to improve wind resistance. The

February 2008

new stand layout worked well (have asked for some photos from the event organizer to put in a future Battler) and we also had our Streamwatch Kit and a few other bits and pieces to display on our counter. We all agreed though that a few more display items and especially some giveaways for the counter would come in handy. We'll have to approach Fisheries for rulers, stickers or whatever we can get. I think a club photo album would also be a useful addition - maybe all the photos from our website gallery? (or all but one or two I can think of! anyway). If anyone has ideas or wants to spend some time on a project like this then please speak up.

About the only disappointment for the day was the fact that the new fishway was boarded up and therefore non operational. I have reported previously that the fishway is typically boarded up to prevent low water levels in this section of river but the weirs were overflowing after all our recent rain so there was no good reason for having it non operational on the day. In the past I have spoken to Council about the importance of having the fishway operational during the breeding season and am hopeful the problem will go away when all fishways are installed (due to more reliable water flows over all the weirs). Since last weekend I have emailed the event organizer pointing out that we missed a golden opportunity to explain the fishway's operation to the public and to thereby gain publicity for Council's efforts. In fact, I have suggested that Bass Sydney would be happy to run a couple of education sessions during the day at the fishway if we can have it operational for the next event. What would be really nice would be to have the Marsden Street fishway operational as well so that we could run a couple of sessions at each and let people know the difference – here's hoping!

My thanks to Milton, Garnet, Jim, Domenic and Chris for helping out on the day. Having so many people on hand meant we could all get some free time to check out the stalls or grab a bite to eat. It also meant we racked up a lot of hours (36 in fact) towards the commitments we made in our grant funds applications. Thanks guys.

Alan Fowkes.

We don't have many articles to include in this months Battler. I assume it's because of the inclement weather, not much fishing being done. I know that I am experiencing what is called cabin fever at the moment, every time I think I might get out to wet a line the heavens open. I have reverted to the old format for this issue because Chris is having problems with his computer and has asked me to fill in. For those that are not aware we are having problems again with the key to the gate at Yellowmundie Regional park. Gary Blount and I have spoken at length on the subject and are sure we will achieve a positive outcome in time. The sticking point hopefully will either retire or we will find a way around him with the younger staff, who have no problem with us being there. More on this at the meeting Tuesday night.