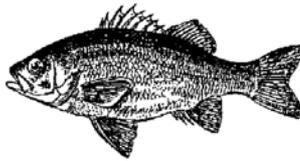


August 2008



Australian Bass, *MACQUARIA NOVEMACULEATA*



# THE BRONZE BATTLER

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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

It would appear that the Bass season closure stirred up plenty of interest.

The chat rooms were running at a high fever of emotion - all good publicity. It would also appear that it was not publicised enough, with some fishing mags and radio programmes still spruiking stories of targeting spawning Bass.

Weather permitting we will have the first day of lantana removal on the banks of the Grose River on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> August. 8am start for all those who will be coming.

We will be operating under new rules for the upcoming

Basscatch events with all of us having to register. Dominic is setting up a new page on the web site with the Registration Form so that we can all do it on line. We will be advertising in different media trying to attract more anglers and Danielle Ghosn (nee Williams) from DPI will attend our General Meeting the week prior to hold a briefing and then hand out catch cards.

On a sad note, I have just been informed that Bill Spiers, CFA President and stalwart Bass man has been diagnosed with cancer. I do not have all the details as yet - he is still undergoing tests.

No speaker for the next meeting so Alan Fowkes will be bringing along his photos from his recent trip to Christmas Island - should be interesting.

See you on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Alan Izzard

## **JUNE GENERAL MEETING**

Danielle Ghosn (nee Williams) from NSW DPI gave a very interesting Powerpoint presentation of Basscatch Monitoring.

The subjects covered were:

- Values of Basscatch monitoring
- History of Basscatch Monitoring
- Review of Methods & Datasets – Objectives & Results
- Overview of Hawkesbury Data – Catch Rates & Sizes
- Reduce Possible Biases in Data
- Discussion Points and Conclusion.



### **Values**

A very cost effective method - large amounts of data provided over large areas can be collected and how that changes over a period of time. Unique - provides one of few recreational fishing datasets. Bridges gap between anglers, science & management of their fishery. Data provided supports the rights of anglers & clubs.

### **History**

The Basscatch monitoring spans almost 20 years (1988 – 2008).

### **Review**

Evaluates the scientific value of data derived from Basscatches i.e. status of fish stocks, impacts of fishing tournaments & success of stocking.

### **Overview**

Two interesting graphs illustrated Bass caught per angler hour for Bass Sydney & HNBA. Also length frequencies compared by event for Bass Sydney & HNBA.

### **Reduction of Bias**

Always hand in your catch card even if no fish were caught, Basscatch Officers to instigate a registration process to ensure all cards from all anglers are submitted. Always notify your Basscatch Officer that you intend to fish & always ask for a card. Record your data accurately.

### **Discussion Points & Conclusion**

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What factors drive your selection of fishing location: accessibility or expected catch results.

Have changes in fishing gear increased catch rates?

Can we standardise to improve the quality of results and enhance the data usability?

If you fish regularly, do you keep personal results?

Finally, it's most important to keep that fine line between maintaining the fun and improving the data. *summary from "Tournament Monitoring" by Danielle Ghosn*

Jim's summary from our Committee Minutes summed up Danielle's talk in a clear and concise manner - something I couldn't do. Danielle presented the data collected since Basscatch records were compiled (1989) with Bass Sydney's initial involvement and expanded on the detail and approach since her involvement over the last two to three years. Her discussion included the weaknesses of the data collection in general and action that can be taken to improve the data by both the DPI and clubs such as ours in the collection of meaningful data and the collection of all catch record cards, and in particular, the importance of recording zero catch data and its effect. This confirms the actual number of fishers and the time spent on the river and without it, how the results can be skewed.

Members' input was sought on ways to improve the process and included the concentration (due to limited resources) on specific reaches of the river and the variation of results due to tackle used including the variation of lures, the introduction of soft plastics and environmental flow conditions of the river.

Some environmental flow data was available that had been compared against the Basscatch records and may be expanded further to give more meaningful results. We can expect future Basscatch event record collection to include greater detail to assist with data collection on the health of the fisheries. The presentation was well received by the members and at the conclusion Alan presented Danielle with a Bass Sydney Certificate of Appreciation.

Thanks, Jim.

## NARRABEEN LAKES SALWATER BASH

On a sunny Sunday morning in June, Bass Sydney members embarked upon Narrabeen Lakes in Sydney's North to ease the winter blues.

There was a flotilla of Bass Sydney members on the lake which was good to see. The Lake itself is custom made for kayak anglers and we certainly took full advantage of everything it has to offer. We headed off in a line a stern and I was wing man to "Rev Head" Nev, who thundered away towards the western side of the Lake. He had his Australis Bass kayak up on the plane and all you could see was a blur of colour on the horizon. I kicked the hobie into top gear and caught up with him in the middle of the lake. By the time I could ask how he was going, his rod doubled over and line shed from his Daiwa Sol 2000 at a rate of knots - it screamed away like a Comanche. Nev was into a serious fish. Narrabeen Lakes contain some mega flathead and it was now obvious that Nev was connected to one. The line on his reel was slowly slipping away further out to sea when he began backing up on the great beast like you would a marlin. With waves crashing over the bow Nev handled the adversity like a real man

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and didn't falter from the arduous task. Into minute five the fight swung back towards Nev and he pumped and wound. His arms swelled like tree trunks. It was like watching two heavy weight fighters slugging it out. The UHF was crackling with excitement as everyone was on the edge of their seats wanting updates on how the fight was going. I was swelling with anticipation at seeing my first metre long flathead. The double came into sight and the fish was spotted for the first time of the starboard side - it came to the surface briefly before rocketing of again, the drag singing away. Nev remained calm and got back to work as it appeared the great brute grew tired, but with one last spirited run the hooks pulled and the line went slack.

Everything went quiet and an eerie silence swept the lake. Nev to his credit took it well and continued fishing. His secret weapon was revealed - a Squidgy spinner bait not the most orthodox flathead lure, but it obviously works.

For a few minutes after, the odd short strike was experienced before it went quiet. I headed off to a point and fished a weed bed and was lucky enough to catch two bream in consecutive casts before getting a dreaded birds nest. Towards 1:30pm I was having a yarn with my soft plastic sitting on the bottom when my rod jumped violently in my hands. A fish had picked up my lure and decided to make a long run. A few moments later a nice sized flathead came to the surface. It took some time for me to get it aboard and with soft hands I dislodged the lure and released it. Not long after Nev, not to be outdone nailed a larger specimen that was the best part of 50 centimetres plus.

We all soon assembled on the shore and it wasn't long before the BBQ was fired up and the sausages were sizzling. With full stomachs it was time to start the festivities with Jim Taylor wining the lucky door prize and Nev winning the best fish of the day award.

Overall it was a very enjoyable day with perfect weather and great company. A huge thanks to those who participated and made the day so enjoyable.

Chris Ghosn.



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Sunday also gave us all an opportunity to see Chris's new Hobie Mirage Sport Fish kayak. It's a very interesting concept with pedal power, 2.92 metres long x 0.75 metres wide weighing just 21.8kg (a tad heavier than a Bass kayak). It's beautifully built from roto moulded polyethylene with every conceivable fishing accessory one would need on a kayak, but to me the most amazing feature is the pedal powered flippers that propel the kayak effortlessly along. The concept is very similar to a penguin's flippers and, in fact, both flippers oscillate independently through 180 degrees sideways to provide the forward thrust. Unsinkable with dry hatches, hand controlled steering, 2 rod holders, wheels that plug in under the hull for transport, adjustable back rest etc, it's a very clever design. Hobie even have a sail option and apparently a lot of guys are using the larger models off shore for sport fishing. Chris's only complaint is a wet arse in the winter as the cockpit and seat well is self draining for rough water work.



Thanks to Chris for organising the day, supplying and cooking lunch, providing the prizes and writing the article on Nev's Flathead encounter. Thanks also to Al for bringing his faithful barby and boiling the billy.

## BLACKFISH TO BASS

From as far back as I can remember Dad was a keen black fisherman. Years ago they were referred to as niggers, let's go niggering or let's go nigger fishin, but today you are not meant say that in case you offend someone. As we know, the correct name is Luderick, but it's a bit hard to say let's go Ludericking , so I guess it's let's go black fishin'.

In those early days of black fishing, the rod of style & choice was split cane. My Dad had a beautiful split cane rod and thankfully, I now have it. After Mum died, Dad had a huge clean out and all his tackle went to the tip. He lived in Esperance 4000k's away so I was very lucky *that* rod was put away for me. Had I not asked, I'm sure it would have gone as well. Sadly, Dad threw out all the old family photos, a real tragedy for my sisters and I.

The rod is made up from 6 small tapered equilateral triangles glued to form a hexagon cross section and bound every 75mm about 2mm wide. At the tip it's 3mm across the hex and 13mm at the butt. All the ferrules are brass and the reel is locked in place with 2 tapered brass ferrules. No hi-tech Fuji reel seats in those days. Unfortunately, the maker's name is missing now, but I'm sure it was made in the UK. Dad had it stripped and re glued at some stage as the constant flexing cracked the adhesive.

Dad only fished the rivers, no coastal rocks, so the floats were as light as possible. His favourite floats were made from porcupine quills!

Hooks are really small (12's for rivers & 10's for the coast) as black fish have small mouths. In fact, in those days the hooks had a flattened end, no eye like hooks of today, so a very special knot was tied around the shank to prevent losing the hook. Small lead split shots were squeezed on the line so the float tip was an inch above the water when baited. The line from reel to float was greased with Vaseline so it floated making it easier to strike if you get a "down" (bite). A small piece of wool was tied on the line with a stopper knot to form a float stop and trimmed to about 1cm long. This adjustable stop made it easy to change depths in between runs (casts) to locate the fish.

The spot I remember that Dad loved so much was called the Oaks. This was upstream from Halversons boat shed at Bobbin Head. It was a long walk along a rough bush track and the black snakes were often about in the summer months. From memory, this was a run out spot, you stood on a specific rock and cast up as far as possible against the tide and drifted down with it.

It was very important to make good fish - attracting berley. Green weed was chopped up finely, mixed with damp sand and bread crumbs or perhaps a little pollard. The berley must have the correct consistency so it can be formed into a ball in the palm of your hand and lobbed near your float.

You cast up and drifted down as far as you can see, watching the float like a hawk. If the fish are on, you would get a good, quick "down", but if they were a bit picky and nibbling on the end of your bait you would only see little nudges. Often a black fish will make the float rise up above it's normal position, which in most cases is caused by the fish fiddling with the weed and lifting the bait thus reducing the lead weight.

I can't remember where Dad got his weed, but it was always fresh with lovely fine strands. You tease out a thinish piece about 8cm long, pick the centre and wrap the strands around the line just above the hook then down past the barb. You don't want it to go too far past the neck of the hook otherwise a fish will just bite the end off and you will miss the "down". I always remember my Dad saying the bait should be the length of a match and the thickness of two. No button baits, ok. Off the coast you use

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cabbage (green weed) that abounds on the rocks between high & low water. Just one leaf, carefully attached to the hook and half hitched above the shank in rough seas.

I was only 10 when I went to the Oaks with Dad and was too young to try my hand, although I still remember the day when I fell over on the oysters. Dad was not impressed as the niggers were on.

Once I grew up, cars, beer and girls came along and Black fishing was forgotten until after I got married. My wife's Dad and Brother were into Black fishing, but mainly off the coast, so we decided to make new rods and have a big go. We bought 3 Butterworth MT5144 blanks, medium taper, 5 wraps of glass and 144" long. We used Fuji runners (just on the market in those days) and all the best fittings. The reel of choice was made in England by Avon (called a Royale) and was aluminium and glass reinforced graphite. This outfit could stop the biggest Luderick off the coast and quite a few medium sized Drummer, although these days it's a bit hard on the back if you fish for half a day. Way back then that combo probably cost about \$100 tops and that's because we make our floats and the bait is free. I'm talking about late 60's early 70's.

My old fishing mate from Esco, Gordon Murphy bought a baitcaster and somehow we became interested in Macquaranovemaculeataing (Bass fishin'. I had a canoe, so away we went, but suddenly the budget was being blown completely out of the water.

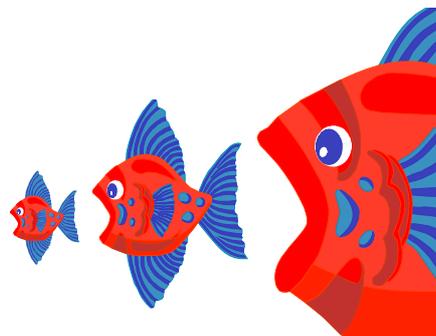
A Perception Craft Minnow kayak, a Shimano Calcutta 50, two lovely Aussie made Silstar Traverse X's, a shit load of lures, a Min Cota electric motor, two more baitcasters, two more rods, a fly rod, two reels, two lines, and stack of flies, three spin sticks, four thread line reels etc.

Sadly the old Black fish rod is gathering dust and I don't have one suitable for the rivers, but one day I'll get keen (with a bit of a push from Dave & Chris) and catch a nigger or two. Actually they are good eating, some people turn up their noses, but if you cook them fresh for dinner after a productive session of Ludericking they are hard to beat. It's a good idea to clean out all the black stomach lining as it can be bitter. I place the whole gutted fish in foil with tomatoes, onion, herbs & spices etc and bake until the flesh just goes white - this way they are very tasty. The foil prevents losing all the fish juices. If you like to have nice brown crispy skin on the top, slice the fish with some parallel cuts and leave the foil open. My brother - in law skins and fillets his, but I can't be bothered. Of course one must chase the meal down with the customary glass or three of Chardonnay.

Cheers,

Millieblackfishin'

**Next Meeting  
Tuesday 12 August 2008**



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# CAPTION CONTEST

The photo below could win you a very nice Bass lure.

Members, please submit a caption by email to  
the Editor

([milliebassin@iprimus.com.au](mailto:milliebassin@iprimus.com.au))

Closing Date 1<sup>st</sup> October

The lucky winner will be announced in the October Battler.



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## BASS SYDNEY BARBECUE

Our annual winter barby was held on the sunny shores of Prospect Reservoir. It was a beautiful day with a cloudless sky and warm sun. Just the shot for warming up the old body during the recent cold snap. It appeared the school holidays had an effect on the usual crowds that flock to this venue, so it was nice to have the picnic area to ourselves.

The billy was boiled for morning tea and everybody produced a nice selection of cakes. Some freshly baked. Thank you all.

It was just nice to sit in the sun and chat - unfortunately at most club events we don't seem to have time. The most interesting aspect of this was to hear all about Alan Fowkes recent Bone fishing trip to Christmas Island. Just imagine having a full week to fly fish for these speedy critters and enjoy beautifully cooked meals every day. Christmas Island is about a four hour flight from Fiji and the plane only goes once a week. Sounds like a great place to go. No work, mobile phones or stress, just pure fishing.

After lunch we set up the targets for the customary casting competition. Young Joe and Josh ala Squadrito & Claydon couldn't wait - great excitement which was nice to see. Future Bass fishos I'm sure.



The casting comp was won by probably the most experienced fisherman in the club, Barry Cole.

Alan made the perpetual trophy - very original. There is a fish on the line. Nice to see as Barry & Trish drove all the way up from South Coast for the day.

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## **GROSE RIVER LANTANA REMOVAL PROJECT**

Lantana is a tropical American shrub with yellow or orange flowers. It is regarded as a pest in some areas of Australia. As we all know this shrub is everywhere and seeds are carried on the wind which allows it to continually spread once one plant is established and begins to flower.

A patch has been discovered beside the Grose river in the Blue Mountains National Park and we (yes, you) have volunteered with others to remove it. This task involves pruning the larger branches back then pulling the shrub out. More established ones will be pruned back and poisoned.

It's a beautiful part of the park. Access is via North Richmond & Grose Wold then a fire trail to the river. We drive into the park with the local ranger along a good dirt track, leave our vehicles, then hike down to the river with lunch, drinks, gloves, stout footwear and jeans etc.

Whilst the first day is August 10<sup>th</sup>, the second is September 28<sup>th</sup>, so please make a huge effort and be available. It will be good exercise. To entice you, the photos below shows just how lovely the river is. And the bell birds sound wonderful.

The lantana is in the foreground. Whilst we were there a lone kayaker paddled by.



By the way, please make a personal sacrifice and get your backside to Northmead on August 12<sup>th</sup>

and enjoy Alan's photos from Christmas Island.

Well folks, that about wraps it up

Cheers,