



THE BRONZE BATTLER

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President's Message

It's already coming up to mid-season and I hope all members have by now had the chance to get on the water to reacquaint yourselves to the mighty Aussie Bass. I've been a few times and found the fishing to be pretty good in our local waters, especially during the October BassCatch.

During the recent Lane Cove R BassCatch, I was thrilled to witness new member Damian Balfour get his first ever Australian Bass. After nearly 2 months of being hospitalized, I don't know who was more excited, him or me. At a creditable 304mm it was a fine fish to start his bassing career!

For the year's final President's Message, no preaching from me re. Russell St. or anything else. I wish you and your families the best for the season and I hope to see you at the Christmas Dinner. We decided to try somewhere new this year and we all hope that the food is OK. Of course, I won't worry as I'll be winning the Miller rod!! Mmmmm! Well, here's hoping anyway!

HS Tham
President

New Members

The Club welcomes 4 new members. They include 2 of our youngest members – **Matt Hunter** and **Matthew Debruyn**. Matt Hunter is the brother of member Mitchell Hunter. The Matts are both 15yrs old and are pretty keen. They both fished the last BassCatch and Matthew Debruyn accounted for 21 bass, so he was right up there. It's great that we have some new members as young as these guys and it's a welcome addition to the club.

The 3rd new member is **Rico van de Kerkhof** who joined us after participating in the last BassCatch. He is on board with the Club's ideals and has been to a Russell St working bee already. A few words from Rico about himself –

I am 34 years old. 2 years ago I moved to Australia permanently and married my long time, long distance girlfriend. I work as a gardener at Rookwood Crematorium and hoping to have my own Landscaping/Gardening business in a couple of years.

I've been fishing since I was 7 years old and on holidays, my first rod was a branch I found in the forest, 2m of nylon and a hook I found around the pond, and as a float I used a wine cork with a skewer in it. Hey, I was 7, on holidays and wanted to go fishing! Back in the Netherlands I used to fish for all freshwater species, from little redfins to Pike and from Zander to Carp.

Now here in Australia, I have to learn to fish again, learn the different species, what they eat, where they hide. So, joining a club is the easiest way to go.

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I use KFDU forum a lot to look around and soon I saw Tham's message about the Bass Catch. Went to the meeting and the Bass Catch and 2 weeks later I became a member. Thanks to Tham's enthusiasm and all the friendly guys at the Bass Catch, I'm now completely Hooked! It even crossed my mind to sell my Hobie and buy a little sit in. What I liked about the club as well is that they do research and some conservation work to create a better habitat for the Australian Bass.

My PB is still under the 300mm mark, although I thought for 2 days I cracked the 400 mark on my 2nd attempt at bass fishing. However, it was a 418mm EP!! So, you'll probably see me out there on the water as much as possible, because I need to get at least a 300+ in the yak by the end of this season! (HST: I didn't think it would take long and it came to be so at the Lane Cove R BassCatch where Rico landed a 302mm FL bass within minutes of starting.)

Our 4th new member is Pete Hatzidimitriou who has joined in the last week. A few words from Pete -

I'm 27 years old, originally from Newcastle...currently living and working in Sydney as a Data Analyst for the Department of Education. My other interests include playing soccer but due to a knee injury it was time to develop another passion...fishing of course was the perfect choice!

I've always been a keen fisho from when I was a kid but my real passion started to develop after my first fresh water experience 4 years ago...ever since then I've been hooked. People brag about the thrill of fishing off shore for kingfish, marlin, tuna etc. etc. but nothing can beat the beautiful surrounds of the rivers and impoundments in NSW.

What I love most about bassing is the challenge of seeking out a fish from its hideaway to nail your lure, there is no bigger thrill then placing a cast into an area you know if you were a bass you would be hiding, only for it to rush out an absolutely nail you on your retrieve...they are such great pound for pound fighters and just absolutely gorgeous fish.

My PB bass is by no means a monster at 38cm but so much fun. My dad got me into freshwater fishing and so I do a lot of it with him in impoundments all over NSW, I fell in love with bass fishing at Lake St Clair in the Hunter Valley. I've not done any river fishing for bass or from a kayak before so I'm very excited about the prospect of learning the art of it from fellow members.



CMA Community Forum

I attended the Catchment Management Authority's Community Consultation Forum recently. It was an opportunity for the CMA to show us the Catchment Action Plan (CAP) for the next 5 years. It consisted of a big series of high-level plans, objectives and dare I say it, "motherhood statements". "Fish-friendly" buildings, development, engineering and design is a very important part of the CAP and it was great to see. It is a blanket term to describe all manner of things that is supposed to help our aquatic environment and fishy friends. It was an excellent plan, but I wonder how much of it will happen. We've already seen how the NSW government is going about dismantling NSW Fisheries, eroding Angler Access and in fact has planned to dismantle the CMA's as well. The first stage of that is the "merging" of the Sydney Metropolitan CMA with the Hawkesbury-Nepean CMA. The SMCMA is a unique CMA as it has many urban issues it is dealing with which is not the usual case for most of the other CMA's in the State. The next stage is the merging of the CMA's into a new mega-department called Local Land Services which will incorporate the CMA, Livestock Health & Pest Authority, Agriculture advisory services and who knows what else. This is supposed to happen by January 2014.

HS Tham

My Gorge-ous Bass Catch

Yet another October Bass Catch has come and gone. It was an eagerly-anticipated event this year with high hopes for a bumper season after the 2 or 3 years of La Niña rainfall. The main question was where the bass were given that the last couple of months have been very dry. Have the returnees been able to move upstream or are they still mainly stuck in the lower reaches? We can only find out by being on the water! This October, nobody from Bass Sydney was fishing Reach 1 & 2, but we seem to have covered the rest pretty well.

The Friday night BBQ went down well and the chat-fest after dinner continued late into the night. It was good to see a mixture of old hands and visitors attend. We welcomed back Greg Smith from Muswellbrook. He's fished with us before and he made a last-minute decision to attend. We also had Rico, a bass virgin in his Hobie Outback and Wilbur and his lovely wife Krystal and their 8 month old son who came down from the Central Coast. George Haddad was another visitor who attended his second Bass Catch with us. River reaches were discussed at length on Friday evening and everyone, visitors & newbies included, retired for the night having made arrangements to fish the next day.

Saturday – Reach 3b

Greg Rouland and I had arranged to fish the Saturday on his tinny, launching from Penrith boat ramp and going up through the Nepean Gorge. We were going to go all the way up to the Warragamba R junction and into the Warragamba if we could. Neither of us had any experience in that stretch and I had to consult member and resident river guide Steve Defina for some tips.

We got on the water around 8am and not surprisingly, the sun was up and shade was already in short supply. "No worries!" we thought, thinking that the high gorge cliffs will provide good shade in the Gorge itself. We were eventually disappointed to find that, due to the orientation of the Gorge, shade was hard to find once the sun was overhead. We tried lower down first, and then above The Narrows. We caught a few fish including a couple of beauties for me.

I was fishing 3 outfits – the UL spin, a new 6' 6" spin rod I bought from Al's Tackle Shop on Friday and a 7' 6" baitcast rod I've had since moving to the USA. It's a rod I haven't used much as it is too long for the kayak. Fishing from the boat, I thought it would be an ideal time for it to catch its first Aussie fish. I was chucking a Dreamfish Twin Buzz around with it until I changed to a white Kokoda ¼ oz tandem spinnerbait. First cast with the white spinnerbait saw it hit and a 342mm bass landed.

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That rod, teamed with my new Rovex baitcast reel, made short work of it. I blooded the new spin rod with my best fish for the day, a 370 on an all-purple Booyah Pond Magic single buzzbait. Nice! I was looking away when the buzzer was taken with a small splash. Greg said it was hit when it just cleared a line of weed.

After this we decided to just motor on through the Gorge and get to the top section. Our morning session was a bit slow in spite of the 2 nice ones I got. I only caught 4 fish in the first 2.5hrs. Greg had only boated 2. We soon found ourselves in skinny water leading up to the Warragamba R junction. We went up it to have a look. Nothing very appealing fish-wise and we eventually stopped at the end and had lunch.

After a leisurely lunch and a cold beer, we recommenced fishing and it got better. Steve D had said the fishing is better up the Gorge in the arvo, after the water had a bit of time to warm. Shade was still in short supply, but I managed a string of small bass on the jigspin/UL combo. Small bass! This is more like a normal Bass Catch! Lots of blood was lost by us to these spiky buggers and a few days after the weekend, my hands and fingers are still hurting!

As the arvo marched on, the shadows were getting longer and more and more areas were opening up to us. It had been a scorchingly sunny day as well. We couldn't stay until after dark as Greg's boat had no nav lights, so we had to make the run back to Penrith before it got dark. When we pulled the pin, we left them biting. The last hour of our day was hectic to say the least. I started throwing the purple buzzbait again in the shady areas and started getting good fish. In fact, my last 6 fish of the day were all taken on the buzzbait, including 3 over 300mm and 2 in the high 200's. Of course, just to disprove the buzzbait/big fish theory, it also included a 140mm bass! The buzzer was as long as it was!

Greg worked hard all day controlling the boat as the electric motor was playing up. I was up the front and was lucky to have the best of it. When the fish were really going off at the end, I insisted that Greg move up the front while I controlled the boat. Greg almost doubled his score in that last period, mainly working away with crankbaits. In spite of my buzzbait success, Greg had continued with the crankbait. When it came close to us leaving, I said that he need to change to a buzzer. He finally tied on a Dreamfish Twin Buzz in black & blue when he was stuck on 13 fish for a while. I think it took less than a half-dozen casts before Greg hooked and landed a nice 348 on the Twin Buzz. Good finish!

We managed to drag ourselves away and got to the boat ramp before dark. It was crowded at the ramp and it took a while before we got the boat out. Final tally for the day for me was 22 bass, with 7 over the 300mm mark. Greg landed 14 with 4 over 300mm. It was looking a bit iffy early in the day, but it came good and we both left feeling pretty impressed with the quality of the fish we were getting. We also learnt that we probably spent a bit too much time up the top end as the middle sections of the Gorge looked great, especially in the late arvo. We had not even touched that section as we bypassed it on the way up and had no time on the way back down. We'll know better next time.

370mm FL buzzbait bass

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342mm big spinnerbait bass

Greg hooks up after lunch...



... to a decent bass



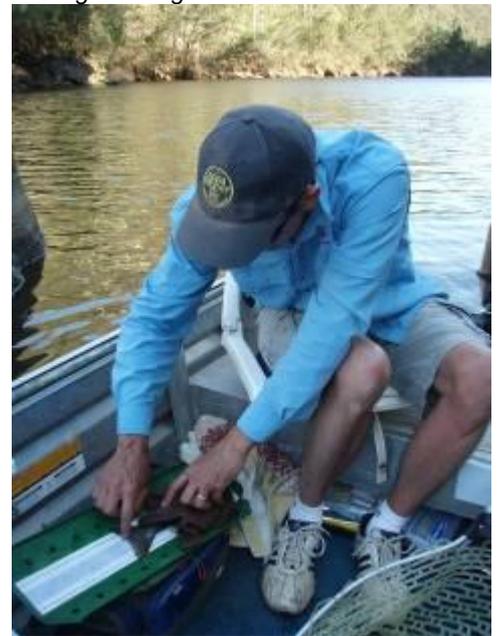
Later in the arvo, another nice crankbait bass

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Lunchtime up the Warragamba R

Greg showing how to measure a bass



Last throw of the dice with a Dreamfish Twin Buzz resulted in a hookup. bass

A nice 348mm buzzbait bass



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Eel-ation! Greg and I saw an incredible sight while we were fishing. I hooked a nice bass in the 34cm category and was battling it to the boat when we saw a big eel next to the bass. At first I thought nothing of it as we often see eels while out bassing. However, instead of just sliding by the eel turned around and attacked my bass! At one stage, it had a death grip on the bass and it was a tug-of-war!! It finally let go and it was more pandemonium with the bass panic-stricken, the eel about to launch another attack and Greg trying to net the bass. Somehow, we managed to net the bass much to the disgust of the eel and it soon slid off into the depths. We couldn't believe it! When we examined the bass, the anal fin was shredded and a few scales were removed from the body near the anal fin! I'm just glad it wasn't a typical 140mm baby bass on the end of my line as it would have been swallowed by the monster eel. It wasn't the longest eel I've ever seen, but it had a head the size of a rugby ball! It was not going to be my only eel encounter of the weekend!

Sunday – Reach 3a

After a late night at the gathering Saturday night, we got up and prepared Sunday breakfast. Scrambled eggs, bacon, tomatoes and leftover sausages were devoured by the crowd and then it was time to break camp. I had arranged to fish Wallacia with visitor Rico. He'd caught his first few bass on Saturday and was technically not a bass virgin any more. I thought Wallacia would suit the Hobie and I suggested that we fished together on Sunday. By the time we got to Wallacia and launched it was midday. Sunday was a little cooler than Saturday with a southerly breeze. It made things very comfortable, but I didn't know if the bass would like it as much as we did.

It wasn't long before I was on the scoreboard with a high-20's fish on the UL/jigspin combo. A small bass later, I was into a 304mm bass. Rico meanwhile, had found he liked the heart-stopping surface action using a Tiemco Soft Shell Cicada. He too got a few on the SSC.

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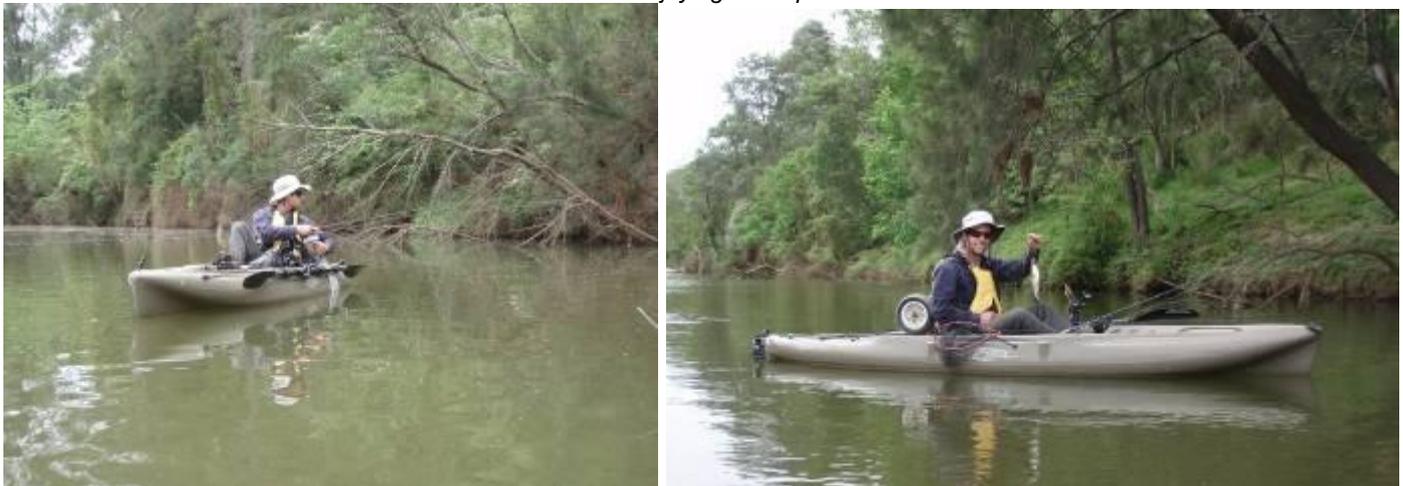
Another surface bass addict is hooked! Meanwhile, I found that the fish were there, but you had to put your lures right into the tightest possible spot, right up the back of the snags before they would bite. If you did get a good cast right back, the fish were mostly there and they would respond.

Eel-advised move! An eel swam past close to my yak and remembering the aggro eel from yesterday, I STOODIDLY plopped my jigspin in front of it and it immediately snapped at it, but missed. What would a wise man do? Probably he would have left it at that and moved on. Oh no... not me!! I dropped the jigspin in front of it again and this time, in one movement, it swallowed the whole lot. The little jigspin disappeared completely into its gob and I was on big time! It was on my UL noodle rod and I had no chance at all. It screamed off towards the nearest snag about 3m away and that's where it stayed. I tried giving it slack line and waiting, but no. I soon found myself retying a new leader and another small spinnerbait! Is this time of year when eels are particularly aggressive??!

Rico had to go at 3:30pm and he returned to the launch point. I continued on until 6:45pm when I called it quits. Rico added another 4 to his tally for the weekend while I finished with 11 at Wallacia. I dropped at least 3 decent fish with the hooks pulling with the white-knuckled, close quarters brawling necessary after the lure is hit right up the back of their hidey-holes. I had one unseen fish take the small spinnerbait on the drop, the line moved sideways, right into a watery thicket of sticks & branches and that's where it stayed. I managed to get my lure back, but no fish.

My final tally of the weekend was 33 bass, of which 8 exceeded 300mm. The size range was very good with my smallest being a 131 and the largest a 370, with plenty of sizes in between. Indicates a healthy fishery in H-Nepean with the fishways and good seasons combining to ensure a good distribution of fish. A couple of PB's were taken during the weekend including a 397mm beauty taken by John Stokes near Yarramundi.

Rico enjoying the experience

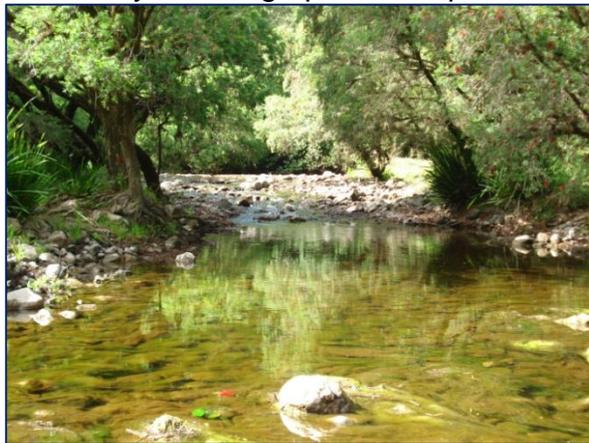


HS Tham

Recollections of trips past – October 2006

Chasing *Macquaria novemaculeata* has become something of a passion that was ignited after I did two 3-day trips on the Clarence with the former guide, Rob Lockwood in 1999 and a couple of subsequent Nymboida trips with Matt Graham. This catch-and-release fishing was a far departure from my youth on the far North coast, when we used to keep most fish we caught in the Tweed River and its tributaries near Murwillumbah. Bass and EPs caught on bait in the same water were thought to be all 'perch' of the same species. The ethos was broadly 'fishing for a feed'. I don't remember catching or seeing a bass back then that would have gone 38 cm to the fork, but have found them up that way since. A family friend on the Tweed, a former 3rd-generation pro fisherman who I've got into catch-and-release (when I'm there anyway), did not know they were different species until I convinced him a few years ago.

A September 2006 bass outing closer to home had disappointed and after a work colleague, Rob - a land-based game angler - had been pressing me to take him on another bass trip, dates for a mid-week October trip on a North coast river were set. The rivers would be warming and we had high hopes that this trip would produce fish. Re-reading a few chapters of *Bethune on Bass* and fondling the bass gear a few times were mandatory in the days leading up to the trip.



This was in the years before La Niña had repeatedly overfilled the Northern rivers and shortened many a bass season. 2006 was a dry year with fairly low water levels – meaning that fish that had got down to the brackish for spawning were probably unable to transit all of the rapids to get back up into the upper reaches in Spring. Testament to this was a small, sub-tropical feeder creek near our campsite that typically runs freely, now having no flow, with stagnant, shallow pools. In other seasons, I had pulled good fish from the deeper edges here when it had a lot more water.

Back then, I had not met all of the farmers I now know up that way, who allow me river access and occasionally drop me off upriver. The plan was to work 10 km upriver from a mate's farm. This sort of exercise – that my brother termed on a later trip 'The Ho Chi Minh Trail' - involved dragging the laden Coleman canoe up several long runs and rapids to a campsite.



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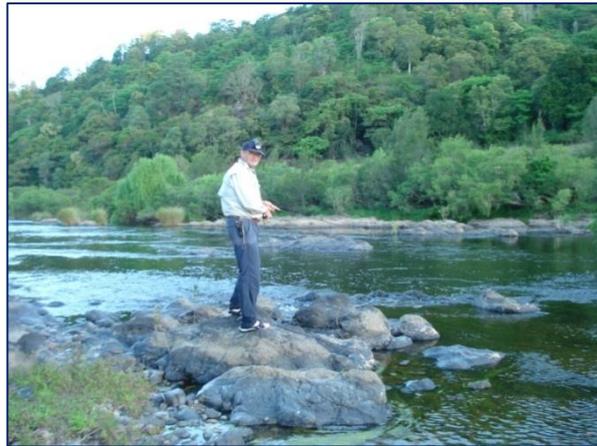
The water in the main river was as clear as it gets, and you could see deep down into the mysterious depths alongside weed beds and rocks. In lower light, bass cruise the gaps in these weed beds, feeding on the shrimps that are abundant in the weeds. As I try to do on overnight freshwater trips, we'd gone in the Dark of the Moon. I'd found on many bass and greenfish trips that night time sessions typically shut down as if a big switch was turned off as soon as soon as the moonlight hits the water. Others will disagree and say that their PB came from a bright moonlit night, but this is not what I've seen.

The campsite we chose on a feeder creek had a lot more rocks than we'd have liked under our tents, but it was within a km of the top of the big pool in the river where we hoped for action at dusk and afterwards.



As we pushed upriver from the camp, we hoped that a strong late-arvo North-Easter breeze that rippled the surface and helped push us upriver would abate by dusk. It was good to see that the pair of Pelicans that live on this stretch were still there on their favourite rocks and I recalled that I'd seen them with two sets of young in recent years. The sun was getting lower over the ranges to the West, as we waded and floundered up through the long rapid above where we planned to fish later in the evening. It was hard work dragging the canoe upriver here with a lot of backwards progress and some swearing to reach the next big pool. It took us 20 minutes to make it 80 metres up through the fast runs and we wondered if it was

worth the effort.



We flicked lures into eddies below the top of that pool, but the only action was a couple of fish that came across a narrow channel and smacked lures at our feet without any hook-up.

We shot back down the rapid with no drama and swung the canoe back up into a large eddy below the rapid. Using the retrograde flow below large mid-river rocks in the fast water, we jammed the canoe up into a narrow slot between the rocks. As we'd hoped, the wind dropped on dusk and it became a balmy evening with a fair barometer and heaps of promise. So far, we'd flicked a range of lures in the pool above with no fish. As it started to get darker, our anticipation increased and we actually held off fishing this promising spot for a few minutes while we watched the movement of the eddy and herring flipping. They were plentiful and probably a major item on the menu of the mature bass we were chasing.



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In the fading light, my cast with a black soft-body *Ploppy* (from the late Peter Newell – LH top lure in the photo) into the far side of the foam-flecked eddy, dangerously close to trees, came up with a fish and this was a promising sign for the coming after-dark session. It was good to feel the weight and power of a good fish again. When she got into the main flow heading for tangled tree roots, metres of line initially peeled off against the Chronarch's drag. If this mid 40 FL fish had been much bigger, the battle may have been lost.



My brother-in-law in the US had sent me some black & red Arbogast *Sputterbuzz* fizzers that have a spinning blade at the front and this would be their first swim. We flicked lures into the eddy with our baitcasters, with the flow around trees on the Northern side putting a large belly in the line. Time-after-time, fish simply grabbed the *Sputterbuzz* or Rob's black *Jitterbug* before we started the retrieve. I think that the current movement rotating the *Sputterbuzz*'s blade may have resembled a sick herring. Heddon's *Dying Flutter* also goes close to mimicking a herring that's not in great shape, but I didn't bother to think about changing tackle. We scored a good number of fish off the surface in this way – all without the addictive big smash. Another

learning exercise. Our braid lines, leaders and knots were taxed close to their limits and our 2-3 kg rods were as bent as we dared as we fought these fish out of the faster water back into the slower part of the eddy.

All fish were taken off the surface, as we did not tie on a diving lure. On the subject of surface lures, I've found – as many other have – that a black *Jitterbug* is a deadly after-dark lure. If you consider that the lure sits as a silhouette on the surface from the bass' viewpoint, why would you use any colour but black – or possibly purple? Interestingly, on this system and on the Clarence and Nymboida, mates and I have seen the jointed *Jitterbug* out fish the single-bodied version by a significant margin.



This wasn't my preferred skinnier water fishing, with an explosive strike and the kayak dragged towards the sticks while you try to paddle with one arm and play the fish with the other, while thinking about how to grab the Environet with a third arm. However, it was a fair substitute. Some of the fish, when we got them in close, pulled our rod tips into the water and a broken rod looked to be an even bet with these big girls. Luckily, nothing was broken and there were no bust-offs. When I get broken off, I always wonder and worry if the fish has spat the lure and is OK.



We didn't photograph all of the fish and released some at the water's edge. All fish were in great condition with a hint of bronze on their flanks. This was champagne fishing at its best, with beautifully conditioned fish into the 50 FL range coming in the next 90 minutes. Rob's fish at 30+ FL was the smallest we scored. After I'd taken most of the fish early in the session and started to feel a little guilty, I stopped fishing and just stood on the rock with the Environet, landing the superb fish that Rob was getting. I hastened to tell him that it wasn't always this good. We hadn't eaten dinner and around 9.30 pm launched the canoe and started to drift back down to the camp. It was pitch-black with only starlight to pick out the ridgelines above. By this time, we were in slower open water and there was little skill attached to hooking up again-and-again. Mixed in with the occasional splash of a big mullet jumping was a 'boof' that was another herring being smashed off the surface by a marauding bass.



Casts of Jitterbugs and Heddon Torpedoes were flicked in the direction of the last 'boof' and more fish into the mid-to-high 40s came to the canoe. At one stage, I'd tossed a Torpedo into the inky blackness at what I thought was the mouth of the creek where we'd set up camp. I hadn't begun the retrieve when line started to peel of the reel, taking drag despite the high drag setting on the threadline. Thinking I'd snagged a tree that floods had left in the creek entrance and that the canoe was moving, I yelled 'Stop ##### paddling' to Rob. He replied 'I'm not xxxxxx paddling'. The reason for this proved to be another fish around 50 FL that had just grabbed the lure on splashdown and headed up the creek. These fish were dining on herring that night, and our lures must have looked close enough to the next dinner course.



Over a drink before a late dinner, we agreed that it was a privilege to catch & release these superb wild river fish. Bass from this far up in this long system that are inclined to head down to spawn undergo a very rigorous winter, getting up and down numerous rapids and runs in order to produce what I understand are around 450,000 eggs per kg of their weight. When we look at recruitment numbers of wild bass, it becomes obvious that only a small proportion of these eggs become fish. A few years have passed since then and I wonder how many more years someone of my vintage is able to do these trips. I've fished this river many times since this trip, with a couple of PBs being spread over the last six years, but have never had a session like this one we enjoyed back in 2006. Maybe next season.

Ron Rogers

Buzz off - After dark buzz baiting action

Having had a bit of a fishing hiatus over last couple of years I made it a goal off mine to rekindle my passion of bass fishing. It wasn't long before my mate Nick and I had made plans to meet at the river in the evening. Nick had done well last season working buzz baits amongst the swollen banks. We had one trip last year together and the river was flooded to dangerous levels but worst still unfishable.

We approached the river and discovered it looking in good condition, which buoyed our spirits. We rigged up and Buzz baits were the weapon of choice. Nick opted for his favorite ¼ Oz single blade buzz bait. Whilst I tied on one of my home made "G-factor" 1/8oz quad blade buzz baits. Things were quite for the first 30 minutes however once the first sign of darkness appeared Nick was on to a solid fish that took us by surprise. It was a well-conditioned silver bullet, he let it go and we continued downstream.

The rhythmic splutter of dual buzz baits echoed across the night air, suddenly the noise came to a violent and sudden stop, as Nicks lure was smashed again his rod buckled over, he was onto another cracker fish. One after another Nick continued to slay the fish consistently taking fish in the mid-30s category. I was day dreaming when my little buzz bait was slammed mid-stream as my light 2kg rod doubled over. I bullied the fish away from the mid water boulders and managed to land a very hansom bass. Next cast I was in again but alas the hooks pulled, Nick suggested I use a different style Buzz bait so I tied on a gold single blade with soft plastic tail, first cast into the dark ness a bass jumped all over my offering as it did its best job to stitch me up amongst the piles of timber. I upped the drag and applied maximum pressure; I released a stunning bass of 390mm.

Not to be out done Nick was consistently pulling fish next to me in a frantic session. His next fish came to the bank, a stunning silver specimen. We decided to put the measure on her, and it just kept going and going, at first glance it didn't look like a giant but it maxed out at 430mm to the fork a great fish by any standards. We observed the fish were still very lean obviously post spawn fish. We finished the night on that note and was surprised how quickly the time went. I can attest to the deadliness of buzzbaits for bass

Chris Ghosn

**LANE COVE RIVER BASSCATCH
NOVEMBER 24th 2012**

Well guys it was a very pleasant afternoon and a magic evening after the breeze dropped and the sun sank behind the hills. Not a thing stirred apart from the odd plop of a mullet jumping on his way somewhere.

Eight members turned up including new members Damian Balfour and Rico Van Der Kerkhof. As usual we cleaned the fish way although it was pretty much ok which I have subsequently learnt was due to Ashley's efforts last month. Thanks Ash.

Soon we were off to Cottonwoods Glen with much anticipation about the afternoons fishing. I was last in and to my surprise Craig Sommerville paddled over to the ramp with a large darkish fish. Blow me down a Macquarie Perch I thought, although after Tham's advice and photos it was obviously a Silver Perch. A very solid fish of 375mm. Never the less this was something out of the ordinary so after a couple of snaps it was released. Apparently it's against the law to dispose of another native breed even though it should have been west of the great divide. The photos are on our Facebook page if you wish to look.

New member Damian Balfour caught his first ever Aussie Bass and if we all remember back to the time when it was our first Bass it's a pretty special moment. He was absolutely chuffed and to top that off he caught another as well. Rico VdK (sorry Rico) managed a 302.

The catch results were: 125, 225, 235, 250, 262, 265, 266, 270, 280, 282, 284, 298, 302, 304, 317 & 340. Plus one Silver Perch. The results were not bad considering the small trickle of water down the fish way. Usually the Lane Cove is tough to fish in these conditions. We all returned on dark, loaded kayaks then set up for dinner. As usual the fare was bar-b-queed Primo sausages, onions and sauce on fresh wholemeal bread, just the shot for hungry men, followed by tea, coffee and biscuits.

It was a very pleasant evening, in fact so nice and mild it would have been great to unroll the swag and camp. I think it was a least 10.30 before we left the park. Thanks to those that made the effort and I hope you enjoyed yourselves.

Whilst on the Subject of the Lane Cove both Alan Izzard & I were invited to attend a meeting at the fish way on Wednesday afternoon the 28th November. A group of four Chinese hydraulic engineers were in Australia to look at fish ways with a view to gathering knowledge about design and features. Those in attendance were Andrew Duffy, the resident park ranger, Mike Pickles from Friends of Lane Cove River, a female interpreter, the four engineers, Al and I. Andrew had A3 colour prints showing various stages of the fish way construction and these raised many questions. We explained how the Bass life cycle works and that Bass are a fish of the catadromous family, that is one that lives most of their life in fresh water, but migrate to the estuarine parts of the river to spawn during winter, then return again.

I explained that we at Bass Sydney fish for pleasure, but always release the fish and they couldn't figure out why we would do that, but after I said well if you kill all the big females there will be no babies so we must look after the mothers. Then the penny dropped and of course they agreed it was a good idea.

I'm sure it was very interesting for the visitors and they took many photos of the fish way from all different angles plus a few group shots of all of us. In the end they thanked us all very much, presented gifts to Andrew, Mike, Alan & I then bid farewell. Many handshakes followed. Luckily there was about an inch of rain on Tuesday evening so the fish way was flowing well. The river looked magic, not a ripple, overcast and with the flow increase I'm sure it would been a great time to cast a lure or two.

PARRA RIVER “Bass Catch” – 15th/16th Dec

Well this is the year! For those of you that haven't heard there have been reports and photos of bass caught this season just above the Charles Street Weir (bottom of Reach 3D). Whether these fish have been washed down during rains early in the year or are remnant stock from the brackish water downstream they indicate the fishway is working – any fish washed down in those floods would have ended up well below Charles Street and had to migrate back up!

We're not talking about one fish from one outing either – there have been multiple fish from multiple trips so they are definitely there to be caught.

You will find the map hereabouts describing the reaches and giving some access notes for each. And, whilst the official event date is Sat 15th December, those wanting to target these known fish in reach 3D might be better off fishing on Sunday 16th as you will find free parking on a Sunday in the streets close by on the northern (Victoria Rd) side of the river. If you do want to fish this bottom end it might be just as easy to fish from the bank – just watch out for pedestrians and preferably take an environet with a bit of a handle on it to aid in lifting fish for measurement and keeping them off the ground while you do it..

I'm happy for people to fish either day on that weekend but be sure to exercise the same “BassCatch” rigour around catch data. Please take a standard catch card with you to record the times fished in each reach and fork length of any fish caught. That is any fish – we know there are silvers here as well as eels and I've also seen catfish nests. Be particularly kind to the latter if you catch one – these are in decline everywhere and it would be a minor miracle if we could sustain a population here.

As usual, we need the info even if you catch nothing. Catch data can be returned at the next meeting, dropped in the post or sent to me by email.

For those of you that don't know the river, reach 3D is the very public and “ugly” concrete channel section - there are much more scenic locations to fish in Parramatta Park and further upstream. I'd really like to make sure we get some fishing effort in 3D this year to see if we can't get a few fish on the board but I can appreciate that some will prefer to launch the yaks upstream. To that end, I'll leave it to you guys to have “first dibs” on the fish in 3D. If you're definitely going to fish it please let me know and I'll leave it to you – if I don't hear from anyone I'll fish that reach myself.

Don't forget there is a café near the kiosk weir (and a million others in Church St) so it will be easy to organize lunch or a cuppa with your fishing buddies before or after fishing if you're keen.

Good luck!

Alan Fowkes



Legend:

- ∅ Thick red bars are the weirs. From the top of the page these are the Upstream Weir (the only one without a fishway so far), the Kiosk Weir and the Marsden Street Weir. Charles Street Weir is just beyond the downstream limit of the map.
- ∅ Reach numbers are in red – Reach 1 is Toongabbie Creek (the left fork heading upstream from limit of map) and Reach 2 is Darling Mills Creek (right fork). There is a reach 4 below Charles Street Weir but no practical way to fish it given the watercraft exclusion zone between there and Silverwater Bridge (though you could have throw from the bank right at the weir and probably from parklands on the southern side).
- ∅ Easiest access is at the Kiosk Weir. From here you can fish upstream or downstream. Getting up over the Upstream Weir to Reach 3A is easy. Getting down over Marsden Street Weir to Reach 3D would be do-able.
- ∅ Access to Reaches 1,2 and 3A is also relatively simple from the bottom of Brelogail Street in Northmead. Park in the street with no time limit and, walking down towards the creek, turn right into parklands. You'll only need to drag your kayak about 30 metres before angling down the bank to the bottom of a riffle and some easy launch sites.

Next Meeting is our annual XMAS
dinner to held at Dusit Thai
restaurant in the Ermington hotel
10th December

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