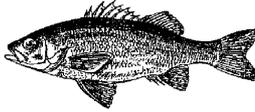


	Australian Bass, <i>MACQUARIA NOVEMACULEATA</i>	
		
<h1>THE BRONZE BATTLER</h1>		

PATRON: Dr Wayne Erskine PhD	
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POINTS SCORE & BASSCATCH OFFICER: Al Izzard	

## President's Message

The new bass season is (finally!) upon us and its looking like a beauty. I'm not the only one that had been hanging out for the chance to tangle with the bronzed battler if the turnout to the Russell Street work day at the beginning of September was anything to go by! A large group of members and Springwood guys turned up to work and many of us brought our kayaks for a bass session after we finished work. I just wasn't sure if Alan Izzard was that impressed when the lure of the river proved too much by around 1:30pm and we mutinied, downed tools and headed out fishing! Too bad it was a cool day and the bass were not being too cooperative. Many of us, me included, had to wait for another day for our first bass of the season. Not so for Trent McMurray who got a nice healthy 33cm fish to kick off his season.

After 3 work days on Russell Street, the area nearest the "crossing" is already looking much clearer and we're looking at getting some planting done soon. There is much, much more to do, but its surprising how much can be done by a group of ordinary people devoting a bit of their time (& sweat) to the greater good. In this sort of work, its all about numbers – the more people we can throw at it, the more we can get done and the quicker we can do it. As has been said before, this project will not only benefit the riverbank and hopefully, the fish, but will benefit the community in which it is in. Importantly, it reflects the value we bass anglers place on habitat. I have long held the belief that we bass fishos are our own worst enemies – secretive, insular and parochial and its about time more bass anglers got off their bums and did something positive for the fishery they profess to love so much!

October heralds our BassCatch which is in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, the first one being held in 1988. As always, we encourage all members and their friends to participate. Just don't forget to return your Catch Cards!

Happy Bassin' !

HS Tham

## Early Season Bassing (2011/2012)

Less than a month into this season, I've had 3 bassing sessions so far. As is expected for early season bassing, its been quite variable. Spring conditions are variable and this certainly seems to effect the bassing, with some days fine & warm and other days cold and more inhospitable. At least I have found it to be the case, but others, like our resident superstar, Ashley, has already amassed over 30 bass so far. In fact, at time

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of writing, he's just scored his first 40cm fish for the season during an after-work session and his float partner Ben Richards, a 43 ! I'll just get depressed if I think about it too much, so lets move on.

My first session was after the Russell St work day on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was a fine day and was certainly comfortable working, but I lucked out on the water. Not even a hit for about 2hrs fishing. Considering that we had nearly 10 yaks on the water that arvo, only a small handful of bass were caught. Trent caught a nice 33cm fish on the sunny side of the river.

*Trent's 33cm season opener*



A week later, I got out on the Sunday of the Reach 5 weekend. Unfortunately, the dodgy weather forecast for that weekend saw us cancelling the BBQ & Saturday gathering, and we left it to individual members to fish whenever they chose. I managed to get out with Ashley in the morning at Hanna Park, Nth Richmond. Ashley caught a few, including a couple over the 30cm mark (including his first surface bass on one of his home made lures) and then left for greener pastures at lunch time. I soldiered on until mid-afternoon, eventually getting a total of 9 bass, none over 29cm. Most of the fish were chubby and very dark, indicating they might have been in the fresh for some time already. At least I was on the board for the season. All my fish were caught on a custom-made mini spinnerbait I got from [Dreamfish](#). A month or so previously, I visited Rodney and he made up a few spinnerbaits to my specs and I'm happy to say they worked well.

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*Ashley working the bridge*

*Here's a little dark one*



*A more fresh-run fish with an injured side*



Another week passed and my 3<sup>rd</sup> outing was with John Stokes and new member James Tran, going down from Penrith weir to Russell St. It's a stretch I love and it was great to just float through without having to return back to the launch site. The forecast was for temperatures up to 30° C and I was very hopeful! I got to the weir early (!) and while I was waiting for the boys to turn up, I had about 5 minutes casting from the bank above the weir. I was burning a 1/8oz spinnerbait over the weeds and soon landed a skinny 31/32cm bass. I thought this was going to be a good day.

After doing the car shuffle, we launched by around 7am and James entertained us by falling into the chilly water getting into his yak right at the start! Unfortunately for James, John had his camera out taking a couple of pix and managed to immortalise that embarrassing moment! Not a lot of sympathy was shown to the newby kayaker and he jumped straight back on and off we went. Brrrrr! He must have been cold for a while! James



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was late as he had been on the drink the night before, so I think he was well awake then! Don't worry James, its happened to all of us. I don't even need to be getting into my yak to fall in the river!

*Are you awake yet?*

*(Pic: J. Stokes)*



*James scores!*

*Scenery*



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*Do you think he's having fun?*

Conditions were bright & sunny and water clear, but very cold. I don't know what the temperature was, but it certainly felt freezing. James was the first one to get on the scoreboard with 2 or 3 fish before either John or myself got anything. James continued well with 2 or 3 fish around or over the 30cm mark, caught on a mixture of small crankbaits & the ever-reliable Betts spin. He also thought he had a new PB, but it jumped out of his net before being measured. Most of his fish were caught on the sunny side too. This must be a pattern early in the season, with the cold water?

Meanwhile, John & I continued to do it tough. I made a conscious decision not to use the mini spinnerbaits or Betts spins and just went with larger lures, hoping to get a larger fish, but it was in vain. The few bites I got were tentative and I dropped 1 or 2. Funnily enough, my only yak-caught bass for the whole day was caught on a Dreamfish Twin Buzz, a large twin-arm buzzbait! Explain that one... I can't! It was a chubby fish around the 26/27cm mark.

That was about it for me. John managed a few late fish, but all were small. James was the star on the day ending up with a handful. We were off the water by 1:30pm and I was on my way home by 2pm. It was a lovely paddle, John & James saw a different stretch of the river and really liked the skinny, moving water scenario. At least James didn't tip over at any of the rapids/riffles to add to his ignominy at the beginning.

Here's to the rest of the season!

**HS Tham**

### Reach 5

The forecast for the first calendar event of the season wasn't looking very good with high winds and low temperatures predicted after a couple of days of solid rain. So there were quite a few cancellations, but new member James Tran still seemed keen to get on the water so we made arrangements to meet at Macquarie Park early on the Saturday morning. This will test out his keenness I thought, 40km winds, 16 degrees max temperature, a brown river and a 6:30am start usually dampens even the liveliest of spirits. So I was a little shocked to receive a call from James at 5:50am telling me he was there already and ready to go. I told him to fish ahead of me, I was still only halfway there!



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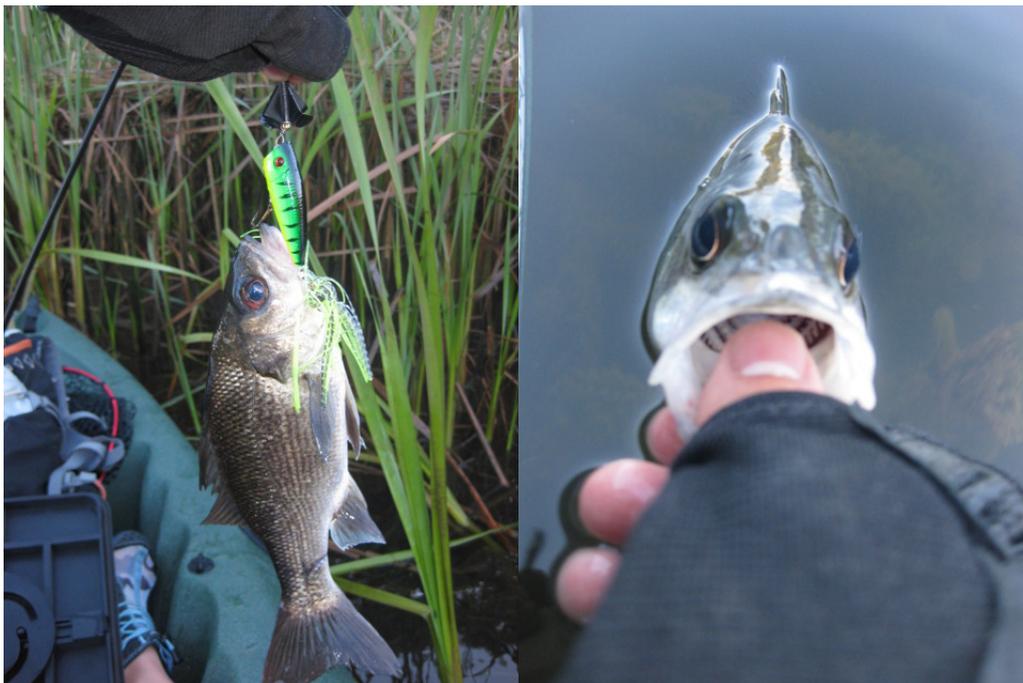


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By the time I arrived on the water James had already caught a fish off the surface on a newly acquired [Dreamfish](#) buzzbait/popper (you'll see it in the pics) A damn good start.



*Pictures by James Tran*



The conditions weren't exactly as predicted, the water was clear and glassy and the sun was well and truly out at 7am but things were to deteriorate rapidly. The buggers had got it right for once.

Things were going slowly with no hits for either of us and I commented to James on how this section of river is usually full of fish and how on a good day most good casts would get attention within the first couple of cranks of the handle. To illustrate my point I fired a cast right into a shallow snag and 2 cranks later I was onto my first fish of the day. It was a fluke, but it illustrated my point well! James switched over to a black crankbait and was promptly rewarded with a 300mm bass, the best fish of the day and a new PB.

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*A new PB for James*

As we neared the Breakaway the wind really started picking up so we found a sheltered little pocket on the bend and fished the reeds for another 20 mins before calling it a day. Final tally was 2 for James and 3 for me so it was a productive mornings fishing.

I called Tham later that day and he was launching at Hanna Park the next morning so I thought I'd give the deeper water another go.

We met around 7am and got on the water quickly. Things started out slowly with neither of us getting a touch around the bridge. The shady side of the river wasn't producing much either so I decided to make the switch and fish the sunny side of the river. The first fish came quickly and was a decent fish at 287mm. I also managed another around 270mm a few meters up. They were the only 2 fish interested so we settled into a rhythm of casting, getting caught in balloon vine or aquatic weed, cursing and casting again. From nowhere a suicidal 325mm Bass decided it wanted to eat my spinnerbait, but without a measure I had to lay it on my paddle and scratch in a mark with my pliers which was later measured with some assistance from Tham.

I neared what appeared to be an opening of a creek, that's weird I thought to myself, I've fished this stretch of river a dozen times and there's never been a creek here before. But sure enough the winter rains had cleared open a lovely 1km stretch of very skinny, very dark, very eroded creek. I ventured up and soon saw a swirl on the surface amongst a collection of debris. I tied on a popper I had made and threw it where I had seen the swirl. Instantly I could see the water moving and could make out a decent bass swimming over to investigate. I paused another 10 seconds before barely moving the tip of my rod, the lure barely moved a cm and it was instantly slurped down and I soon had the first fish in the net caught on one of my lures. At a fat 340mm it was a great way to start things off.

I turned around and went back to the mouth of the creek but the wind was well and truly up so I call Tham who was off in the distance and decided to head home. I paddled upstream and noticed a large square of polystyrene floating in the river attached to the bank by some balloon vine. Upon closer inspection I realised that the balloon vine was actually growing out of the foam, as was a 3 foot tobacco tree, a small casuarina and a variety of other aquatic herbs.

As I drove through Castlereagh I saw Chris pulling into Devlins Lane, so I slammed on the brakes and was soon following him down the laneway, but that's reach 4 and a whole other story.....

Ed

## My first Bass Catch -A retrospective. Part 1

*-Chris Ghosn reveals how he ended up fishing his first bass catch.*

My first ever trip with Bass Sydney concluded at least 3 years in the wilderness trying to break through into bass fishing. When I was an apprentice chef working long hours and split shifts one thing that got me

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though the days was reading fishing magazines in my breaks. I soon came across pictures off guys holding up these handsome bronzed brutes. However I think more than anything it was the rugged beauty in the dark, danky places in the background that really captured my imagination. I just couldn't stop searching for articles on bass. In those days Dave Seaman and his mates from the Mid North coast were the most prodigious writers. I eventually discovered the works of John Bethune and many others. I devoured anything I could get my hands on. Fishing websites were in there infancy in those days & therefore word of mouth and advise from tackle shops was about the only way of gaining knowledge. Joining a club was hard as I worked long, strange, unsociable hours. I would spend my days off if and when I got one in tackle shops spending my hard earned money on what I thought were wise purchases but unfortunately discovered that in almost 100% of cases I was ripped off and taken advantage of. Something that to this day still resonates strongly in me. I will always go out of my way to help anyone interested in fishing and help get them started if I can find something that I know will work which I have a spare I am happy to give it to them so hopefully they can discover the joys I have. One benefit of the internet and forums is the amount of useful info out there really makes starting off a lot easier.

At this stage there was a revolution in the fishing world, bream comps had just started Gel spun polyethylene "GSP" "super lines" were the rage and I would save my dollars and buy things like spider wire and fire line and re spool my old reels, I eventually got caught up in the hype and hoopla of bream fishing at about this time I bought a second hand australis bass kayak and was given a pair of roof rack which I wasn't sure how to install. They both sat in my garage until one faithful day I drove to a place called Windsor and looked down and discovered the Hawkesbury river. My mind started ticking over I could see all the articles I had read mention places like Hawkesbury & Colo and now I could see these names on signs I was actually in an area where there were bass. That started an obsession which lasts till this day. One Saturday night after work at around midnight (when most normal guys my age were out partying) I rushed home and said to myself these roof racks will be installed and I am going bass fishing tomorrow morning. So I some how managed to get these roof racks on my car than tie on my kayak. I managed a couple of hours sleep. Next morning I am up before dawn absolutely buzzing. It was like I had 10 cups of coffee, I left in a hurry and realised I forgot my paddle so I had to go back. My youthful exuberance had got the better part of me. Before long I am bombing along Windsor road absolutely peaking. I eventually hit Windsor at about 6:15 am with the fog gently lifting I remember it so vividly, at the round about an old WB Holden Ute drove past me with an aging elderly cowboy driving in all the clobber smoking a pipe he gave me a wave and a head nod, I was in heaven, as I crossed the bridge I still remember the song on the radio was a country song by George Strait "cowboys like us" playing it stuck in my head a moment frozen in time.

Long story short for many years I repeated this scenario with each time no success however my enthusiasm never waned. I took a hiatus for about 6 months after I finished my apprenticeship living in regional Albury and the family farm, before moving back to Sydney. I remembered vaguely a club that met at Northmead and made some phone calls, I eventually gave Alan Izzard a call and immediately felt compelled to come and met the guys we spoke for some time I immediately felt a connection and eventually I went along to my first club meeting and met the guys Alan made me feel very welcome and to this day regard him highly he has been very supportive and generous to me, he's always been available for a chat and he's a good bloke.

Well wouldn't you know it the day of the bass catch I am all excited but stuck at work in a meeting going nowhere I was too polite to let them know I had to go, I eventually get away and the traffic is horrendous, no time to pack or get food or even directions I am off like a shot and heading towards Wilberforce where we were camping that weekend. I eventually find this place and whilst a lot has since been said and written let me set the record straight to what really happened. Its pitch black I don't know were I am going when I am confronted with a formidable body of water. I assumed the road was at the end of it so I drove to what I assumed was the end and gave the old ute a boot full before I suddenly came too an immediate halt I tried to accelerate but nothing happened. I had driven into the tail end of a dam. The cavalry finally came and kindly pulled me out. And that was how I introduced myself to the Bass Sydney boys and the wider bass fishing community. I was letting that distract me I was keen boy what a night just talking fishing with the boys. I eventually hit the water this time in a kayak not ute. Wouldn't you know it I had been trying to catch a wild river bass for years and on my very first cast I hooked up. Yes that is a fact on my very first cast on my very first bass catch I caught and released my very first wild river bass. Thanks to Bass Sydney. I ended up with 7 for the day and had the time of my life. As a footnote on my second bass catch with the club I caught a fish first cast as well, but that's a story for another time.

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Here's a report written up by Alan Fowkes on the progress at Woods reserve:

## WOODS RESERVE UPDATE

In my new job as a bush regenerator (along with Ash) I'm lucky enough to make return visits to the site of our first serious weeding project – Woods Reserve.

“Lucky” because, whilst we all saw the immediate visual impact of our lantana removal efforts, only these return visits can show you the startling regeneration of native vegetation that has taken place since.

Where a lantana monoculture once prevailed, the river bank now sports a suite of native grasses and groundcovers overlaid by a veritable forest of bracken fern. A great outcome visually but also for insects, small birds, frogs etc. As we've always preached, the river also receives benefits with a much better “filtering service” and an improved foodchain at the river's edge.

Up the slope a little, the removal of the lantana has paved the way for more of these species but also for shrub and tree regeneration which will further improve the ecosystem on site.

Fortunately for Woods Reserve, National Parks has funded regular follow up work by the company I work for. This makes sure the gains are realised from Bass Sydney and the Springwood boys' early efforts but also allows for the expansion of the area subject to lantana removal and bush regeneration. So far, we've pushed further back up the slope, penetrated further into the upstream and downstream creeks and are now working beyond the upstream creek.

We've already seen that this site is capable of a remarkable bounce back but, with so much lantana on surrounding properties, constant vigilance will be required to keep it healthy.

For now though, it's a good time to look back and enjoy the fruits of our labour. For those of you that can't easily access the site I thought a few photos of the river bank might be in order



*Here's a couple of shots of the initial work being done on the site. And this is what it looks like today.*



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*The river bank now clear of lantana and sporting a coat of grasses and bracken fern. Hopefully, shrubs and trees will be next.*

*Our team working the bottom slope around the middle of the site: looking for, and largely failing to find, lantana and crofton weed regrowth.*



*Smoko just below the upstream creek. Some of you may remember that, soon after lantana removal, this was a sea of Crofton Weed.*

## NEWS

### Regatta Centre

Just a reminder: The springwood boys are hosting another regatta centre event on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of October. Start time will be 4.00pm and we will be on the water until dark.

As usual the cost will be \$7.20 each and you need your buoyancy vest.



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### Hawkesbury Environment Network launch

The Hawkesbury Environment Network (HEN), University of Western Sydney (UWS) and TAFE Western Sydney Institute (TAFEWSI) are entering in to an agreement to develop the role of the Hawkesbury River Waterkeeper.

You are cordially invited to attend the official launch of the HEN and the signing of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' between HEN, UWS and TAFEWSI for Collaboration and research to promote the health of the River system and its watershed.

Please help us to bring people and organisations together to increase awareness of and act for sustainability and the environment in your community

**When: 19th October 2011**

**Time:** 4pm-6pm

**Where:** University of Western Sydney,  
Hawkesbury Campus, Bourke Street,  
Richmond, Building L2 (Northside)

**For catering purposes, RSVP by 14th October 2011 to:**

**Email:** [sustainability@uws.edu.au](mailto:sustainability@uws.edu.au)

**Post:** The Secretary, HEN – PO BOX 126, Windsor 2756

**For enquires phone:** 02 45721635 or 0414 672 014

### **AUSTRALIAN BASS RELEASES, CENTRAL ZONE, 2011**

Lakes Wallace and Lyell have just had a bit of a boost with the release of 5,000 Bass into Lake Wallace (Wallerawang Dam), and 10,000 into Lake Lyell. From all reports the release was an outstanding success.



*Hopefully these fingerlings will turn into some fat healthy bass*

### **Millerods Giveaway!**

Ian has sent me some pics of the rod he is building and it promises to be something pretty special. I will post all the details of the rod once I receive it but until then here are a few pictures as a bit of a teaser.

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Once again Bass Sydney would like to thank Ian for such a generous donation toward our riparian rehabilitation program. Remember to be in with a chance of winning join us on any of our working days at Emu Plains. The more times you come along the greater your chances! Remember only members who actually participate have a chance of winning this sensational rod.

To have a look at more of Ian's work visit: <http://www.millerods.com.au/>

### **Emu Plains Day 3**

The date of the next Emu Plains event has been moved to the 8<sup>th</sup> of October. The site is looking great, the effort put in so far has been fantastic. Thanks for all the hard work!

### **Bass Sydney Apparel**

The new caps and badges should have arrived so any new members who have not received one please contact Garnet before you attend your next meeting or event. They will be available to members at the cost of \$8 per cap and \$5 per badge.

### **New Member(s)**

Bass Sydney would like to welcome new member Craig Somerville who came along to our picnic day at Lake Parramatta and met the usual suspects. He has already purchased a kayak, so I'm sure everyone will get a chance to meet Craig on the water soon.

### **Hawkesbury/Nepean Basscatch**

The basscatch is on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of October with camping at the usual spot. The briefing will be held on Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of October. Please get your registrations in promptly and I look forward to seeing everyone there.

### **Ed's Fishing Report**

It's been a slow start to the season but the warmer weather (generally) has seen better fishing early September than the last few years. I managed to sneak out the first day of the season (and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ....) for an afternoon session at Devlins lane. I arrived at 4:00pm and didn't get a touch for the first hour and a half but 3 fish came quickly from the shallower water. I had 6 by the time night



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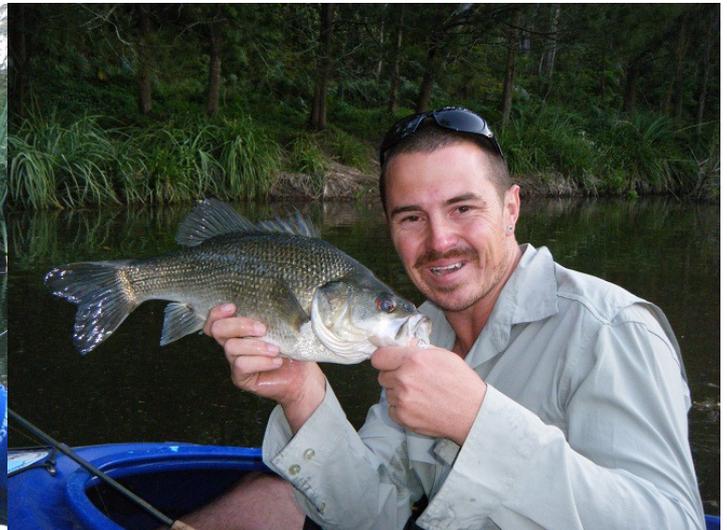
fell so I tied on a cicada imitation and soon had a feisty Bass hit the lure several times without hooking up. I waited a moment before firing another cast as close to the bank as I dared. The lure moved a foot before the water exploded and I had my first surface fish of the season. All the fish were caught in shallow water with scattered weed.



The next day I was working on the river just upstream of Yarramundi so I couldn't help myself and took the kayak with me again. I decided to head out from North Richmond bridge and had a slow afternoon only landing 1 fish and dropping another, once again the fish was caught in shallow water with scattered weed.

Day 3 was a scheduled Emu Plains working day but Chris and I were keen to get out early so we launched near the wier and fished our way down to the worksite. We ended up with 1 each and we managed to spook a big fish that was sunning itself on a rock. At the end of the day the kayaks and rods were eagerly brought out with most heading for the open water downstream. Garnet, Al Izzard and myself headed upstream but the fish just weren't interested with only a couple of hits for Al and myself from a section of reeds and a fish that took a liking to my Sammy. This fish was taken in slightly deeper water, in the middle of the pool on the edge of a weedbed. Still in full sun though which has been another common trend early this season. Trent scored the biggest fish of the day with a cracking 330mm bass taken on a slider.

By mid September some of the bigger fish started making an appearance but there still weren't any real numbers of fish around. Sometimes though size does make up for numbers.....



I decided to try upstream and one thing was confirmed, Douglas Park is now officially the busiest place in Sydney to fish. I arrived at 6am and there were already 4 cars in the carpark. An hour into the session another 2 canoes went passed followed shortly later by another 2 kayaks. Perhaps I will try and avoid it on weekends from now on. The fishing was still ok though, unlike the weather and I managed 3 decent fish, 2 over 300mm.

I snuck out for one final fish in September as it's definitely been a start to the season to remember. I got on the water about 4:30pm on the 30<sup>th</sup> and had a 250mm on the line in half an hour. Can't get much better than this I thought. I picked up another around the same



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size a bit further up before once again this September my lure was demolished by a 370mm bass. I had reached the point I was going to turn around when I saw 2 green kayaks come around the corner. Bugger I thought, I'll have one quick cast then duck back down river to hit a few choice snags before they get there. I threw in my trusty spinnerbait and instantly it was inhaled. In the style of a true Bass fisherman I quickly dipped my rod into the water so these blokes wouldn't know I was onto a fish. This was another big fish and I got her in the net and on the measure in record time. I was just about to put her back into the water when I noticed the faces were rather familiar! It was Ron and Daniel so I called out a greeting. Ron replied with "showing off again are we Ashley?" YEP I said with a big grin and held up a 402mm in great condition.

See you all at the Basscatch!

Ed

**BASSCATCH BRIEFING**  
Next Meeting is on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm at  
Northmead Bowling Club.

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