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President's Message

We have survived another bass-free winter and the 2012/13 bass season has finally arrived! I was very happy to break out the yak, for the first time in over 3 months, especially after an underwhelming blackfish season! A very different-looking Nepean R greeted the new bass season. The floods early this year have dramatically changed much of the river. It should be a good year, but I guess we'll find out as the season progresses.

In the meantime, our monthly work days continue and we have now seen the first plantings of native trees at our Emu Plains site. There is much more to be done and as always, I call on our members to volunteer some time and sweat and work on the site as often as they can. As we all should know, Bass Sydney was awarded the Habitat Heroes Award at the National Recfishing Conference held on the Gold Coast. The Emu Plains project AND our long history of direct and indirect action on habitat and environmental issues to benefit native fish &/or the fishery is the reason we won the award. This means that we can take pride to have been recognized nationally for what we do.

Our club also continues to progress, with a greater emphasis of community engagement by talking at Fish Habitat forums, CMA seminars, National Recreational Fishing Conference, etc. Our advice or support is being regularly sought by various groups. Steadily, our membership continues to grow with some new members in the last year that are on board with the club's main priorities.

This season is the 25th season of Bass Catch. The first Bass Catch was held on the Hawkesbury-Nepean back in 1988. Geoff Barrett, NSW Fisheries' Bass Catch Coordinator has printed some commemorative shirts. Some of these shirts will be offered as a special raffle during the October and February Bass Catch. However, the actual "25th Anniversary of Bass Catch" is next season, 2013/14. Stay tuned next year for some special happenings to mark the Bass Catch program and Bass Sydney's involvement in it.

I'd like to end this issue's President's Message by saying "congratulations!" to young member Paul Matten who got married in late September. Aaah! The brashness of youth!

HS Tham

Carp Control Strategies 2012

I recently attended the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers (NSW CFA) Annual General Meeting held at the Regatta Centre. Dr Dean Gilligan, Fisheries Scientist was the guest speaker who spoke about the latest carp control strategies. Dr Gilligan was invited to speak to the CFA because of the

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announcement that after a number of years, the funding for the 'daughterless carp' genetic modification was being stopped. In fact, Dr Gilligan updated us on that, but also to put everything into perspective, he also spoke about all the other carp control strategies that are being worked on today.

Dr Gilligan informs us that the 'daughterless carp' technology was only one of several techniques being looked at by Fisheries scientists. He notes that knowledge of cyprinids, and progress in their control has really accelerated in the last few years. Dr Gilligan told us that the latest research confirms the following about carp:

- They definitely cause an increase in water turbidity
- In shallow lake ecosystems, they cause a significant reduction in zooplankton and macrophytes and a concurrent expansion in phytoplankton, leading to even greater turbidity
- Carp have rather small home ranges
- Carp can form winter aggregations in lakes
- Carp may be even more dependant on floods to spawn than Australian native fish
- There are spawning "hotspots" which can be considered "carp nurseries"

Some of the above characteristics of carp can determine where and when carp are most vulnerable and are involved in the various techniques being looked at for carp control:

Judas carp:

Radio-tagged male fish are released and tracked to large aggregations of fish. Easy to then put out a big net and get the vast majority of the school.

Carp Separation Cages:

This technique is used at fishways at weirs & locks/regulators. It uses the carp's ability to jump over low barriers and Aussie native fish NOT jumping. Barriers are installed in areas where fish are moving though. Carp will jump over the barrier straight into a trap. The trap or cage is then emptied of the noxious fish at regular intervals. Self-operating, BUT the downsides are –

- Affected by drought or conversely during periods of high flow
- Vulnerable to vandalism
- Involves considerable infrastructure
- Require a power supply
- Needs regular checking, clearing and maintenance
- Uncertain about how anyone other than a government organisation could manage one.

Carp Pheromones:

Pheromones are sex-attractant chemicals. This technique usually involves a female carp that is releasing pheromones being put in a cage. Male fish, attracted by the female carp gather around the caged fish. They can then be targeted. Trials have been successful, but so far, are not appearing as a cost-effective method.

Daughterless carp (genetic biocontrol)

Not long ago, it was announced that funding for research into this technique has been pulled. This is after approx. 10yrs of research so far. However, all is not lost as some funding was found which has enabled existing research to continue. Interestingly for me, the research is being carried out at Auburn University in Alabama !

This is genetic engineering – male carp are artificially produced to carry a gene which produces offspring which are all male. The idea being that, over several generations, the lack of reproducing females will mean a population collapse. It might be a while yet before this technology is perfected in carp.

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Koi Herpesvirus (KHV):

- More correctly called Cyprinid herpesvirus-3 (CHV-3)
- Related to other diseases of carp
- First confirmed outbreak was in England in 1996
- High mortality in all age groups, but juvenile and larval age groups are especially susceptible
- Highly contagious
- Species-specific. No other species effected.
- Mortality strongly temperature-dependent. Most effective temperature range of 13 – 23° C.
- CSIRO has been researching KHV since 2009.
- Hurdles include –
 - Public perception (“...herpes virus in our waterways??!!”)
 - Biosecurity Act and many levels of government regulations
 - Likely resistance from koi breeders and coarse anglers

The most likely scenario for future carp control is the combination of 2 or more of the above techniques.

HS Tham

CFA Annual General Meeting

Shayne Alexander and I attended the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers' (CFA) AGM in August, held at the International Regatta Centre near Penrith. Shayne found himself “elected” as CFA's Liaison Officer to Recfish Australia. I continue as the Vice-President Central Region. I am also to liaise with a couple of other groups with the aim to open Prospect reservoir to (some) recreational fishing access. Much to do there, but I'll try to keep you all informed about this.

There is a very interesting project that has been going on for some time – the NSW Angler Access Project. This project is one of the Recreational Fishing Alliance. Chris Robertson, who leads the project, is a member of Singleton Flyrodders Assoc., a CFA club. Essentially, the project is about securing defined angler access to various waterways in NSW and one of the end results will be an interactive map showing these spots around the state. One of the side-benefits that Chris is working on is a kayak/canoe trail on the upper Williams R. It is recognized that the section of the Williams between Fosterton & Dungog, while beautiful, is a little too long for a comfortable day's yak/canoe fishing. We may look forward to have an access point somewhere in between in the near future.

HS Tham

New Members

The club welcomes new member Damian Balfour. He is originally from Scotland and is a nurse at RPA. Damian met Tham & Daniel Flood at the Fish Habitat Network mini-forum at Taren Point. Damian, already a FishCare volunteer, was interested in what we do and has joined the club. He is however, a newby to kayak fishing, bass fishing and fishing with lures generally! So far, he's bought himself a kayak and was unlucky to miss out on a fish at our Sept 1 work day after-work fishing session. Our mission is to ensure he catches his first Aussie bass before too long! I thought I'd get him his first fish before now, but Damian decided to do the Sydney half-marathon one weekend, followed by some other crazy event which has led to him being in hospital with a yukky leg infection! By his description, it sounds an awful lot like what happens to minor injuries on the Kokoda Trail! I advised Damian that he's probably better off parking his bum on his nice new kayak and catching a few fish instead. Hopefully, he'll be better by the Basscatch.

National Rec-fishing Conference 2012

The conference held in the convention centre on the Gold Coast in August 2012 was attended by approx 150 speakers and delegates from all over Australia. The conference key note speakers were very well accepted:

Martin Salter: Gave a stirring presentation on meeting the challenges of rec. fishing in Australia and paid particular attention to the possibility of the super trawler being allowed to work in Australian waters. This was touched on in several following addresses. Martin also strongly recommended the need for a national body to represent rec. fishing in Australia.

Karen Schmidt: This young lady really engaged the audience. She talked about succession planning for clubs and how to engage the younger generation via "facebook", "Twitter" etc.

Nathan Johnson & Matt Gillett: Talked about the Young Leaders program they had attended in WA and gave their perspective of meeting the challenges ahead.

Chris Hunt (USA) and Simon Evans (UK): Their presentation focused on better habitat producing more fish with examples of how cancelling stocking and repairing habitat had proven that "More Habitat= More Fish".

After lunch

Graham Pike Co-founder of Recfish blasted the governments action on the super trawler of possibly being allowed to work here based on science that is 8 years old.

Several speakers spoke about how we should engage with decision makers, but

Liz. Baker NSW DPI put it to us that we should be the decision makers, a different view that was very well accepted.

At the end of day 1 we had the Awards Dinner where Bass Sydney won the "Habitat Hero's Award" which naturally pleased me very much especially after the list of projects was read out. The food was excellent and the night seemed to be enjoyed by all who attended. Some kicked on into the night and were sporting hang dog looks the next morning. Steve Starling was the guest speaker for the night. He was also the recipient of the "Communication Award".

Day 2

Another interesting array of speakers set into the 2 arenas.

Fern Hames MBDA NFS talked about the MBDA and the common ground between fishers and irrigators.

Jeremy Lyle UTAS who produced some very interesting figures on the demographics of anglers and came up with the figure that the greatest percentage of anglers is in the 30-44 age bracket, so if you want to increase your membership that is where you should be looking. The next largest group was 5-7years, possibly the same group teaching their kids.

Matt Barwick Recfishing Researchspoke about co-operation being the key to achieving better outcomes.

Judy Lynne and Barry Pollock Sunfish Qld. talked about the fishery co-managemant and snapper fishing management trials and the lack of success, appears that there was a conflict of interest.

Alyce Parker Vic. DPI spoke of the ways and means of connection with young fishers and showed a fishing app that is being developed for the new smartphones, defiantly for the younger set.

David Green spoke about Fishing Tackle

I then gave my presentation. (was a little bit put off when almost the whole of the people from the young leaders program moved to the other arena before I started. They were heard to comment later that there was too much " habitat crap" being talked about.)

Stan Konstantaras ANSAten talked about the Angel ring Project and its success.

Ben Diggles Digsfish Services Qld. talked about the media perspective of angling and how it was dominated by the green perspective. Showed a quote by some green group that said that catching a fish was "humiliating" to said fish and that it would probably prefer to be killed than returned to the water, don't know how they actually interviewed the fish for that one.

Bill Sawynok Infotalked about catch & release also and how we might have to fight the extreme greens like PEW etc.

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Peter Kind DAFF talked about a project on Murray Cod that was successful and that it was actually driven by community.

Andrew Norris DAFF spoke about habitat enhancement can improve the angling experience.

Plenary session tried to come up with 3 projects to be taken forward from the conference.

1. develop and implement a national charter for recreational fishing
2. provide a clear and succinct message on the national social (health and well-being benefits) and economic importance (\$GVP, flow on economic contribution and the number of jobs) of recreational fishing to the Australian government and the community
3. provide for ongoing leadership development
4. develop and implement a national strategy on fish habitat to improve recreational fishing opportunities

Closing Address was from Patrick Horn FRDC and was extremely good, especially the bit at the end when he said how pleased he was that habitat recovery was so strongly spoken about.

As there were 2 arenas going at the same time I could not listen to all the speakers so I chose the ones that I thought would interest me most. My conclusion of the conference is as follows:

Speakers: very good on the most part

Presentation content: again very good though some were same same.

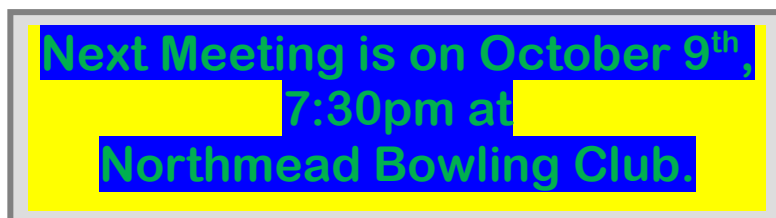
Themes: OK

I was disappointed at the number of actual angler delegates at the conference, though when the cost is considered it is no wonder, it was a bit like an old school boys reunion. The other thing for me was the lack of connectivity between fresh and salt water anglers, as far as habitat goes salties just don't seem to get it, but maybe I am a little biased here. I did enjoy the experience. The challenge ahead to get the message out to the clubs and anglers that could not attend, it is up to us to take this up, we cannot leave it to under resourced government agencies to do all the work.

I had the pleasure to have lunch with Chris Hunt & Simon Evans on the Friday before the conference, 2 great guys who quizzed me regarding the problems we face here, and who both made it a point to congratulate me after we won the award..

Thanks to:

Craig Copeland (The Boss), Liz. (Ma) Baker & Kylie (Habitat Hottie) Russell from the Fisheries NSW Conservation Action Unit for their hospitality over the weekend and shepherding us about.



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