Australian Bass, MACQUARIA NOVEMACULEATA

THE BRONZE BATTLER

President's Message

Well the rain that most of us were eagerly anticipating finally arrived and once again our creeks and rivers are full if not overflowing. As usual rain at this time of year slows the fishing down, but our members have still been very busy taking full advantage of some of the other fishing opportunities available like trout, GT's, Bream, blackfish and Cod. We are certainly a spoilt bunch!

The Bass season is not over yet though! There's still plenty of opportunities to get out there and get a few last Bass for the season. Our weeding session on the Lane Cove provides a perfect opportunity to do just that.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to ask a few of you to write up a few of your adventures from the last season for the winter editions of the Battler. I know I always need a good Bass fix in the middle of winter to ease the withdrawal symptoms and I'm sure Pete could use the additional content to make his job a bit easier.

Good luck to all those that do manage to get out for a final fish of the season. Late afternoons and very slow fishing are my tips.

NEWS

Congratulations to our Bass Catch Trophy winner for 2014 - Daniel Flood. Daniel also took out the club Person of the Year Award. The runner up Club Person of the year went to Damien Balfour. It should be noted that both members have made an astounding commitment to Bass Sydney and its operations in order to be awarded Club Person of the Year and Runner Up.

Les Simshauser (Sec.Hunter Native Fish ,Inc.HNF) has informed us plans for the Paterson River project are going ahead and that the logs are now on site. Last week the soil conservation representatives were present with Kylie Russell & Russ Foster.

Scott Nicholls did a presentation at the meeting which included information on the Paterson site so we Hunter Native Fish members could see what needed to be done. HNF have set up a 3 man working committee to oversee the project.

The Editors message: The end of the season is near! As the cooler weather approaches and closed season not long begging at our doors, I turn and reflect on my bass season to date. Due to ongoing

back and shoulder issues, I have not spent a great deal of time in the kayak this season. Although my dream of joining the inaugural Bass Sydney 400 Club became a reality so all in all I am a content camper. I have purchased a new Wilderness Aspire 105 kayak which has seen the water once, but I plan to put into good use come September! I am yet to venture on a cod mission this year either, but I'll hopefully get there sometime in June for a big cold-water cod special! – Tight lines, Pete.




Photos from a recent trip on the Nepean River.

Where to now on marine reserves?

Well, the Coalition's back in power in Canberra so where to now on the polarising MPA management plans? They'd been passed through the House of Reps prior to the election and therefore should be sitting waiting for consideration by the Senate when it meets. But the new Environment Minister Greg Hunt has being quoted as saying that the new government will "as soon as practicable suspend and review the flawed management plans", and to re-visit the no-take zones and MPA boundaries, as was virtually promised to both the commercial and the rec sectors prior to the election.

Will they be held back from a Senate vote while this happens, or will there be some lobbying of the independents by the new government to try and get the plans rejected? As it stands, Labor looks to have 26 seats and the Greens 9, giving them 35 votes presumably in support of the MPAs as proposed. The Coalition has 33 seats, and there seem to be 3 Palmer United Party senators. If big Clive went with the government and opposed the MPAs, then they'd have 36 votes. But there are 5 other independents: Nick Xenophon, a Liberal Democrat (previously known as the Outdoor Recreation Party), Family First, the DLP and the Motoring Enthusiast Party. You'd guess the Liberal Democrat wouldn't support the plans, but who'd know about the rest. We might have to wait for a full Senate / double dissolution election to see it cleared up.

Back in NSW, a set of previously existing aquatic reserves has been re-gazetted, in the Monday September 2, 2013 Government Gazette. There are 12 reserves listed with their prohibited activities,

and a pretty confusing list it is too. At Barrenjoey Head, Boat Harbour, Bronte-Coogee, Cape Banks and Narrabeen Head you can only run a fishing comp or take fish or marine vegetation for scientific purposes with a permit, you can't take marine invertebrates at all (crabs, cunje, shellfish, occies, mussels etc, as with all the others) but you can line fish or spear fish and pick sea lettuce and green weed for luderick and rock blackfish bait. At Cabbage Tree Bay, Bushranger's Bay and Shiprock you can't do anything much other than look at things but at Long Reef you can line or spear fish but not pick lettuce or weed. In North Harbour you can line fish but not spear fish or pick lettuce or weed. At Towra Point you can line fish and use a prawn net in part but not all of the reserve but not spear fish or pick lettuce or weed. To be sure of what you can do legally at Cook Island you need a GPS to work out where you can fish and you must hold onto your rod or handline at all times when fishing….tape over those rod holders. And don't go after silver drummer with brown lettuce or brown weed or confuse it with the green stuff as it's not legal to pick it anywhere in these reserves, except at Cook Island. Got all that?

My head hurts, and that's without even thinking about how far I've got to be from the water's edge in NSW to legally fillet a fish or two……..

John Newbery

Williams River Bass catch March 2013

Eight Bass Sydney members decided to go to the bi-annual event held at the Williams River Holiday Park this March. Jim, Milton and I were late deciding and when I rang to book a cabin I was told that there was only 1 left and it was a bit small but did sleep 3-4 ok. SMALL: it was so small that you had to go outside to change your mind! SMALL: it was so small that a fly flew in and had to reverse to get out! SMALL: it was so small that it would not hold a fart, though some smart Alec said that was because there were 3 old farts in there already. It did have a toilet but you could not use it at night time because the light was directly wired in to the exhaust fan and that was powered by an old Boeing 747 motor.

Anyway it was all good until we discovered a number of red blotch's on our skin, was it bed bugs? Who knows? Anyway, on to the fishing. We almost outnumbered the Hunter Native Fish members this trip with Dave, Nev, Anthony and Shayne also staying in another cabin, larger than ours I might add, and Trent and 1 of his mates fishing on Saturday morning. We had decided to fish the camp pool yet again as we had caught fish there each time. We set off early, about 7.30am, and were on the water fishing by 8.00am. We had gone down to 1 of the boat ramps and had decided to fish downstream until the water skiers showed up, which they did about ½ hour later so it was time to move back to the restricted zone.

We caught a few fish, biggest was 315mm, which is pretty good for this area. We arrived back at the camp ground about 1.00pm for lunch. I had 10 fish by this time and I think Milton 9 and Jim 3. After lunch we decided to go up to a private spot I know and fish upstream from there, Milton caught a fish 1st cast and when I went past him up to the next riffle I caught 2 small fish in 3 casts. I told Jim to have a go and I am sure he caught another 2 as well, however he must have forgotten to record the second 1. I ended up with 7 and Milton 8 for the afternoon giving us 17 each. Jim decided to have a quick dip and then head back to the launch spot to dry off.

At the barbeque that night we did a bit of a round up, Dave came back with 30, Nev 25, Anthony 17 and Shayne 13. We met Trent at lunch time and he said that he and his mate Pete had only 2 between them, all in all a pretty good day with 101 fish landed, measured and released to grow into bigger fish. Some of the Hunter guys had similar numbers so it was 1 of the better weekends for the Williams.

Some of the Hunter guys also fished Sunday but as we had decided to pack up and go home I have no idea of their numbers. Milton cleaned up in the raffle again, drawing 3 of his own tickets in a row, I will have to see if I can work out how to do that for future raffles. I think he ended up with about 6 or 7 prizes.

As it turned out packing up and heading home early was a good thing as a massive storm blew through sometime in the afternoon with cyclonic type winds that has brought trees down everywhere, so there will be plenty of new snags in the river next November.

- **Alan Izzard**

Fish Bite at Night After Rainfall – by CHRISTOPHER DOYLE

Bream in an estuary near Sydney become nocturnal following rainfall, adding to the growing body of evidence that environmental changes can influence the behaviour of species.

Animals usually display distinct activity patterns or rhythms that allow them to be classified as either diurnal (active during the day), nocturnal (active during the night) or crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk). These activity patterns have generally been considered inflexible, deviating from the normal pattern of behaviour was thought to put the animal at some sort of disadvantage. However, scientists are now discovering that, for some species at least, certain environmental factors can cause an animal to switch from nocturnal to diurnal activity and vice versa. If these rain events are changing the behaviour in these animals so drastically, what is going to be the impact of future changes to rainfall?

Adding to that body of evidence is a team of Australian scientists who have recently discovered that rainfall causes yellowfin bream (Acanthopagrus Australis) to switch from primarily diurnal to nocturnal activity. The scientists found that these estuarine fish remain nocturnal for up to a week following rainfall before switching back to their normal diurnal activity.

Dr Nicholas Payne, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of NSW, in collaboration with scientists from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the University of Tasmania, made the discovery while monitoring the behaviour of yellowfin bream in the Georges River estuary in the south of Sydney. It is the first reported example of rainfall causing a reversal in an animal's activity rhythm. "It is a stark reminder that rainfall is a pretty big deal for aquatic animals," Payne says.

It has previously been difficult to study the behaviour of aquatic animals at night due to the challenges associated with working in such environments. To overcome these difficulties, the researchers used accelerometry sensors to monitor the activity levels of the fish, and Dr Payne puts the success of the project down to the use of this novel technology. "It is not really a surprise that this is the first time it has been found," he says. "This technology is quite new, and it really requires this kind of technology to allow us to get at these types of questions."

The accelerometry sensors measure changes in the amplitude and frequency of a fish's tail beat, giving a relative measure of its activity levels. The sensors also record information about how deep the fish is within the water column.

The sensors were surgically implanted into six fish immediately after their capture to minimise any negative effects from the tagging. “The whole surgery technique from when we catch them to when we put the tags in and release them is generally not much more than 10 minutes,” Payne explains. “There is a lot of evidence that holding them for extended periods in a laboratory or in an unnatural setting can be a bit detrimental to their health and behaviour, so we generally get them back into their natural habitat as quickly as possible.”

Weighing only 7 grams and measuring 66 mm in length, Payne is confident that the tags had little or no impact on the behaviour of the fish. “In a 300 or 400 gram bream they represent a very small percentage of their body mass, so we think that they didn’t have too much of an influence on their natural behaviour,” he says. “The pattern in the first four or five days after we release them is not very different to the rest of the time series. If there was to be any artefact of the tagging we would expect it to be isolated to the first day or so.”

Once inserted, the tags transmitted information about the activity of each fish to electronic receivers stationed at various places within the estuary. Whenever a fish came within 300 metres of a receiver, the data from that fish was transmitted to the receiver via an acoustic signal.

Payne and his team used a total of 34 receivers, with a distance of just over 1 km between each receiver. While this meant there were periods when the fish were out of range of a receiver and therefore not being monitored, Payne is confident that the sample of activity received when the fish were in range was a good estimate of their overall activity patterns.

“Every time we pull up and download one of those receivers we have a huge time series of data, often tens of thousands of bits of information that are all time-stamped down to the nearest second and sub-second. So we know at this time, on this day, what each particular fish was doing,” Payne explains. “So we were confident this gave us a good estimate of their activity patterns.”

Handling and analysing all that data proved a challenge in itself. “You’re talking several tens of thousands of pieces of information and we try to link those bits of information from the fish to things that are happening in the environment. It is certainly not something you could do in an afternoon over a cup of coffee.”

Payne and his team monitored the activity of the bream for a period of 4 months, during which time a number of significant rainfall events occurred. It was clearly evident that the fish were switching to nocturnal activity following each rain event.

Why exactly rainfall caused the fish to switch to being nocturnal is not entirely clear, although Payne believes it is related to the decrease in salinity that accompanies significant rainfall events. “When there is a change in salinity, similar to what you get after rainfall, their energy requirements increase and that is really driven by the costs of osmoregulating,” Payne explains.

The influx of freshwater following rainfall causes a reduction in salinity, meaning the fish need to work harder to maintain their internal salt balance. In addition to this, rainfall causes dramatic increases in water flow, placing additional energetic demands on the fish. As Payne notes, increased water flow “is like putting the fish on a treadmill to make them swim faster”.

In order to meet the increased energetic demands, the fish need to acquire more food, and Payne believes the bream achieve this by switching to foraging at night when their prey is most abundant. However, this also places them at a greater risk of being preyed upon themselves.

“The potential predators of these fish, sharks and even mulloway are generally considered to be more active at night,” says Payne. “So what might be happening is that normally the bream choose to be more active during the day because they can acquire all the food they need and they can avoid predators by resting at night time. When it rains, it might be that the bream are forced to forage more at night time and expose them- selves to more predation pressure.”
Payne notes that while the findings add to the body of evidence concerning the plasticity of activity rhythms, they also have implications with respect to climate change. Rain events are predicted to change dramatically in the coming decades, both in terms of frequency and magnitude, and this may place yellowfin bream, as well as other estuarine animals, under additional stress. “It makes you ask the question: if these rain events are changing the behaviour in these animals so drastically, what is going to be the impact of future changes to rainfall? What is going to happen to the behaviour of these fishes?”

Funded by an ARC linkage grant, Payne and his team are now using accelerometry sensors to monitor the behaviour of several other fish species in the Georges River estuary. “We are trying to not only look at how rainfall affects their behaviour, but also look at interactions between species and whether when one fish changes behaviour, does another species do something different or something similar?”

As for the accelerometry sensors, Payne believes they will be used more in the future to study the behaviour of aquatic organisms. “People are beginning to understand that these tags can really provide interesting information for a lot of applications. I guess we were lucky to be one of the first ones to get them and get some interesting data back for a free-ranging animal.”

- ***Christopher Doyle is an environmental biologist and freelance writer.***

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Article Source*: http://www.famer.unsw.edu.au/media/DoyleApril2013.pdf*

Ecological Management & Restoration

For all those interested in freshwater fish science and management. A Special Issue of 'Ecological Management and Restoration' on 'The Native Fish Strategy: Bringing native fish back' is free on line and contains key reviews on fish passage, environmental flows for fish, management of alien fish, threatened fish and recreational fisheries and natural resource management governance and engagement:
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emr.2014.15.issue-s1/issuetoc

Cover image for Vol. 15 Issue s1
Special Issue: The Native Fish Strategy: Bringing native fish back. Ecological Society of Australia and Wiley have published this supplement with financial support from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Department of Environment and Primary Industries (Vic) and NSW Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries).

Bass Sydney Member Josh Pearson continues his success on local bream






https://www.facebook.com/BassSydneyFishing

Hawkesbury-Nepean Bass Catch Report – Feb 2014

Constant rain put a dampener on the February Bass Catch. We had a healthy number of registrations (47), but quite a few people either pulled out or just did not fish. Others (like me) fished Saturday, but could not bring themselves to do it again on the Sunday.

Special mention must be made of Ged Delany who did an overnighter, with a mate, from Wallacia to Tench Reserve. A very nice trip for sure, but under the conditions that we had??! A+ for effort!

No. of anglers: 26

No. of Catch Cards returned: 25

Largest bass: 338mm (Ashley Thamm)

Smallest bass: 97mm (Rico v d Kerkhof)

Most fish: 32 (Paul Matten)

Best 5 bass: 1409mm (Ged Delany)

Most Points (Feb): 92 (Paul Matten)

Bass Catch Trophy Winner 2013/14: Daniel Flood (Congratulations to Dan for consistent results this Bass Catch season!)

Commiserations to Springwood's John Fornasier who came second.

- **HS Tham**
Bass Catch Officer

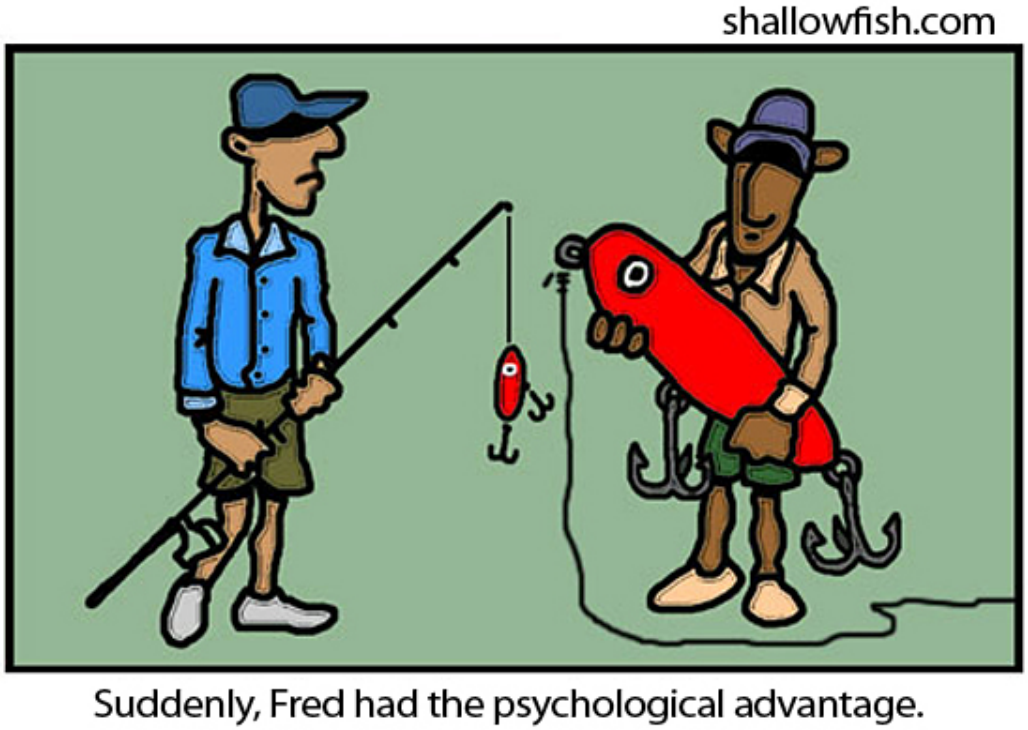
Next Meeting is on Tuesday June 10 - 7:30pm at Northmead Bowling Club

- Wilderness Systems Aspire 100 kayak.
- Worth $900+ retail
- For BASS SYDNEY MEMBERS ONLY
- $2 per ticket
- Unlimited no. of tickets can be bought
- Will be drawn at the Christmas Party 2014

Specifications:

Length:	10' / 305 cm
Width:	27.5" / 70 cm
Max Capacity:	300 lbs. / 136 kg
Deck Height:	14" / 36 cm
Weight:	44 lbs. / 20 kg
Cockpit Length:	49" / 124 cm
Cockpit Width:	22.25" / 57 cm

Monthly Fishing Cartoon Funny



Big lure, big fish….right

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