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Vice President's Message

The AGM is now done and dusted, and only 19 days until the end of the season. On behalf of Rico, I would like to thank all members and their families for their participation over the last 12 months. It has been a successful year, with many highlights and a few low moments for the club. On the plus side of the ledger, Alan Izzard was runner-up in the NSW Landcare Fish Habitat Award, Russel Street hours worked is now over 1500 and we had good turnouts for all club events, capped by a great Bents Basin bass catch to complete our 30 years of bass catch. On the negative side of the ledger we saw the passing of our club patron, Dr Wayne Erskine., and we were sorry to hear of the poor health of club stalwart Al Philis.

Thankyou to the new committee (who are mostly staying on from last year), and a big thanks to John Stokes for putting his hand up to be Bass Catch Officer. Nathan Horgan has volunteered to run the raffles for 2108. Also thanks to John and Nathan and good luck with our Gone Fishing Day initiative for the 14 Oct 2018, which will be a freshwater event on the Nepean.

Last of all, make some resolutions for this year. Help a club mate out, plant a tree, clear some vines and weeds, get out fishing, catch a new species but most of all get involved with your club if you can and help to look out for our bronze battler.

All the best of health and happiness to you all for the year ahead.

~ Matt McHugh

A message from our Project Officer

Bass Sydney attracts many new members because of its policy of being Bass and River carers. We started work on the site at Emu Plains many years ago and the members then were all gung ho, we had up to 16 members at some of our Saturday morning working Bees. Alas this is no longer the case. All members get the benefit from the work we do whether it be at Russel St., LCR or Bents Basin as the club is well known in DPI Fisheries and NP's. So, where am I going with this you might ask, well I am getting older and do sometimes struggle to get to the working bees myself but force myself to go because if I don't turn up that would leave Milton , probably our oldest member (sorry Milt.) and the 2 non member ladies who make up the 4 regular attendees. I realise that younger members have kids and kids sport BUT surely each member could at least make 1 working bee a year, there are only 11 scheduled and sometimes due to inclement weather the day is called off. What I would like to see is a roster system where each member living in the Sydney region can get his wife to organise the kids, give fishing a break and come along and help out, not too much to ask is it? Please, give it some thought. For more information feel free to [email me](#).

Regards,
Alan Izzard

Bass Sydney Photo Competition

Hi members—after some nice pics circulating from recent fishing trips we've decided to run a monthly photo competition open to all members. You are encouraged to get involved and submit one photo per month. Photos can be of anything fishing related and do not need to include Bass so be as creative as you like. There are a few rules:

- Photos must be from the current season only (from April 2017 onwards)
- No Bass photos to be entered during closed season (May 1 to August 31)
- One photo per member per month

All entries to be emailed to [Jason](#) and the Committee will decide on one winner each month and will be published in the Battler. Each monthly winner will then be considered for the Photo of the Year to be voted on by all members before the 2018 AGM. The winner will receive a great prize (to be confirmed soon). We look forward to seeing some great pics!!

Cheers,
~ Jason

The Editors Message

So another season is drawing to a close, this one was a very light on one for me fishing wise. People have started giving up asking me whether I went fishing on the weekend, that's when you know you need to get back out on the water. Hopefully I can get in a few morning sessions before season close, and given the extended warm whether we should see the fish continue to bite and the larger models feeding up before the cold change. Hopefully I'll have some pictures of some nice late season Bass to share with you in the next Battler.

~ Pete

Quick Trip to the Hunter

I took a few weeks off in late November 2017, mostly to recuperate from health issues. I spent the first week at home with my feet up and just walked the dog each day for exercise and the last week I worked around the house, doing all of the things I'd avoided during the year. During the week in the middle I threw the yak on the car roof, bass gear in the back and headed for the Hunter Valley to fish some water I'd never fished before.



Figure 1 First Fish Williams

I headed for the Williams River first up, putting in between Clarence Town and Dungog, and paddling upstream through a number of riffles and runs into a big long deep pool. Fishing was tough to be honest. I didn't catch a single fish in any of the shallow or quick sections. Once I got into the big pool, fish started to hit the lure. I ended up with 6 fish, the biggest was 300mm. All fish but one, were taken on the soft-shell cicada, the other one took a jig spin. This was probably one of the greatest days I've ever had fishing, I had to force myself to keep going, I was exhausted and a bit nervous about being on my own, but the river itself is beautiful. There are nice little runs and riffles, there are sections that are totally in shade and some great looking fish habitat. To be on your own in that type of a river is a real treat.



Figure 2 Williams

I stayed at the pub at Clarence town that night, I think it was a Sunday. I had a counter tea (big fat steak and veges) and a pleasant night in clean pub accommodation.

In the morning I packed up and headed for Buladelah via Seaham. I had a quick look at the ramp at Seaham and decided a paddle upstream was in order. I paddled upstream until I got to the weir and then hauled the yak up and over the wall into the pool above the weir. I paddled around and caught a couple of bass until I realised that there are no water craft allowed and decided to get out of there. It would be a good place to fish at night some time from the weir wall, not sure if you are allowed in there, but not too sure anyone would care.

I got to Buladelah and booked a room at the pub, locked up some gear and headed for the Wallingat River. This is a spot I've always wanted to explore. It is a rough dirt road in there to Wallingat River Campground where you can launch. The river looks fishy and I caught a number of small bream and flathead as I paddled upriver. I'm sure if you picked the right tide it would fish well, especially the top section which has an abundance of drowned timber. I didn't catch any bass but I did get my first bream on an SSC. Two actually, and decent sized fish.



Figure 3 Upper Wallingat River

I think the river could do with another go in the tinny next time. It's a lovely remote spot with good looking water and relatively untouched. I spent the night at the pub in Buladelah, a great dining room and cold Tooheys Old.

I decided to get up very early on Tuesday morning and head back to the Williams, via Dungog this time, and travelled in a thick fog. I fished the same section of river. This time I approached it a bit differently. I had a quick flick with the SSC for 2 and then headed for the deepest section of pool and flogged it with a jig spin. I honestly can't remember how many I caught, but the jig spin really fired.



Figure 4 350 from the Williams



Figure 5 First Bream on SSC

Must have been around 10 with the biggest at 350 and an unlucky fish at that, it took me around a snag and then swam out the same way it went in! From the Williams I headed for Paterson for lunch and a nice burger and a full tank of diesel.

I didn't have anywhere to stay yet for the Tuesday night, so I headed to Gresford with the intention of fishing the Paterson River below Lostock and Lostock itself. I found a room at the Beatty Hotel in Gresford, checked in and then headed for the upper Paterson. Trent McMurray helped me out with a launch spot at one of the cross roads. It's different again from other places I've fished, heavily weeded up and difficult to fish on the first attempt. I only had the one fish in a short evening session, but it was a good one and beautifully coloured. A 320, again on the SSC. I headed back to the pub for the night. Had a nice walk down to the Allyn River and another good counter tea, this time a mixed grill! There is a pretty good camp ground on the Allyn River, which could be a good one for a club outing some time.



Figure 6 The Paterson

I checked out early Wednesday morning and headed for Lostock dam. I caught a few very small fish around the edges, but I think I fished it completely wrong. I bumped into some guys who fish it a bit and they had landed some nice fish casting lures up between the gaps in the weed as you go up the old river bed. It's a nice place to fish though, and would be a good option for a weekend trip with a group. Its electric motors only and good for kayaks being a smaller lake.



Figure 7 *Lovely colour on this 320 from the Paterson*

From Lostock I decided to drive to North Richmond via Putty Road and Colo, intending to fish somewhere before staying the night at Kurmond. It rained along the way and was chucking it down at Colo, so I decided to explore the road that goes to Upper Colo. I saw the turnoff for Comleroy Road and took the road up and across Wheeney Creek. The rain cleared so I decided to fish Little Wheeney Creek. It's a steep walk in and a bit of bush bashing, but I did hook a nice sized fish before losing it trying to get it out. It's really a lot of fun when you cast to a snag from an elevated position to the opposite bank and watch as the fish comes out and around the snag to engulf your lure!

It was a great trip, 2 new rivers and a new lake, and a new spot on the Williams. A few quality fish including my first bream on a SSC and a couple of 350s. A few nice nights in pub accommodation and time spent talking to country people, I really felt at home up there. Many thanks to Trent and Alan Izzard and Joe Crust who helped me with some spots and tactics.

~ Matt McHugh

Blayney with Tham & Shayne Easter 2017



I felt I got lucky with this trout- a hen rainbow, as I hadn't fared well on our long weekend's extensive fishing sojourn that had taken us over much rough ground, river-bank fishing! We'd fished almost 22 hours in total and I had little to show for the many miles walked and a thousand or more casts. Little did I know my fishing was on the shallowest of ascendancies – a very slow ascension over the Easter weekend.

On Friday, Shayne Hodgson, Tham and I arrived at a great looking river, it was approaching mid-morning and we were keen to start catching. The early start that morning, the three hours or so of in-car chat and mental preparation, the unencumbered drive and the morning coffees had all played their part – we were excited and optimistic and we needed lines in the water, we were keen to fish. I'd never caught a trout in Australia – it felt an exciting prospect.

Tham found the turnoff after turnoff on unsealed roads, Shayne provided 'walkie-talkies' and we communicated through the dust we were kicking up, we opened and shut farm gates, we joked about double demerit points, but silently we planned our attacks, strategies, lures and landing big trout. We then parked our two vehicles a little away from a small family of campers, said our 'hellos' and noted that there wasn't much evidence of angling - this bode well for us as they'd probably not flogged that stretch of river. Tham and Shayne headed upstream and I took ten minutes to sort out some tackle options. I quickly caught them up and the river looked promising. It was narrow in places, running shallow, clear and clean water with plenty of deeper pools, varying geological features such as pebble beaches, soil embankments, strewn boulders, erosion and deposition, river snags, flora and fauna (we saw a sly fox running for cover on the far bank) and shaded parts over the water. It was also obvious the negative impact cattle had on the area, as cows could freely access the stretch of river along where we were at. It was warmer now, the sun had risen, nary a cloud in the sky nor a breath of wind. A nice day, a nice river, good company and promising prospects. As we fished, some of us lagging here, others overtaking there, we eventually spaced ourselves out, fishing without disturbing each other or the mighty trout that surely lingered therein, we had found a tempo that suited. We each got to try new pools and runs, I had a few bites and a few 'follows' from small trout only, but nothing amazing. We co-joined for lunch, expressed our collateral deflation at the lack of trout so far and

agreed on our collective persistence. The one memorable 'follow' and 'take' I got came late in the afternoon as the sun wasn't far from sinking. It was autumn and days were getting shorter, our elevation above sea level is around 900m and I think that makes for sunsets setting sooner – I could be wrong: it has something to do with measuring with trigonometry and is more obvious from mountain sides, but I can't say how it effects when up on plateaus. Obviously, I wasn't catching fish if I was pondering such things. The sunlight was still bright despite late afternoon and the sun was now hanging low over my shoulder, casting long shadows in the direction of my casting.



My last cast punched the lure off into the distance, leaving my braid stretched out well beyond my long roundish shadow and the lure I was using, a trout coloured hard-body diving minnow, plopped into the pool. This was a large deep wide pool, the river flowing in and curving round from my left.

I was targeting a possible 'lie' that would have a trout facing up stream, picking off any food or injured fish drifting by. Approaching from behind and casting upstream somewhat would avoid spooking any trout. As I steadily retrieved from what must've been the umpteenth cast, I felt a hit on my lure and almost instantaneously I saw the head and open mouth of a trout, illuminated by the bright low angled sunlight. It was the first decent trout to show itself thus far. I and the trout failed to hook up, instead it turned sharply, showing of its long silvery flank as it caught the sun, the trout quickly disappeared. I concluded that the beautiful Sun had dazzled the trout, blinding it and therefore misjudging its strike on my lure. I was disappointed as the day was now ending - but not overly worried, as at that time who was to know that catching trout on Saturday & Sunday would prove equally challenging? Tham was even more disappointed as he was The Guide and the first spot was one of his favourite stretches on the Belubula R. He had many more stretches of that river, but he decided on another river for the next day out from Orange.

Saturday was looking to be a full-on day, same as Friday, with lots of riverbank scrambling. Lucky for us that morning we had a pitstop at Summer Hill Ck on the way to the final destination Ophir, the site of Australia's first paying gold strike in the 1860's. Shayne cooked us up a breakfast of generous portions of bacon & free-range eggs on fresh bread – delicious. We then added a freshly plucked Redfin from the river that Tham caught. It cooked in minutes wrapped in tinfoil. It was an excellent use of an invasive pest. Tham also landed an undersized rainbow trout which was promptly returned, it had been the first trout of the trip.

Saturday's fishing led us to a beautiful gorgeous gorge, so ideal, that the thought of not landing a decent trout felt remote. The water was beautiful, the river had all the features of a trout fishing book - from slow deep pools, timber structure, rocky outcrops, fast flowing narrows, eddies, riffles, tumbling white water & babbling brooks. The gorge had native trees, grasses, wildlife & birdlife, sunlight & shade, boulders & shale, undercut banks and shallow sunny spots, insects skated on pools out of the main current. There was very rough ground to cover going downstream, nil obvious path to lead the way but for some vague animal tracks. Plenty of brambles to pierce, rip, cut, trip and ensnare. Not forgetting the jaggy nettles to sting and impede.

Twice I encountered the front half of a red bellied black snake, the biting end and on the second time I thought I'd stood on it as my foot placed heavily onto a flat rock, the red bellied black snake shot forward trying to escape and as my foot came down directly on its trajectory and surely upon its black shiny body it had disappeared. I continued to jump-hop the next three steps as the instant-replay in my brain played catch-up and registered that the snake went under the very rock I put my foot down upon and, phew, it was unlikely to sink any fangs into me! I pushed on though and made it downstream to a very decent looking pool.



On the way, I fished the most desirable areas, approaching from a downstream perspective, keeping a low profile & out of sight - but with no success. The last pool I fished promised everything and delivered nothing. I felt pangs of despondency. One trout flashed its rear half, wafting its tail in my direction as it glided through a sunny spot and within casting distance too. It was gone, nil response to lure or my wishful thinking. Later one or two trout jumped in the pool - there were other surface ripples & swirling made by who knows what - possibly trouts. Then I looked across the wide pool from higher up on the steep bank, I was camouflaged by pine trees and looking out over the river's bend towards the far bank and I could see into the water flowing over the shallow, sloping, stony beach. And two decent trout glided slowly from left to right heading downstream and out of casting distance. I was running out of time & the sun wasn't far off touching the topmost tree tops atop of the gorge. Up there were two deer making a racket, one was sticking his antlers up into the lower branches of fir tree &

thrashing them around. The smaller deer, looked like a doe, was getting a feed from the fallen branches. Later Shayne said he could have shot one of them from that distance & angle. I considered moving further downstream again but resisted the job of walking around the pool, crossing over the shallower narrow section & peppering the beach area with spinners. It wouldn't have been difficult, it was just that up to this point every pool or water featured felt like the next best thing but they'd all failed to deliver. Defeated, I trudged my way back downstream, then trying to move quickly, in an attempt to catch up with Tham & Shayne, surely, they'd have done better. It gets cold quickly when the sun sets and being deep in the gorge, darkness would be quick. The thought of some ankle injury while scrambling over those boulders and brambles was enough to get my sprint on and forgo the trout's temptation.

I caught up with them both as they were targeting running water at the entrance of a great pool. The next pool upstream was the source of Tham's nice rainbow trout. At this point Tham was 'the man' as he'd made good on his promise of catching trout. Leading the score board by one trout, he was the only one - unfortunately, but no-one was going to begrudge another angler his trouty success, when Shayne and I had each failed, in landing not a fish.



We got back to Shayne's truck & viewed the rainbow trout, it was a good one, probably 45cms, hefty, freshly chilled post capture and while Tham went off to fillet his trout by the river, Shayne adorned us both with a chilled refreshing beer, 'St. Etienne', tasted great after all Our exertion in the pursuit of no trout.

Later that night we had the freshest of sashimi trout, soy & wasabi. It was the finest aperitif of the trip. On our return to our pub hotel accommodation we deviated off the road and down a track to a bush reserve on another section of Summer Hill Ck Tham knew. Shayne's truck can take only one passenger shotgun, so I climbed atop and sat on a builder's plank and held onto a ladder, both were securely tied down and parallel to each other. All I had to do was hold on while we descended a steep and rough track. Tham & Shayne headed upstream to a big pool Tham knew & I went downstream for a moment I'd spied a quieter pool and thought that us splitting up might increase our successes. The

never-ending fight with brambles & nettles continued as I searched for a gap in the bankside weeds and a possible way down to the water, in case I needed to land a fish. The pool wasn't too deep, the bottom was visible and fish weren't showing themselves. It was deeper over at the far bank. As I cast out a small silver spoon with a red flash & treble I worried that it was now the end of a second days fishing and I was fishless, seconds after the light spoon hitting the water I had a feisty little fish on, a redfin and he didn't drop off either. I reeled him in, swung him over the weeds & 'done him in' with a spike to the brain. I got three more larger Redfin, hooked and dropped several more, had some bites that failed to hook up and had multiple follows - sometimes two Redfin at a time. They're fun to catch & quite tenacious. I was surprised at how aggressive they are. There were some small trout also following occasionally, having a nip. The sound of Shayne's ute sounding it's horn signalled that the short fishing visit was up and we exited right on dusk. Both Shayne & Tham had also landed redfin & Tham had a big fat specimen to show. On analysis those redfins would give a better account of themselves if they had bigger tails, a decent sized caudal fin for power and propulsion. Redfin look very similar to Australian Bass I thought. Looking at a redfin head on, their profile is very bass like I think.



As mentioned, we had trout sashimi thanks to Tham's angling prowess, followed by Chinese food at the Hang Sing restaurant. Then beers at the Royal Hotel. Tham won a game of pool, Shayne went back to our accommodation - both are unrelated & with a few more schooners under our belt we discussed trout fishing, lure selection, brambles and that nettles are a forgotten hazard when kayak fishing, and the small trout lure I had, the CD1 with its one rear treble that I'd failed to use so far. It was nippy, walking back to the Exchange, and the day's walking was taking its toll on Tham as he dawdled somewhat.

On Sunday, we rose at near five AM, and headed out fishing. But firstly, we had to retrace our previous day's movements in search of Tham's lost wallet, this highly important but time-consuming exercise involved visiting our starting and finishing points from yesterday. It was proving fruitless until luckily Tham searched his fishing bag again, for the fifth time we think and found it. This is in addition to Shayne and I also searching Tham's bag - he was sheepishly relieved. The bag had done the very thing it was designed for - keeping said wallet a secret, zipped, sealed in a pocket, a perfectly designed bag for Tham - we sighed with relief and cheered.

We then headed to the fishing grounds with a spring in our steps. Only to be usurped by two anglers who'd fished the same ~4km river stretch yesterday & landed 14 rainbows they told us. It might have been me who, with utterance aloud, thought "for fuck's sake, why would you flog the same stretch two days in a row?" As a result, we headed off opposite, going downstream towards the huge waterfalls. At least the two anglers had told us there was a path down the falls, and off we went. Today felt different as I hooked & dropped several small trout before climbing down this very impressive waterfall with its many pools and rugged rock walls.



My best chance of a trout came just below the falls, in the form of a deep rock fissure that had a strong flow, starting with babbling white-water. I dropped the silver & red spoon into the frothy white water & raised a nice trout almost at my feet, it's back, dorsal fin and tail all broke the surface & it was a nice fish, sinking back down. I changed lure's to a soft plastic & got a bite but no hook-up, Tham had been offering encouragement, observing & now had a chance. He fished it and got a momentary hit. We persisted & fished it some more but for nothing. Just as Tham had left I stopped at the bottom of the pool & cast upstream to the start & a short way down I hooked it, played it a little too enthusiastically and dropped it. It hurt, but I was philosophical about it and thought there's always the return journey for a second crack at it.

Tham & I caught up with Shayne who'd bagged a nice Rainbow earlier, keeping it freshly dead in a cool pool for collection later on our return. As we fished these beautiful pools that all looked good enough to hold fish, it was Shayne only who landed a second Rainbow Trout, and proudly held it aloft - another Rainbow & bigger! He went on to lose a big nice Brown Trout which would have topped the day for him.



Back at the big waterfall, I was keen to retry that rock fissure with the missed trout. But by now the day was after lunchtime and there were people, families with an excitable dog in tow clambering over the falls and huge rock formations, diminishing their majestic-ness and our achievements in conquering the descent. By now we'd well and truly found our rock hopping feet and made short work of the 'falls ascent. As a result, I omitted fishing the pool with the right amount of gravitas and missed the opportunity for a trout that day. I didn't recognise the pool as the same on I tried on the descent. No more fish were to be had and we rendezvous at Shayne's truck for a cooked mid-afternoon lunch, consumed and appreciated heartily.

That was it, 2pm and the trout fishing was over, day three completed with mixed results, there was some disappointment at the numbers of trout being what they were, but some exhilaration as Shayne had now landed more trout than he'd ever done before; while simultaneously he'd landed more than Tham or I. We rejoiced in his success, relieved we'd not 'all' blanked. In fact, there was some informative discussion about the trout caught so far and in-depth analysis of Shaynes trout that day,

both of them around forty centimetres & plump, healthy looking. As Shayne gutted them and admired how pink & rich the flesh looked, we examined their stomach contents & Shayne extracted some crustacean heads and claws and then a perfect specimen of a dark green yabby. It looked immaculate, not yet digested and supportive evidence on what their diet was. We packed up, pondered fishing for Redfin again and decided against it, choosing instead for an early finish and a start to the evening. We were in need of muscle relaxants of some sort as muscles and joints were showing their wear, we could feel it, especially my left knee. Walking had become sore. Still, it was strange to be calling 'time gentleman' as they say in pubs after last orders. Tham usually fishes to the maximum and won't quit if there's a bee's dick's chance of another fish - his legs must have been hurting more than it showed.

Sunday night, after a lie down, shower, change of clothes and foot wear, we tagged along to Shayne's mate's house for dinner and it was the finest food we ate that trip. Karl BBQ'd up some fine sausages/snags, tasty tender steaks and succulent rack of lamb, wife Deb set us a splendid table, adorned with table cloth and the best tasting mushrooms in Blayney, sweet potatoes, roasted veges, salad, bread, butter, beer, wine and civility. At this point we were re-civilised, minded our P's and Q's then lost at a game of pool. Around lunchtime that day when we were having less trout success than we could tolerate, Karl, unknown to us, had jumped down a river crossing on the Belubula, cast a lure and landed a really nice 47cm rainbow trout, that was now chilling in the fridge for next day's dinner. Tham had abandoned the Belubula after Day 1! Shayne sparked up, Monday's drive home, dodging the holiday traffic could be juggled to include a last gasp early AM fishing session between 7 and 9 catching the earlier risers; I joined in, tagged along – last chance at a trout for me. Shayne offered encouragement declaring Monday 'Damian's trout day', nice sentiment, but I didn't hold much hope, but if fish are to be caught, then you have to be fishing, and Monday morning looked as fine a day for it as any. Plus, it'll be a long time before I'm back here, so better to make the most of it. Tham opted for a sleep in with instructions that I had to be back around 10am. His old legs had had enough. Shayne and Karl were catching up - being long term mates, discussing stuff and headed upstream after we peppered the first pool; I ducked downstream, too many fishing the same pools can't be good. I was maintaining a silent presence, keeping a low profile and not trying not to spook any fish that might be facing upstream, spying my approach. Kept to the river side and cast upstream using bushes and the background to mask my profile/silhouette. The river was shallow and wide with thin green river grasses entangling the trebles of a shallow diver. I changed to a little chatterbait, a single hook facing upwards and caused less snagging on the riverbed. Further downstream the river swung left and small deeper pools appeared along the far sides, undercutting the bank. I started getting follows from little rainbows then hits and finally a hook up. I had finally landed a small rainbow trout, about 15cms and very wriggly, my first for the trip and a relief despite its small stature - I chuckled at catching a trout. At that size they're hard to photograph, so after a few attempts it was quickly returned and I'd try again. I got 8 rainbows between 12-18cms approx., it was getting easy, they were following aggressively whenever the lure was nearby. These small Rainbows were nicely coloured and menacing any lures

they saw, so much so that I had to reconsider the lure I was using, as the upwards facing hook of the Chatterbait was, on more than one occasion, penetrating the eye socket and to avoid further damage I changed to something with smaller hooks - a small crankbait lure a Rapala Countdown 1 Brook Trout colour, in the pub's night time session of reflection and beer, Tham had talked about the Rapala CD3 and its efficacy as a trout lure. The CD1 was around the same size as a CD3, but with only a rear treble. Tham thought it would be good as he usually removed the front treble & replaced the rear with a slightly larger treble to reduce tangling.

Next there was an equally wide but now deeper, slower moving pool whose waters were dappled with bright sunshine as trees and bushes lined both banks. Midstream there was some structure - logs and rock formation but all subsurface. Ideal trout habitat. I tried a few casts before racing back to the parking area only to be met by Tham who, after a sleep in, couldn't resist and he offered "another quick hour of casting and then we'll go, beat the holiday traffic". I enthusiastically agreed. Shayne departed a few minutes later, just before 10am. We said our 'adios' and thanked Karl for his hospitality.

Without much further ado, we scurried down to the pool I'd touched upon earlier, Tham's legs were holding him back and he had a few fruitless casts at shallow riffles en route. At the long pool, we had several casts each, sneaking about staying out of view and generally being careful, using the bushes and trees to camouflage our presence, the riverbank was steep behind us so at least we weren't sticking out like the proverbial sore thumbs. Tham raised a nice trout several times at different spots up and down the bank. I had some follows too from slightly bigger and better trout than the eight I'd caught before, in fact I caught two more, taking my trout total to ten for the day and for the trip!

We enthusiastically flogged the water with a few score casts and ten, retrieving sub-surface lures from as far as the far bank, casting perpendicular, upstream and downstream, trying also the parallel water to the near bank. Trout came and went with hardly a touch, promising but not delivering. Eventually we started making our way back to the top of the pool, planning to head back to the car and the journey back to Sydney. At this point Tham hooked and landed a nice size Redfin, he offered it for dinner and I accepted, my Vietnamese 'outlaws' will do something delicious with it. Again I looked at it, they are quite ferocious but would fight better if they had a bigger caudal fin.



Tham shouted to me to come up for a cast, he raised a nice trout that had followed his offering. Tham was at a narrow gap in the tress, I finished my cast or two, not having much faith in the next offering feeling as surely as the previous, that it'll amount to nought. The spot was where I'd cast before. It wasn't ideal, the bank was steep, thick trees and bushes encroached on each side and in the water was branches lying on the water's surface and others sunken - some just sub surface.

I cast that little 16th of an ounce, sinking, brook trout coloured balsa CD1 lure across the river and it plunked in just short of the far bank, I retrieved and kept the rod tip low in order to keep the lure diving deeper as it tended to rise to the surface with the height we were fishing from. Well no hook up, but a nice trout did follow briefly before turning away, we both saw it, piquing my interest further. Several more casts without a snifter had me resigning myself to failure from another trout feigning interest. On what was to be the LAST cast before we seriously returned to the car and set back to Sydney, a decent sized trout took interest and rose up from the depths and fell in behind my lure, following at pace, weaving behind the lure its visibility turning on and off, in and out of the dappled sunshine. This time it didnt turn away and followed across the half way mark and continued. It was close but at any moment it could shy away. I kept retrieving and for a split second I was tempted to slow down, fighting this intuitiveness I made a conscious effort to speed up my retrieve and lost sight of the trout as my lure closed in on my rod tip at speed and the shade from the trees made visibility difficult. With no distance left and my excitement barely contained I awaited the tick of the lure hitting the rod-tips' top eye and it all being over, with nothing to show. With maybe a rod length of line to spare the rod loaded up, significant weight on the line and the rapid solid tugging on the line as the line arced back out from the bank and the trout was on, felt heavy and took some line, the drag zzzz'd a little and then it was more vigorous splashing and turning, a jump or two, lots of short runs each one showing more flank and rainbow colour and I'm thinking it's looking bigger with each turn, the hook could pull at any moment, my leader could snap, knots might give, but no long screaming runs, just to-ing and fro-ing in the confined space between the bushes and around the sunken branches. As it went on the trout was seemingly getting stronger and making short but powerful concerted efforts at running into branches, trying for deeper water and taking more line with each run, the arcs were getting bigger and it was taking me round to my right and into the bushes where for a heartbeat or two I lost sight of it before it emerged to my left and heading into those subsurface branches again. In one moment of dread it had its head out the water, side on, prized up hard against the branch and I thought this is when the treble snags the branches and she gets off, with more head shakes she was off the branch and still connected and powering into the water again, at this point I decided (maybe foolishly, time would tell) that I'd have to try and drag her up the grassy bank, I stepped a little further into the soft muddy soil at water level and leaned in, gripping the leader. Steadying the twisting and turning, I lifted as confidently as I could and slid her up the bank to chest height, where the grassy slope levelled off and I could place a firm hand across her midriff and prevent any last kick, flick, jump and lost fish happening. A nice healthy, fit, fat, colourful Rainbow Trout of 46cms lay on the grass. The Rapala CD1 had one point of the treble thinly hooked into the front top lip - not much, but it had held. I was relieved it had all

come together. I couldn't believe that it had played out just like that without any disaster. It seemed counter-intuitive to keep winding and to wind in faster as I was running out of line and water with a nice trout in hot pursuit and in doing so, she'd snatched at the fleeing bait with nothing to spare. It was my eleventh trout of the day and my best, my best thus far. It was exciting. My previous contentment at catching redfin and all those small rainbows earlier and the enjoyment of a good fishing trip to new places was superseded with hearty joy that was evidenced by big grins and some pressure of speech as I talked about it for the next hours' home on the 5.5hr drive back to Sydney over the Blue Mountains (we had missed our window by leaving much later than Tham wanted). I couldn't believe my luck that I landed it without calamity, I'd avoided the disaster where one has to temper their own frustration and placate those around them that losing a nice fish isn't all that bad as fellow angler's express their disappointment and condolences.

~ **Damian Balfour**

Tuross Head and Beyond

In March Les Simshauser from Hunter Native Fish invited me to join him for a week at Tuross Head. We set up camp on a beautiful warm Monday afternoon at the Lakeside Tourist Park after a pleasant drive south. Les had stayed here on a number of occasions so he had a good idea of the fishing options. I took my Oztent with side and front panels which created an annex whilst Les took his trusty Cub Drifter, he also set up his annex so we had a good spot in case of inclement weather. And so it was, just on dark a southerly buster hit, at this park you are right on the water's edge and in the teeth of any gale.



It blew like the clappers then the rain started. I moved my car around in front of the tent as a wind break. Unfortunately, this change upset our fishing plans as it lasted for almost four days. No fishing Tuesday, Wednesday, but we did venture out in sheer frustration on Thursday afternoon and tried a saltwater creek Les had been to many times before with great success, but alas it was not to be. Ten minutes after launch it rained and after fishing for a couple of hours we hadn't had a touch. Back to a warm shower and a re-think. The good thing about the re-think was it was accompanied by a few glasses of Merlot with cheeses and dips.

On Friday afternoon we opted to fish the flats at Tuross Head and just drift over the shallows in our yaks casting plastics and lures. The water here is crystal clear and the channels that mingle through the flats are a deep green, surely, we would get some action here. Well needless to say that didn't happen either apart from a few small flatties and a tailor. I did drop a decent Flattie using a WTD with crushed barbs whilst trying to apply more drag. There was a persistent wind all the time which made it unpleasant. Back to camp for another hot shower and more Merlot, yeah.

Saturday afternoon we decided to give the salt a miss and head upstream to fish the fresh. At last the wind had dropped and with a cloudy sky, glassy water the conditions were perfect, but nobody told the Bass. It was tough going, I managed to catch six small Bass and Les a nice high 300, plus some smaller fish. We fished upstream for about two kilometers then headed back fishing our way. It was enjoyable, but frustrating as the location was perfect, but as you've all experienced the fish didn't fire. I even tried my new soft-shell cicadas, but not even those could tempt a hit. As usual my go to lure was a 1/16 oz Chatterbait with silver blade and translucent fish.



On Sunday we did the tourist thing and headed down to Tilba for lunch and a browse through the craft shops. Les's wife loves it here so we headed off and did our own thing and left her to potter along alone.

I had visitors at night all week and there's nothing like company, but when they eat your bread (I forgot to put it away, too many Merlot's I guess), run beside you when you are cooking and check out every item in your clothes bag it's a bit over the top. Stuff like this doesn't bother me, their harmless and didn't wake me up.

This is the first time I've been in bad weather with my Oztent and I'm very happy with the outcome. The little annex created by the peaked side panels and front panel didn't leak a drop. It's a very good set up for one person, the tent is 200 x 200cm and so is the annex.

Sunday night was dry with a lift breeze blowing so my tent was ready to be packed up early on Monday morning, but mother nature wasn't finished, suddenly it blew from the north east and then a

heavy shower hit so I was back to square one. Finally, the sun poked it's nose out and after an hour or so most of the tent was dry so I packed up and headed home. The weather was perfect for the drive. Nice heading down and back, but in between a bit ordinary. Sometimes you just pick the wrong week, but we both booked powered sites so decided to go whatever the conditions. This place has great potential with lots of fishing options and there's no doubt about it, the South Coast is very pretty.

~ Alan Izzard

Fruitless Fishing Days

Alan Izzard & I had two days out boat fishing to break the monotony and to take advantage of the great weather. The first was a saltwater effort launching at Berowra boat ramp and heading downstream to the Hawkesbury. The tide was running in so the plan was to stop at a deep hole beside Bar Island and fish for Flatties or whatever came along. We drifted across the hole with the incoming tide a number of times casting three & four-inch soft plastics and the only fish taken was a small Flattie by Al. So far catching a fish from this boat has eluded me, but never mind press on. Ok, plan B, head out into the main river and try another spot beside Milson Island, but it was very shallow in close with rocks so we moved opposite and fished the drop off along the shore below the M1.

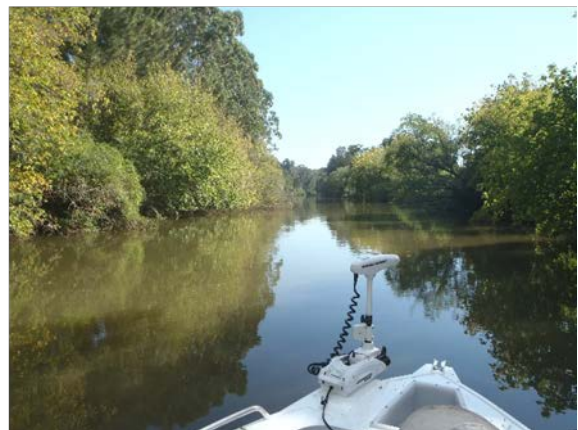


I think this is called the Vines, the water is very deep in close due to the topography so we set up the Minn Kota and pottered along the shore casting hard bodies etc in between the rocks and in the shade. The water looked so good, plenty of colour and an ideal home for a Bream or two, but unfortunately nobody was home. I'd have to say that Al & I are bloody hopeless saltwater fishers, essentially don't have much of an idea, but I guess all you can do is keep at it. And, another thing is I think you need to constantly fish these spots to work out what is the best technique, time, tide and lure. We ventured further up the Hawkesbury for a look then saw a prawn trawler working the area so that in addition to the very hot afternoon made up our minds to head home.

The interesting thing you don't realize how many people are living on the river until you potter about in a boat. Whilst it's a very peaceful existence everything has to come and go by boat and if the weathers inclement I'm sure it would be a real pain. Not very easy to wiz up to BWS for a nice bottle of Chardonnay to have with the fresh fish you just caught. So, at the end of the day, just one Flathead and things didn't improve much for our next venture to Cattai Creek.



We launched at Windsor boat ramp and mid-week it's very quiet, there was a nice tide running in so we planned to fish the run in and out up in Cattai creek. It's 11 kilometres from the ramp to the mouth of the creek and the Nepean river was glassy as during the run down.



The water looked quite dirty once in the creek, but anyway we set up the Minn Kota and poked along casting either side as it's quite narrow at the beginning. I managed two small Bass on a gold beetle spin with a soft plastic whilst Al had issues with the overhanging vegetation. It's an entirely different thing standing up in a boat and trying to cast under the shrubs and trees into the shade where the Bass would be. Essentially, we are very spoilt fishing from kayaks and that's really what

you need for this type of fishing unless you are very skilled and downright lucky from a boat. Never mind we kept at it and fished upstream six kilometers to a spot where we had fished by kayak after launching from a friend's place. Another thing, it becomes a major boat maneuvering exercise to go into a small gap and recover a lure especially driving the Minn Kota with a remote. Not to worry, just press on and keep trying, but things didn't improve so we found a shady spot, tied up for lunch and a rethink.



After lots of thinking there were no bright ideas other than to flick more lures just hoping the fishing would improve, but of course nothing changed so eventually we decided to give the main river ago. This didn't last too long after a wake boat appeared and pretty much spoilt the afternoon, so we packed up the electric and headed back to the ramp. The only positive was I finally managed to catch a couple fish from the boat. At last, just need to keep at it.

~ **Milton**

Hinchinbrook Barra – April 2018

Last weekend I was fortunate to join my brother and 6 of his mates to celebrate his 50th birthday by chasing some Barramundi. We flew to Townsville on Thursday and our accommodation and fishing guide picked us up from the airport and couriered us the 90 minutes north to Lucinda, a small town on the entrance of the Hinchinbrook Channel.

We organised the trip through Crackajack Sportfishing Adventures (www.crackfish.com) and Crackajack arranged our accommodation through Hinchinbrook Resorts. Todd and Raylene from Crackajack were great hosts and ensured we had a great time. They achieved their goal as we are already talking

about when we are going back. With 8 of us going, I had my concerns about how we would fit on the boats. The good part is that it kept the costs down and enabled us to have a waterfront house for our accommodation. The pub and restaurant attached to the resort was just a short walk down the road. It also included a general store/bottle shop for any essentials.

We had two boats available, a smaller tinnie that could take us up the Herbert River chasing barra with lures. The other boat was larger and would fish the channel and weather permitting take a run out to the reef. We lucked out here as the wind prevented us getting out to the reef. However, we couldn't complain too much as we were the first booked trip to go ahead after the past 35 days had been cancelled because of floods and cyclone warnings.

On Friday, we split into two groups and headed off in different directions. This wasn't ideal from a group get together point of view, but it made for some interesting stories at the end of the day. The pick-up was on the jetty out the front of the accommodation. It was a reasonable start at 7.30. Not too early as the tides prevented us going any earlier. No one was complaining.

I was in the small tinnie with my brother, nephew and cousin that went up the river chasing barra with hard bodied lures. Crackajack have a sponsorship arrangement with Lively Lures and I was happy tying one of these on as they are one of my favourite chasing south coast flathead. Seeing the lack of paint on the lure it was also clear that it had caught plenty of fish before. The other guys had some Japanese lure that I did not get the name of. The rods were G-Loomis fitted with Shimano bait casters. There was also a Shimano Stradic spinning reel there for those not up to using the bait casters. Quality gear that worked well all weekend. Even for my nephew who had not used a bait caster before, guide Todd had him knocking in great casts in no time and I'm sure the quality of gear helped with this.

After a dash through some mangrove creeks and a run up the river took us to our first stop. A non-descript part of the river not unlike what would attract us when fishing for bass. And just like bass, we were instructed that good casts close to the structure was needed to entice a strike. Unlike bass however, Todd suggested that we keep a bit of slack line on the twitch when working the lure. This was due to the way the barra inhale their prey with a large amount of water displacement. If the line is too tight, the barra can't suck the lure in resulting in short strikes and missed hook-ups.

It was a bit of a slow start, we soon got the hang of rods, reels and working the lures. Having 4 of us on the boat was a little tight but not unbearable and I'd have no problem doing it again. The boat itself was very stable even with four of us fishing off the one side. In the morning session, we hooked a few barra, mangrove jacks and hard fighting sooty grunters. No trophy fish but of reasonable size and very healthy. Before lunch it started to quieten off a bit, but Todd kept working hard switching up lures to try a few different things before suggesting that the fish we had caught were in the areas with more

flow. After lunch that would be where we target more. During lunch, Todd also suggested that if we find the right snag, we could pull as many 20 barra off it. After lunch, we targeted an area with more flow and had immediate success. As we worked our way up the river, I had my doubts about Todd's 20 fish from one snag claim. Then we came across a snag where we got a double hook-up. He hit the anchor mode on the electric and we continued to pepper the snag. There seemed to be some submerged snags just out from it and if we continued to fish it along the same line casting into the same place, it continued to produce results. I don't know what the final count was but considering the fish we dropped, I'm sure it went very close to the 20 mark. The fishing quietened off a little as we fished the rest of the afternoon, but this one snag alone made our day. There were no huge fish, except for a few that got away of course, with most being in the 50-60cm range. For a bunch of barra beginners, we thought we did alright. Crackajack's policy is to catch and release all river caught fish. The other guys spent the day in the Channel. They attempted to get out to the reef but only went as far as the end of the 5km sugar cane jetty. A sight in itself. In the channel they bait fished a couple of reef structures which produced countless largemouth nanny-gai. Nothing big enough for the table but as I was to learn the next day, a great fighting fish that pull much harder than you would expect. Following that they worked their way around a few of the mangrove creeks where they cast lures for barra, mangrove jacks and trevally.

The next two days we swapped boats and pretty much followed the same scenario as day one. As to who caught the most or largest fish, well I don't think that will ever be resolved. The largest fish went just over 70cm but of course there were a couple that got away that were much bigger. Honest! It was disappointing not to get out to the reef to battle GT's and other hard fighting reef fish, and we didn't get the elusive metrey, but we still had a great time. The river and channel were a little dirty following the recent floods, but they still fished well. I look forward to going back when it flows clearer.

Hinchinbrook Island itself was an amazing sight. I didn't even bother taking a photo of it as I knew there was no way I could do it justice. I can definitely recommend Todd at Crackajack. He knows his stuff and works hard to make sure you go home happy. Can't wait to go back.

~ Greg Rouland



The pick up from our back door



Sooty Grunter

First Barra



Mangrove Jack (not mine)



Cod in the Channel



Final Barra (well at least one we took a photo of)



The "small boat" and Hinchinbrook Island



The "big boat"

New Bass Sydney Trophy

Former long-term committee member and local Bass enthusiast Warren Willoughby who moved from Glendenning to Narromine many years ago kindly donated a new club trophy. The trophy is for the Largest Bass of the Year and applies to wild river fish caught in the period from one AGM to the next.

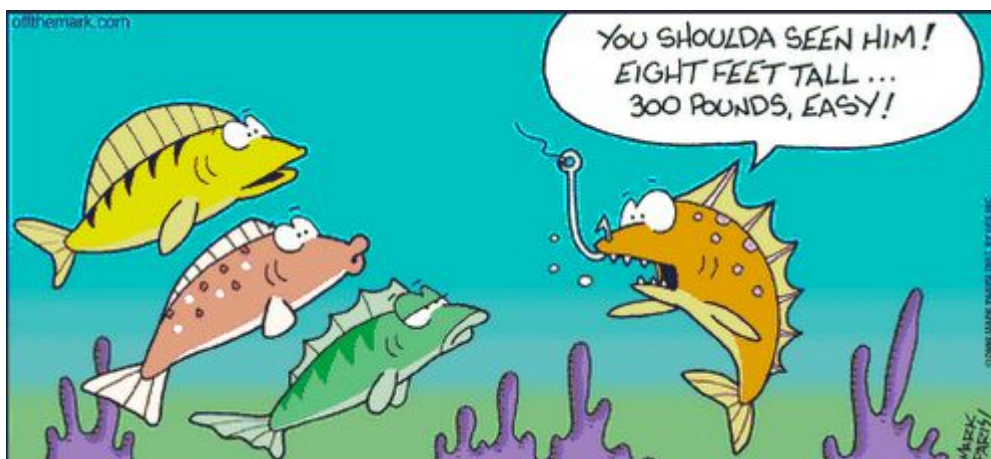


Your fish must be witnessed by another member with photographic proof to be eligible.

The nameplate along the bottom is engraved BASS SYDNEY Donated by Warren Willoughby.

The committee would like to thank Warren for his generosity and we look forward to engraving the name of the member who manages to catch the largest Bass each year.

Monthly Fishing Cartoon



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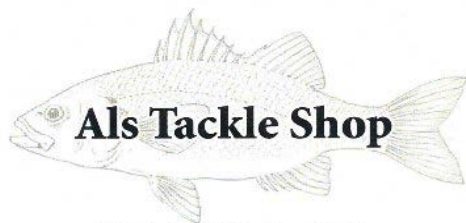


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