



BASS SYDNEY Fishing Club Inc.

PO Box 136, NORTHMEAD NSW 2152

www.basssydney.com

Affiliated with "The Council of Freshwater Anglers"

PRESIDENT:	HS Tham	Emu Plains P/O	Alan Izzard
VICE PRESIDENT:	Matt McHugh	Lane Cove Environmental L/O:	Matt McHugh
PAST PRESIDENT	Alan Izzard	Parramatta River Environmental P/O	HS Tham
TRESURER	Doug Chang	Bents Basin P/O	Rico Van De Kerkhof
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President's Message

Welcome to another "year" of Bass Sydney. We had an eventful 2018/19 with a packed calendar and plenty of bush regeneration, both at our site at Emu Plains as well as at Lane Cove National Park and Bents Basin. There was also our participation in Gone Fishing Day even though the weather made it difficult. It was also eventful with the rise of Ozfish and our ongoing debate whether we should join or not.

This year also coincided with a changing of the guard of the Bass Sydney Committee. Many factors have led to this juncture – old age, fatigue, burnout, family reasons, personal reasons, waning interest, etc, etc. Currently, we are without a Vice President and a permanent Secretary. Milton is continuing as Secretary, but he would like someone else to take the role after he has done it for the last few years. This is also my 3rd term as President.

The Committee has been wrestling with lots of questions, many of which the club has been wrestling with for almost as long as I have been in the Club (23yrs) – membership, involvement of members, recruitment, what would attract more members to our club events, what club events are popular, the balance between bushcare and social fishing, etc. We feel that our monthly fishing events are reasonably well-attended with again, a reasonably small but enthusiastic bunch of members. That doesn't mean the C'tee has thought of everything. Suggestions and input from the general membership is always welcome. Stay tuned for some changes to Point Score and other changes.

I feel that Bass Sydney may soon prove too hard to keep going without a strong and vibrant Committee. I call upon the general membership to step up, get involved and some new blood in the C'tee would also be most welcome. I don't think I'm overdramatising things by saying that I would hate to preside over the winding up of the club that has been going for nearly 40 years.

On a happier note, congratulations to Past President Rico for winning the BassCatch Trophy for the second consecutive year. Also, congrats to Jason McMaster for new bass and EP PB's in the season just past, both from the same trip to the Malacoota area. We also say farewell to Matt Hahn who is following his partner who is being transferred to Tennessee. He's going to be a kept man and fishing bum! He expects to return to Oz in 2 or 3yrs time. Personally, I

will greatly miss my tidal bass & trash talk outings with him on his little tinny and I hope I can still fish with him when he returns.

Here's to another year of fishing and camaraderie.

HS Tham

MALLACOOTA INLET PART 2

Continued from April Battler

DAY 2

After the high of a PB Bass late the afternoon before, my brother and I both knew that the bar had been set pretty high on the first day and that we needed to keep our expectations in check for Day 2. To be completely honest I wouldn't have been phased if I went fishless today as the trip had already produced some quality fish. The weather was a carbon copy of the day before. Our plan was to hit the same bank in the lower Genoa that had produced bream yesterday and then work our way upstream through the middle reaches which we had ignored yesterday. We were off to a great start again with 3 nice Bream in the first 15mins or so. Two had come on Cranka crabs and the other on

a plastic. After a quick start the action slowed so we worked our way slowly upstream looking for likely territory.



Before travelling too far we came across a lovely section which had to be explored. The river was quite wide at this point but very shallow apart from a very narrow channel to about 3m deep which ran right along one bank. This deeper bank was lined with large tea trees which not only produced lots of shade and some great snags, but because the water level was so high many of them were partly submerged which created a dense tangle of branched just below the water line. The tactic was to waft our lure of choice (a crab for my brother and a light plastic for me) down in front of the submerged foliage and through the snags to hopefully be taken on the drop by willing Bream. It also looked like fantastic EP water but we had all but given up hope of finding them after fruitless casting in beautiful water in the Wallagarragh the day before. We had only just begun to move along the bank when we began to spot lots of nice bream holding in the shade and on various snags. The anticipation was high but after several lure changes, we were unable to entice a strike. Soon after changing to a lightly weighted plastic my brother was bricked in quick time by what must have been a good fish. It pulled line with ease and got

home easily which left my brother swearing in exasperation. I had changed my jig head right down to a 1/32oz to maximise waft and sink time to try and get the bite. On a big shady snag, the lure had slowly disappeared from sight and reached the bottom when I began a series of slow subtle hops. On the second hop I got a take and set the hook on a solid fish which rolled instantly and showed itself to be a good EP. Pleasantly surprised that we'd finally found a Perch, I applied the pressure to lead it from trouble. As it came closer to the boat, we realised what a good fish it was. It slid straight into the waiting landing net and I prepared the brag map hoping that it may beat my PB of 43fl. 435! A PB Bass and now a PB EP on the first 2 days of the trip. Obviously, I was pretty happy! She had the lure way down which required some gentle surgery but after a swim and some pics she swam away strongly.



After this we couldn't entice another bite so moved upstream casting at likely areas and managed another 8 Bream over the next few hours without any real consistent action. Early in the afternoon we found a small shallow side arm which would usually be inaccessible when the system was open. With the elevated water levels the shallow entrance was submerged and we used the electric to enter the shallow snaggy maze as stealthily as possible. It was great looking water that we felt sure would produce. There had to be bream in here! What ensued was without question one the most frustrating few hours in all my time fishing. We soon found Bream in their hundreds! There were schools of bream that numbered easily in the hundreds swimming around aimlessly on the surface in the shallows. They were seemingly unperturbed by our presence and would pass within a rod length of the boat. Over and over again. But they were not in the slightest interested in any of our presentations. They were not easily spooked; they just showed no interest. After what must have been my tenth lure change, I finally got a take on the same lure that got the big EP. Finally. one landed but that was it. Many more lure changes for nothing!

What was this behaviour? They were clearly not spawning but were they preparing to spawn? I had seen small schools of black bream behave this way on occasion in other south coast system but never in such numbers. Being early-December, it seemed too late for black bream to be spawning, but maybe they were spawning late due to the system being closed and unsuitable salinity levels. We would never know but it was interesting to ponder in frustration. I tried to get some pics of this but they just did not do it justice.

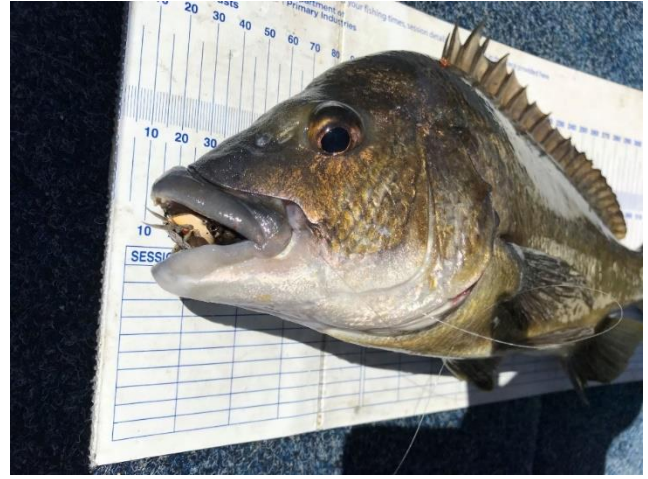


DAY 3

The forecast suggested our run of magic weather would come to an abrupt end and we woke on day 3 to find the forecast accurate. 30 knots of SW and rain squalls do not make for a comfortable (or even safe) day on the water, let alone on expansive open systems like Mallacoota. With safety in mind and still stumped by the strange bream behaviour we had seen the previous afternoon, we decided to fish further downstream around the top lake and some of its side arms which had steep sides and should offer some protection. It's a widely held theory among those who have fished Mallacoota that the flats fishing and shallow wind-blown edges can really fire for bream in windy conditions. We had experienced a hot bite in these conditions on a previous trip, so it was with some confidence that we headed to a familiar bank in the top lake. The sizeable chop and brutal wind made it uncomfortable and a very quick drift, but with discoloured water on the edges and trusted aggressive retrieves that worked previously we were willing to stick it out and put in the casts. After a couple of hours, several drifts and only a few fish sighted for no hits we were struggling for answers. We moved spots several times and eventually getting sick of the wind we moved into a side arm which was much more protected. The first thing we noticed here was that the water was MUCH clearer and we began to sight fish consistently. It appeared that on this occasion the fish were holed up in patches of clear water. After no action and several more lure changes, my brother went back to the Cranka crab in olive which is one of our go to's. On his second or third cast he landed a lovely black bream. And then another. And another in short time. After the third I tied on a crab and immediately joined the action. We landed 11 in a consistent late afternoon bite as the wind began to drop. The pattern on this day was clean water, tea tree snags and crank crabs. While we were casting, we heard the guttural screech of a koala in the thick eucalypt forest that lined the lake edge. It sounded a fair distance in so we figured we were no chance of spotting it.

Soon after we moved spots looking for similar water to test the pattern on more hopefully willing bream. One point of discussion was that while we had caught some nice bream to 37fl, we had only encountered 2 big fish. We cast for a short while before we heard another koala call from the bush but this time much closer by. I quickly scanned the trees as then koala continued in what sounded to be a frenzied screech. It sounded like something serious was happening. A lone koala climbing at speed up a tall bare branch nearby caught my eye. Keen to get a closer look if we could, we wound in and I edged the boat into the bank so we could get out and take a look from a closer vantage point. They must have known we were there as all went quiet as soon as we climbed out of the boat onto the bank. After a brief search I found 3 koalas all occupying one huge eucalypt. There was a baby (the one we had seen from the boat) now so high in the branches that it seemed the small twigs could break at any minute. Then there was another larger one about half way down the tree and a huge male about 8 feet from the ground looking seriously pissed off that we were there. Although far from an expert on koala behaviour I theorised that having heard several calls earlier in the afternoon from a different spot that maybe it was mating season for them. It was likely that the large male had approached the female in a less than gentle fashion to mate (hence the frenzied screeching) and had pushed the baby away from its mother in the process, which was now clinging to the top branches terrified. After watching for a few minutes, we left them to their koala business and headed back to the boat grateful for the encounter. It's certainly not every day that you get to see koalas in the wild and it was a nice end to a fun and productive trip.





FINAL THOUGHTS

Conversations with some of the locals in the Mallacoota pub over a few beers and several other reports indicate that there is a firm belief that the Bream tournament circuit is having a noticeably negative impact on the Mallacoota system. Mallacoota now hosts 3 or 4 Bream comps every year. These are always two-day events and can have up to 100 teams entered. No matter which way you look at it, that is pretty heavy pressure when you consider that they are all effective anglers and each event sees hundreds of fish caught. These fish see countless lures and some no doubt wise up to all the strange bits of plastic swimming past them over an intense couple of days in each comp. But what about the fact that these comps are all catch and release? Personally, I feel that many of the Bream caught and released in these tournaments don't survive. They are all kept in circulating live wells but studies have shown that fish kept in these situations undergo significant stress. They are then handled several times and kept out of the water for lengthy periods to be weighed and then photographed before release. I think the mortality rate may be much higher than many think it is. Conversations with locals also report that the local meat fishers gather near the weigh in site in the days following comps to fish baits for many of the surviving bream which have not moved (or been well enough to move far). They may be more susceptible to baits (an easy meal) while trying to recover from the stresses of being held in a live well etc. I fished Mallacoota in the 2016 Southern Bream series and largest bag taken from 80 boats over 2 days was about 4.8kg. Most would agree that a bag of 5 bream for 4.8kg is pretty impressive (and it certainly would



be in most systems on the east coast), but not for Coota. Bags of 6.5kg were not uncommon going back a few years. There has been so many big old Bream caught in the last five or so years that this must be having a significant impact. I've had some great days fishing down there but some of the other guys on the trip have fished it for the last 7 years straight. They report catches of 80+ fish in a session during a hot bite as recently as 4 or 5 years ago. Some of these guys did not catch a Bream in 3 days on this trip. The biggest fish caught from 22 anglers across 3 days was 37fl. That does not sound right. When there is no commercial pressure in this system and catch rates (and average size) have dropped significantly, it's hard to draw any other conclusions. The fact that the system was closed does not add anything to the argument, as conversations with Micah Adams and local guide Kevin Gleed report that in the 1990s the system was closed for 4 years and it fished outstandingly. Hopefully this theory is tested more thoroughly by someone soon and the bream comps can move toward more sustainable practices. It would not be hard to provide each angler with a measure and a digital camera (or a go pro to switch on for live footage of a catch). I guess we wait and see. Here's hoping that famous systems like Mallacoota can return to their former glory with the attraction of prehistoric black bream and more consistent catches.

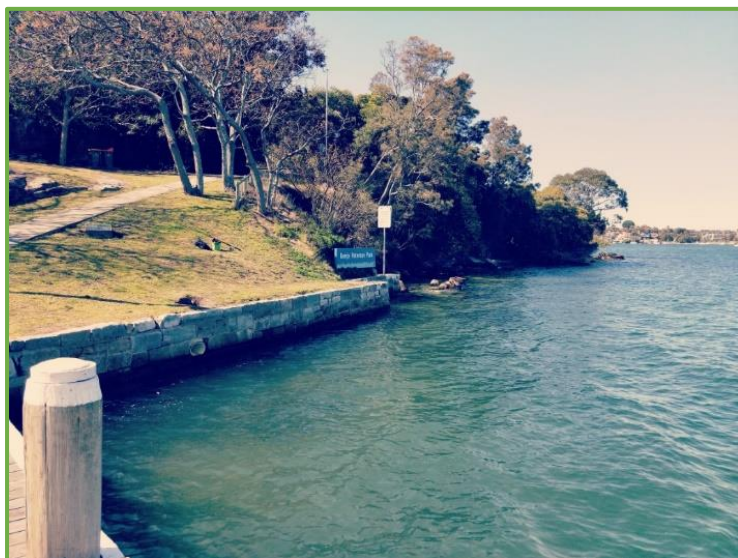
Cheers, Jason McMaster

BLACK FISHING BEDLAM POINT

Milton Lazarus

Bedlam Point on the Parramatta river may have been aptly named due to its location just behind the old Gladesville Mental Asylum. At this point the river is at its narrowest and in 1832 a hand winched ferry was used to carry people and horses across the river when conditions were suitable. It was so small only one horse and two people could cross at a time. In the 1890's ships used to berth here to unload and load cargo from the old wharf just downstream a little from the first photo below.

Now called Banjo Paterson Park, Bedlam Point is a very pleasant place to cast a float or two for the wily Luderick. Historic Rock End Cottage is nearby and the park offers lovely views over Looking Glass Bay.



Like all new spots it takes a while to suss out the best tide, but this place has potential as Brian Shanley caught a solid 40cm fish in 2018 so it would probably be worth a few more sessions in the future. A few weeks later Brian tried this spot again at low tide, but to no avail, so we will keep at it to determine the best tide. A nice location to pass a few hours and only 20 minutes from home.

I've included the picture on the right to show you how the water quality has improved in leaps and bounds over the last ten years.



This April we had a short session here again to see if there were any fish about. Luckily Brian had bought some quality cabbage and river weed up from the south coast, the cabbage didn't create any interest, but not long after changing over the green weed, I had a down. In fact, I was talking and not looking at my float and it had disappeared. A gentle lift of the rod tip and all hell broke loose. Boy, it's been a long time and I sort of forgot how good a solid Luderick will fight. I was palming the centre pin reel letting the fish tire and each time I decided it was time to bring the fish in, it decided otherwise. Finally, Brian grabbed the net and together we landed a very solid fish from the wharf. Luckily there's a ladder on the jetty down to the water allowing easy netting.



Not long after this photo Brian hooked up to a solid fish too and battled with it before it headed into the oysters and that was it. Gonski. We only fished for a few hours and I really enjoyed myself. The last time I hooked a Blackfish was at Howley Park with Tham sometime in 2017 - 2018. We fished from the rock wall shown in the top left-hand photo, comfortable fishing except you need a long -handled net to reach the water. The biggest problem facing Black fishers around Sydney is sourcing green weed. Cabbage is reasonably easy to find, but good quality river weed is a different story.

On this occasion we fished the run in, it was only a small tide, about 0.8 and a light westerly tended to nullify the run in somewhat, but at least we had a crack and hooked two fish. We will return and try again on a bigger run in, that is if we can find some green weed. I remember my Dad used to keep his weed between two layers of a hessian bag that had been dunked in salt water and it lasted for weeks. When I was putting on my first bait, I remembered my Dad always said the bait should look natural, be the length of a match and the thickness of two. No button baits! My Dad loved his black fishing and regularly fished a spot he called the Oaks which was upstream of Halverson's boat shed at Bobbin Head along a track which is now part of the Sphinx walking track. We always looked carefully ahead walking to his spot due

to snakes. I don't remember catching a fish there with Dad, but I do remember falling over on the oysters. Dad wasn't impressed as we had to head home early.



Oliver Izzard fishing Al's dam at Fiddlewood – hoping for a bite.....

BASS CATCH 2018 – 2019

Derek Sonter

I first would like to say a big thank you to John Stokes who has been Bass Catch officer the last couple of years, and for Rico for taking registrations at Bents Basin this year.

So, there was a distinct difference between the two, October we had a great turn out but not a lot of fish caught and a few donuts as well from some gun fishermen. February saw a drop in participants but an impressive increase in the number of fish caught.

So, for next year's Bass Catch (October 2019 & February 2020) we have decided to reintroduce a new Noel Brown trophy for the Best 5 Bass, also another for the largest Bass at both Bass Catches. We still have the overall Bass Catch point score, so for this year Rico Kerkhof is the winner of the Bass Catch Perpetual Trophy, affectionally referred to as the plank of wood. It was a very close affair with Matt Hahn only getting pipped by 4 points, to put it into context a 200mm plus fish would have won it. These trophies will be presented at the 2020 AGM.

OUR BELOVED PLANK OF WOOD, FIRST PRESENTED IN 1989



Once the Bass Catches are over, I will publish the point scores in the Battler as below for your interest.

Top 3 and Bottom 3

Best 5 Fish

Matt Hahn	1631 mm
Damien Balfour	1598 mm
Steve Peach	1519 mm

Point Score Fish

Rico	140 Points
Matt Hahn	136 Points
Damien Balfour	108 Points

Largest Fish

Damien Balfour 395 mm
Matt Hahn 343 mm
Steve Peach 330 mm

Smallest Fish

Milton Lazarus 115 mm
Jason McMaster 136 mm
Rico and Derek 142 mm

Summary of Fish Caught

OCTOBER				FEBRUARY	
Largest Fish	334			Largest Fish	395
Smallest Fish	115			Smallest Fish	137
Most No. of Fish	11			Most No. of Fish	21
Most points	50			Most points	106
Number of Anglers	25			Number of Anglers	14
Total No. of Fish	60			Total No. of Fish	92
Total fish length	12524			Total fish length	21861
Average fish size	209			Average fish size	238
Average No. of Fish/Angler	2.40			Average No. of Fish/Angler	6.57

SEASON OF FIRSTS

Matt McHugh

It's now May and another Bass season is over. Seems like only last week that I caught a bass on the first day of the season for the first time. I was on the NSW North Coast at Maclean and had a few hours out on Mangrove Creek. It's a bit warmer up there, and the bass seem to be a bit more easily tempted than my local bass.



My next real success was later in November after a very lean October Bass catch when I did my first ever night fishing. Bites were plentiful and the fights brief and brutal with some very healthy mid-thirty size fish caught. So long as the moon was hidden, I caught fish, all on the surface and all on cicadas. I found 6 foot raider yak rods to be perfect for this with a heavy leader.



I spent most of December chasing fish in Berowra creek, mostly flathead and estuary perch, but also caught some very healthy bass and on occasion, good numbers.

On Boxing Day another first. I had a great session with Matt Hahn on the Colo, culminating in my first 40cm fish and also my PB. Full story is in an earlier Battler, but easily the highlight of my season.

January and February were spent with more fishing in Berowra and another lean Bass Catch but a brilliant day up the river with Doug. Fished for the first time in the upper reaches and definitely on my to-do list for next season.





In early March I spotted a bargain, and purchased a second hand Aspire 105, fantastic kayak and just the thing for the March outing to the Shoalhaven. First time bassing for me down there. Caught enough fish to make it interesting and had a brilliant afternoon in Broughton Creek on bream and perch. Definitely a must for future calendars with great camping and good company.



I spent most of the end of the season targeting Estuary Perch but had one more memorable capture. My first buzz-bait caught bass, a beautifully coloured fish from the rock bar in Berowra Creek. Caught on a Zman frog on a weighted worm hook with a buzz blade on the front, fished in shallow water. The hit was spectacular and a great close quarters fight.



Looking forward to next season already, what firsts will there be.
New waterways, new lures a 50.....

AUTUMN SALT WATER – **Steve Peach**

It was almost the beginning of May and I decided to fish a salt water stretch of the Lane Cove river to see if any bream were still up high in the system. I wasn't sure how it was going to go, but there were quite a lot of small jelly prawns skipping around near the surface so I figured there was a good chance of at least some predatory fish.

Sherif who I was fishing with managed a few smallish bream on fresh bait, but I was hoping for something a little bigger on the fly gear. Casting towards one snag in fairly shallow water I had a decent hit and landed a smallish flathead of around 40cm – it was a start at least.

A little further along I had a good strike, but the fish fairly rapidly declined in size as I got it closer to the boat. It was a bream, but only just! I won't embarrass myself by publishing the measurement on this one.....

As we got a little further down the river there were some more little jelly prawns flicking around near the bank, then suddenly the water erupted in about 5 square metres of foam.....kingfish!

They were herding the bait against the bank and going into a feeding frenzy. I called out to Sherif "KINGIES!" and pedaled like mad towards them in the hobie. By the time I got within casting range the prawn massacre was all over, but I cast in anyway. Too late, the fish had moved on.

About 5 minutes later I heard the familiar frothing sound and saw that the kings had the bait up against the bank again. I high tailed it over to the action. They went down just before I got there, but I threw a cast in anyway and rapidly retrieved the small shrimp fly. Behind the fly was about 4 or 5 bow waves. I saw a small group of kingfish tailing the fly all the way back to the kayak, but when I stopped the fly, instead of taking it they turned around and swam off. Damn!

A little while later the carnage was on again, this time I could determine which direction the school was travelling. They were down again by the time I got within casting range but I had a fair idea of where they should be. I threw a long cast about 20 metres upstream from where they had been and began a strip retrieve. BANG! The line pulled tight

and I felt a fairly hefty head shake as the rod loaded up. I knew it was going to be a challenge to stay connected as I was on 6lb bream leader, and sure enough after a few seconds of excitement it was all over. The fish made a powerful lunge and I didn't go softly enough on it and the leader popped. Kingfish 1 – Steve 0. Must... Bring... Kingie... Rod... Next... Time!

After that the kings disappeared but I continued upstream searching for bream. I snagged up in a nice sunken tree snag and paddled in to get it, only to spook a pretty good sized bream just a couple of feet away....this was not really going to plan. After giving it a rest for 10 minutes and trying some other structure, I came back to the snag where I had spooked the fish and cast in, letting the fly sink well into the branches. Then the line suddenly jumped taut, as the fish hit the little shrimp pattern on the drop. The hooks didn't stick though, and that was pretty much it for that snag.

On the way back to the ramp I cast a little despondently into an ordinary looking little bay of shallow mangroves. After a couple of strips and a pause, suddenly I had a really good hit and this time I was on! It felt like a solid fish and ran towards a nearby tree, but I managed to turn it's head and back-pedalled on the kayak to bring the fish out away from the snags. A good tussle ensued before the fish came to the surface and was netted, I beautiful 28cm FL bream, exactly what the doctor ordered!

Bream are one of my favourite species to target on fly now. For years they were an elusive target that I just could not seem to catch on a fly, but after targeting water further up the estuary and changing tactics I feel like I am a good chance to catch bream most days now. They are great fighters and the fishing is very similar to bass fishing around snags, so they represent an excellent target in the off-season for bass. I plan on doing a lot more bream fishing and refining some techniques further.

The takeaway for me from this trip was that there were still a few good fish up in the river at this time of year, even when many of the bream would likely be heading down to the harbour entrance to spawn. I was surprised to see kingfish this far up the system, but I suppose that the dry weather and lack of rain into the system has probably cleaned up the water and sent many species upriver in search of cover and food.

I'm always amazed at what a great, diverse fishery we have here in Sydney. Since the removal of commercial netting from the harbour it has been improving each year - it has to be some of the best fishing around.





TROPHY & CERTIFICATE PRESENTATIONS

Milton Lazarus

The Annual General & General Meetings were well attended with 14 members present, so thanks to all who came along. With both meetings concluded our new President, Tham presented Jason McMaster with his trophy for the Largest Bass of the Year and the 400 Club Certificates to Jason McMaster, Matt McHugh and Matt Hahn.

Congratulations guys, well done and welcome to the 400 Club.

Jason: A huge 490 from the Genoa River on the 30 November 2018.

Matt Hahn: A big 411 from the Colo on 31st March 2018.

Matt McHugh: A magic 445 from the Colo on 26th December 2018.



June General Meeting

our next meeting will be held at

Northmead Bowling, Recreation & Sporting Club,

166 Windsor Rd Northmead

at

7 -30pm on 11 June 2019

in the Board Room if available.

If not, it will be somewhere in the general club area opposite the bar.



2019-2020

CLUB CALENDAR



June:	1-2	Cod Trip
June:	11	General Meeting
July:	21	(Sunday – 11am high tide) Black Fishing at Birchgrove & BBQ
August:	13	General Meeting
August:	17	(Saturday Lane Cove Burns Bay & BBQ
September:	21-22	Lake St Clair
October:	8	General Meeting
October:	19-20	Bass Catch at Yellomundee
November:	9	Lane Cove River Bass Catch & BBQ
November	16-17	HNF Bass Cat Catch at Clarence Town
December:	10	Christmas Dinner (venue to be confirmed)
January:	18-19	Colo
February:	11	General Meeting
February:	15-16	Bass Catch at Bents Basin
March:	14-15	Grady's
	21-22	HNF Bass Catch at Clarence Town
April:	14	Annual General Meeting
April:	18-19	McDonald River

This calendar will be posted on our website shortly.



The State of Bushcare and Landcare in Greater Sydney 2017/18

Our landcare and bushcare volunteers are integral to the enhancement, maintenance and protection of Sydney's unique and beautiful bushland. Greater Sydney Local Land Services surveys Landcare and Bushcare groups in the region every two years. The most recent survey focussed on the 2017/18 financial year and targeted incorporated Landcare Groups, council and National Parks bushcare programs, as well as local and regional Landcare Networks.

About the survey

The survey asked groups their respective number of members, hours of labour invested, type of works undertaken and challenges. The survey attracted responses from

- 19 Landcare groups and networks
- 33 council or National Parks bushcare programs

Overall, the survey captured data from 97 per cent of all known groups and networks. Bushcare groups accounted for the vast majority of surveyed groups (98 per cent), with Landcare groups and networks making up the remainder.

What did the data tell us?

Our survey revealed in the 2017/18 financial year, about 890 groups were engaged in bushcare or landcare activities. These groups had more than 5,800 members regularly attend their events, with an additional 6000 one-off volunteers participating throughout the year. Together they carried out almost 126,000 hours of work. This equates to approximately \$4.4 million in paid labour costs (at \$35 per hour).

Landcare groups worked on both public and private land, predominantly in peri-urban landscapes. In contrast, bushcare groups worked solely on public land in both urban, suburban and some peri-urban settings. Groups (both Landcare and bushcare) reported their main activity as bushland conservation activities like bush land regeneration and tree planting. Groups also noted that much time was spent educating the community, campaigning about local environmental issues and managing grants.

Of the bushcare and landcare groups surveyed, 63 per cent participated in citizen science initiatives. Bird and other fauna surveys were the most common citizen science contributions, but vegetation and water monitoring activities (such as Streamwatch) were also included.

Bushcare groups were particularly interested in training to improve the dynamics of the volunteers, production of grant applications and media and communications training.

Landcare groups were interested in training around weed and plant identification. Further to training support, Landcare groups identified the need for more funding, more volunteers (especially younger people), better landholder and community engagement and funding from external bodies to support their work (e.g. funding for pest management contractors). The overwhelming workload was considered to be a substantial threat to the future of some groups.

- In the Greater Sydney region 890 groups are engaged in bushcare or landcare activities
- These groups support over 5,800 regular volunteers and almost 6000 one-off volunteers
- Volunteers undertook almost 126,000 hours of work in 2017/18 financial year
- This equates to approximately \$4.4 million in kind labour costs



**Local Land
Services**

Landcare group well-being was mostly "stable" (63 per cent), with few groups identifying as "surviving" or "thriving" (21 per cent and 16 per cent respectively) and no groups identifying as "barely hanging on."

Bushcare and Landcare group awareness and involvement with three major local Landcare networks overwhelmingly increased from the previous survey.

Support

There are a number of ways Greater Sydney Local Land Services supports environmental groups. Bushcare groups predominantly accessed grant funding, while Landcare groups accessed Local Land Services for a more diverse range of reasons including for events, site visits and communication with staff and information through newsletters and the website.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services provided \$704,762 in direct funding to volunteer groups in the 2017/18 financial year, enabling them to continue work maintaining our environmental assets. Funding was provided via the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and Catchment Action NSW. Ninety-five percent of those surveyed indicated they had interacted with Greater Sydney Local Land Services. Of

these interactions, 94 per cent of respondents reported they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience.

In addition to Local Land Services, groups relied primarily on local council, followed by conservation groups, individual donors and other government support resources.

Comparison to previous years

Total volunteer numbers have diminished from the previous reporting period (2015/16) by 9 per cent. There has also been a disproportionate drop in the number of volunteer hours; 28 per cent less hours were invested during the 2017/18 compared to the previous period. There was also a shift towards higher numbers of one-off volunteers and against regular members (119 per cent and 75 per cent of the previous period respectively). Last period 90 per cent of Landcare groups reported they were "stable" or "thriving" compared to this period where only 79 per cent indicated "stable" or "thriving". When asked what the biggest challenge for the longevity of their groups was, ongoing funding was of most concern. All indications point to a lack of funding security and this is likely driving the loss of capacity for groups to support their volunteers and maintain sites.

Table 1. Bushcare and Landcare volunteer hours and numbers by reporting period. *NB the periods 2005-2012 were based on different geographical boundaries and may not be an accurate reflection of on-going trends*

Survey Period	Total number of volunteers	Total volunteer hours
2005	14,060	169,981
2007	21,407	178,793
2009	17,119	180,189
2012	26,394	169,430
2016	13,152	173,723
2018	12,002	125,977

"A lack of funding security is likely driving the loss of capacity for groups to support their volunteers and maintain sites."



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