

December 2019

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Australian Bass



Percalates Novemaculatea

THE BRONZE BATTLER

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President's Message



Another calendar year comes to an end! How fast do the days, weeks and years pass now?? We are well and truly in the bass season and the fishing has been pretty good around Sydney. The October Bass Catch saw great numbers among most participants. It was better numbers than we have had in the past few events. Even Garry Blount caught a few fish! Sherif Tadros achieved a new PB bass twice in one day! His newest PB of 361mm FL was only beaten by 2mm by a fish from yours truly.

I hope to see you at our club Christmas Dinner next week. If not, have a great Christmas break and a Happy New Year.

Bass Catch October

I was looking forward to the Bass Catch even though the weather in the lead up was a bit up and down. There were worries too about the drought and what its effects may be on the fishing. Doesn't matter! I just wanted to spend some time on the water bassin' and hopefully, catchin'.

Damian and I decided to fish together for at least the Saturday. I suggested we fish from Russell St to the campsite. Damian doesn't get to fish much nowadays and he wanted a long float he said. I thought if we went from Penrith weir, it would add another 4 or so hours to the day and a grand -total of ~11k by river. OK Damo said!

Then Denis Hill, the President of Sydney Flyrodders decided to join the Bass Catch and he was keen to try fly fishing for bass out of the kayak. Peachy put him on to me and Denis was added to our Saturday float. We met Denis at the weir at around 6am. I had earlier managed to convince Denis that a 12ft Hobie Outback might be a bit big for the stretch I had in mind. Actually, it is just the first third of that trip which sees all manner of river conditions and some skinny bits. After Russell St, its flat water all the way to the portages above Shaw's Farm. Denis brought his wife's Hobie Sport instead.



We had our yaks on Damo's car on Friday night. We will have to return to get the cars at the weir in my van. Actually, it's my daughter's van, but I borrowed it for the weekend. Nice & comfy! No tent to put up & take down.

Saturday 5am...the alarm went off. I made coffee, drank it and we left for the weir. We met up with Denis and before too long we were on our way. The first hour or so went by and we had not caught anything yet. However, a couple of sections later, I started catching fish. Nothing on surface or buzz baits yet though. My 5th fish for the day was my biggest for the weekend at 363mm FL. It came from a nothing cast to the edge of some shade and close to some bankside reed where it was taken on impact. So much for casting accuracy!



So...from mid-morning onwards, it was a steady bite all day. The wind came up mid-arvo as expected and even though it gave us all the s#*#s dealing with it, the fish just continued biting. It was clear during the evening chatter that everyone caught good numbers. Mid- to late-arvo saw us step on the gas to finish the float and get back to collect our cars at the weir. I'm sure I would have scored quite a few more fish if we didn't rush the last 2 hours of the float. Still, it was pretty good with me landing 26, with only the one fish over 300mm. Damian also got around the same as I did. Denis also (finally!) managed to land 2 small bass. I was worried about him as he was struggling.

We got to the rock barriers above Shaw's Farm. I got a bit bruised helping Denis get his Hobie Sport over the big wall but we all made it back to the campsite in time for us to get our cars from the weir reserve.



We were on the water for 11.5hrs and Damian and I were tired, hungry and it was getting late so we missed out on doing the raffle. We should've had it on the Friday night as there was few people around.

The Sunday saw us break camp and try some carp fishing with Gary Blount. 4Fourwere caught on Friday arvo. They weren't biting for us on Sunday morning but Damo was happy to land a mullet. Gary and the Macman fished the camp pool early Sunday morning for a few more fish to add to their tally. Matt scored a 300+ to finish off his weekend.



After giving up on carpin' Damo & I left the campsite for a bit of lunch in Penrith. After lunch saw us launch from Devlin Rd for an arvo session. We fished from 2:30pm to about 7:30pm. Even though we were fishing at the most popular yak launch on the whole river, and there were several people bass fishing from there, we still managed to keep scoring fish all arvo. I managed to add another 18 fish to finish on a tally of 44 bass landed for the weekend. Still only the one fish over 300mm from Saturday, but it looks to be the fish of the weekend by 2mm from Sheriff's new PB.



Damian managed a unique capture on the Saturday. He landed a small bass on his jigspin. He netted the bass, unhooked it and tossed the jigspin back in the water. While he was measuring the bass, the rod attached to the jigspin started bouncing and he grabbed the rod to find himself attached to another bass! It was even a little bigger than the first! Soon he had 2 bass in the landing net. See pic of Damo holding his 2 bass. So, was the second fish "trolled" or was it caught "spinning"???

Another Bass Catch done. I enjoyed it.

HS Tham

OCTOBER BASS CATCH

By Matt McHugh

Doug Chang, Rico VDK and myself hatched up a plan to fish from Shaw's Farm to Yarramundi starting at first light. We quickly modified this when we realised how quick a float that would be, so we did a car shuffle to Hanna Park at North Richmond, picked up Doug at Yarramundi and still managed to launch at Shaw's Farm before first light.



It was beautiful on the water at that time, pitch black until a bit of light allowed us to see the wisps of mist rising off the water. It was tough early, no action to speak of until half way to Devlin's when Rico started getting hits and dropped fish on a chatterbait. I switched to a chatterbait and pretty soon lost it on a deep snag and replaced it with a jig spin, silver flasher with a 1/12th jig and Zman motor oil grub. We fished through Devlins without getting any fish and headed for the top of the big pool downstream from Devlin's.

It was here that I spotted a Platypus next to my kayak snuffling around in the weed bed, he saw me and took off. It was great to see one in the Nepean for the first time and a really big one at that.

By this time the sun was just peeking over the trees on the eastern bank. It wasn't long before we started getting fish on the jig spins, up hard against the rocky wall on the western bank. I got my best fish of the day from here at 290 and we all started to get a few along this bank before the bites started to taper off.



I headed across to the shady eastern bank with its deep banks and fallen timber. The fish were really biting freely along here, and again the jig spin did the damage, sometimes 2 fish coming from one small section. Doug and Rico joined me and we leapfrogged each other along the eastern bank until the wind started up at mid-morning.



We tried the western shore again along the last bit of rocky shore without any luck until we reached the tree line. There we found one solitary pocket of shade. Rico remarked that there would have to be a fish in there. He casts in and sure enough hooks and lands a small fish. I then cast in and hooked one, as did Doug after me. 4 or 5 fish came out of that one shady pocket.

After that we had lunch at Yarramundi, the wind was really starting up by now. The stretch from here to the tidal limit rock bar above North Richmond was fishless. Just on the downstream western bank from the rock bar I happened on a school of fish and pulled 8 small fish by going up and down the same 100m of bank. Doug and Rico caught a few more downstream from here but that was it for the day. A total of 72 fish between us for the day and not a fish over 300!



I had a quick fish from the pool at Shaw's Farm from 6:30 to 8:00 on Sunday morning. Whereas the fish wouldn't look at a cicada on Saturday it wasn't long before I had my first on a cicada and the first over 300 at 310. The bite was steady and I ended up with 5 on cicada and a further 3 on jig spin after the surface bite tapered off.

The theme of the fishing seemed to be that if you could find water without much weed, you'd find fish, as soon as the weed got heavy the fishing became difficult. It was great to fish with Doug

and Rico, as always, they were great company. Thanks to everyone that organised a great weekend.



Cheers, Matt McHugh.

HUNTER NATIVE FISH BASS CATCH 2019

Alan & I, the only two Bass Sydney members attending arrived Friday mid-afternoon at The Williams River Holiday Park in a howling hot westerly. Not the greatest conditions to be setting up camp, but we managed. A few of the old HNF members were already there so after our tents were erected, we caught up for a chat and discussed the conditions for the all-important following day. Luckily a light south westerly change was predicted which would be preferable compared to today.



Alan enjoying a beer

Dungog Council re-opened the park at Easter after a lengthy closure making significant safety and amenity changes. All sites are numbered now and each has a double tap thus saving that long walk to the only tap of the past. In addition, there are fire hose reels dotted around too. The previous long-term supervisor Dianne and her husband have gone and a new manager is now on site.

More HNF members arrived later in the afternoon, so in total they had 18 attending, so a pretty good roll up. Apart from Noel and his long-time forward hand in an old fiberglass canoe, Alan & I all other members chose boats for the event due to the extremely low water levels upstream. This proved to be a good move.

The HNF guys set up two gazebos side by side, a big BBQ, tables, food and so on. Entrée was marinated and barbequed mini drumsticks, followed by steaks, sausages, onions, coleslaw, potatoes salad, bread and wraps. A hearty meal enjoyed by all together with lots of beers and a few glasses of red.



I think we hit the sack just before eleven and had the usual sleepless night only to be woken up about 4.30 am with our neighbor rummaging around in his truck getting all his tackle organized for the day, then deciding to start his generator soon after to make a coffee. Needless to say, we were not impressed and he didn't even offer us a cup. We had planned getting up about six as there was no rush to get on the river before dawn. We just forgot to set up camp away from the group as we normally do.

Alan and I headed up to Alison to check the river and decide if we'd fish there or return to the weir pool and join the others, plus all the Clarence Town locals fishing in the Shelton Shield. This is an annual competition and it always seems to clash with the HNF Bass Catch. It would be preferable if the dates could be staggered in future, but it didn't worry us as we decided to fish upstream even though the river was very low with just a trickle flowing downstream.

We launched and spent four hours fishing down to the lunch spot which is actually the first place you can get out anyway. After two or three casts I landed a Bass measuring 205 at 8am, so naturally I thought, ok it looks like being a reasonable day, but that was it until a lovely 328 came to the kayak at

10 am and absolutely nothing after that. Actually, it felt like a 428 it was so feisty. Alan caught a 215 at 10.20am.



After lunch we fished back to the launch spot rather than doing a car shuffle and opting to fish down to Thalaba bridge as there's some big trees across the river and portaging around them is difficult and I'm quite happy to avoid bush bashing with little leg protection these days. And age is not helping us now so one often looks to take an easier option. Getting through the three log jams and carrying our kayaks up the steep track to our cars was enough exercise for one day anyway.

In places the water was very clear whereas in other areas as shown on the next page it was murky. Apart from the open pool down to the lunch spot most of the river is quite shady with trees arching overhead so it's great fishing in hot weather.

There are some nice spots along this reach that should have been holding Bass, but alas not a touch. They may have been there, but shut down due to the low flow or barometer, a question most Bass tragics ask.



We arrived back at camp mid-afternoon to make a cuppa and catch up with the boaties who were on the water very early and back at camp for a late lunch before venturing out again later in the afternoon. Towards dusk it became very cold, so a hot shower and rug up for another great HNF BBQ. The HNF guys got a fire going in their drum and that was followed by a big raffle, but Alan & I were so cold and tired we didn't stay and headed back to camp for a cuppa and an early night. Our apologies to HNF for not partaking in the raffle. We both slept like logs and luckily our neighbour didn't start his generator at 5am.

We had an early breakfast on Sunday, packed up camp, offered our thanks to the guys and bid farewell until the next one. I was home at 11am so had the car unpacked before lunch. Even though the fishing was really tough we both enjoyed ourselves just getting away, pitching the tent and partaking in a couple of bottles of Merlot with dinner.

Thanks to the HNF guys for their effort and it's always great to catch up for a yarn at their two Bass Catches. Alan & I have been attending this event for almost 25 years now and we always enjoy ourselves. Like all we are hopeful that decent rain will come soon and refresh the river as it has always done in the past. In fact, it always seems to rain at the March Bass Catch, so finger crossed.

BENDEELA CARP OUTING

Thanks to fellow club member Brian Shanley, I convinced my family to visit Bendeela in Kangaroo Valley. We got there mid-afternoon. The original posse had shrunk from a lucky seven to just 'we three': composing myself, my FIL' (father in law) Nhut visiting from Viet Nam and daughter Grace.

We searched out the river looking for a likely spot. Brian had described an ideal spot to us, but we couldn't find it. He'd seen a "Carp Champion", an old European guy, catch at least six carp in an hour - sitting on the bank'.

Undeterred we found a spot with a wee bit of depth and a wee bit of run. Unknown to me my FIL Nhut was getting quite worried, believing that the tide was out and would return pronto. Grace on the other hand was getting quite excited and made a mud pool to wallow in followed with throwing in slabs of wood with loud muddily smacks sounds. In fact, it was becoming farcical as FIL Nhut doesn't understand English, I not Vietnamese and Grace choosing to not understand anything I said - herding cats springs to mind.

We landed two carp - fairly small, then towards the end I foul hooked a duck which I caught and released after a period of amateur veterinarian throat surgery. It was at this time I lost a possibly bigger carp on the other rod - it went walkabout, took my float under a snag and headed for the hills, then snapped me off. But I got my float back somehow - all of which happened when I was wrestling with a disgruntled duck.

I don't know if I was anywhere near the spot that Brian had suggested. But we were in the Bendeela campsite fishing on the riverbed, my father in law (FIL) was convinced of all sorts of things, mostly unbeknown to me, until we got home and accessed translation services via a vis my wife. He was also gesticulating that there weren't any fish and that we should move up river: but we showed him, phew. I also tried a surface cicada and a jigspin near some snags too and showed him how lures worked. Nhut had acted out that he thought fish might be under the snags and would come up and take a bait - this I worked out from his near manic actions. Intuitively he has some fishing savvy even though he's never fished.

Grace and he got a carp apiece, Grace caught the first and FIL Nhut getting the second, but bigger one.

I got a duck literally.

We may return.

Damian Balfour





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BIRD OF THE MONTH

by Alan Fowkes

Last issue we talked about the importance of grasses and why we've chosen to leave some weedy ones in place while we work on improving the volume and diversity of native grasses. This time, we're staying at ground level but talking about the things we discard rather than the things we keep.

When removing weeds, we're always confronted with the question of where to put them. One of the key considerations is whether the removed item is carrying any seed or other reproductive part.

For example, if you pull out a Bidens ("Farmer's Friend") that is loaded with seed and you drop it where you found it then you probably haven't achieved much. All those seeds are likely to germinate and give you a whole bunch more Bidens. Some weeds will even have sufficient energy in reserve to generate seed from existing flowers so it's preferable to bag and remove weeds in seed or flower.

An example of an "other reproductive part" is provided by Madeira Vine. These vines have underground and aerial tubers that are all capable of re-sprouting. If you dig out the underground tuber but leave it on site or if you allow any aerial tubers to drop to the ground then you will simply be generating more vines and more weeding work down the track. All these tubers should be bagged and taken off site (the leaves and stems are safe to leave on the ground).

On our site, at certain times of the year, we're confronted with large volumes of weeds like Bidens and taking them all off site is just not practical. In these situations, whether they're in seed or not, we will often stack them in a series of piles. These piles are best placed at the edges of our worked areas and, ideally, on top of other weeds we hope to eradicate.

In this instance, the logic of the pile is that it will act as a mini-compost heap, hopefully breaking down some of the weed seed contained within it as well as the weeds we place the stacks on top of. At worst, the pile will "shade out" the majority of the seed to limit germination and will provide a more compact area to re-work when germination does occur.

The stack pile is also a concept we use when removing large volumes of woody weeds like Lantana or Privet and all the stacks we create provide habitat as well as, ultimately, nutrient sources. The Spotted Pardalote pair shown below (female on the left, male on the right) were photographed perching on a Lantana stack on site. These little birds dig nesting hollows in sloping banks and, given that they both were disappearing inside this stack on a regular basis, I suspect they'd chosen to nest underneath it for added security.



Till next time.....

Lyn and Milton
wish the fishers and their families a



*Merry
Christmas*

and a

Happy New Year



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