

April 2021

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Australian Bass



Perca latipes Novemaculata

THE BRONZE BATTLER

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President's Message



Another Bass Season is drawing to a close! If we had limited opportunities in 2019/20 due to drought, flood & COVID19; then this season has shown how too much rain is cramping our style! I can't believe Summer is over and the season officially ends in just over a month's time! This season should provide plenty of recruitment and it should auger well in the next few seasons.

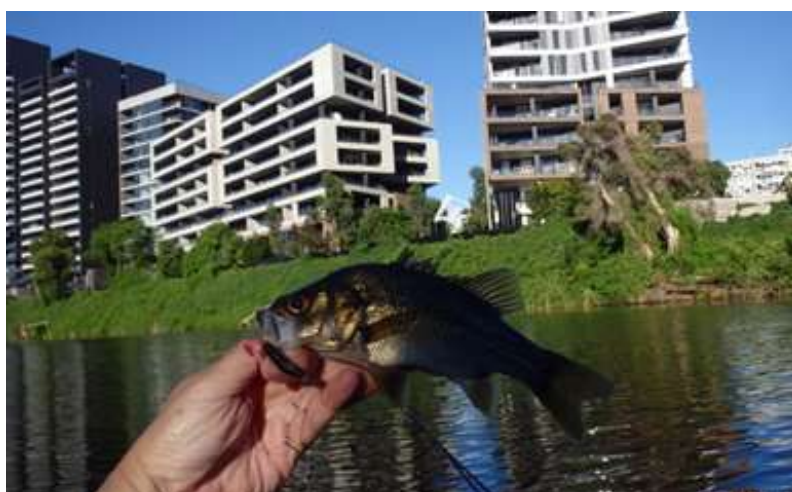
I will also take this opportunity to announce that we're planning a club trip away to Wyangala Dam on the first weekend of May. I want to get in early as we will need to book, especially if staying in onsite vans or cabins. Please let me know if you're going, or thinking of going. Main targets will be Murray Cod, Yellowbelly & carp in the dam. The Wyangala tailrace is also a good trout spot. There are several cabin options available to us. It would be quite economical for a few guys sharing a cabin or two. I estimate it will cost us around \$60 per person.

Also - the AGM is on next month. We didn't have an AGM last year because of COVID19. We need some (new??) people to take up some Committee roles. Milton has said repeatedly in last couple of years that he wants to hand over the Battler and Secretary duties. Please make yourselves available as I keep saying, we need to do this to survive as a club.

GEORGES RIVER CLUB OUTING JANUARY 2021



Peachy launching next to wharf at Light Horse Park, Liverpool



FEBRUARY BASS CATCH

Milton Lazarus' Report

I was keen to fish the upper reaches of the Nepean with members after missing the last two February Bass Catches, but unfortunately the weather forecast was dire. The camping and fishing gear were ready, but I still wasn't convinced it was a goer, however after receiving a message from Tham who was already on site with his camper set up I just threw everything in the car and hit the road at 11am on Saturday morning.

The plan was to launch beside the Macquarie Grove road bridge almost in Camden and fish downstream towards the weir around the big bend beside the airport. Local member Greg said you can't rely on the available forecast as the cloud often goes around Camden. And so, it was, a typical February afternoon, hot humid and no rain in sight. This is a nice launching spot with a sandy beach



and an easy drag across the grass from the car.

I looked upstream and saw the familiar yellow Bass kayak belonging to Tham in the distance, therefore headed that way instead. Met new member Craig and chatted with Tham about the catch results. Not epic, but reasonable. It was pleasant fishing in the shade around the shore, but very hot otherwise. I managed two small Bass, a 218 on my go to lure a 1/16 oz chatter-bait & a 118 on something very left field, a No 2 Stump-jumper. The lure was two thirds the size of the Bass. I tried this lure as Brian had success on one fishing the Macdonald recently.

The action was non-existent so we pulled the pin at 3pm and headed back to base camp at Bents Basin for a cuppa and some rest. The place was packed with families and it was nice to see the little kids running around having so much fun. I set up my old trusty touring tent etc. Scott Musk arrived for a catch up after he fished upstream from Yarramaundi using his new fly outfit and homemade flies with great success catching five Bass. Great effort and very satisfying when you made the flies.



The old tent, 35 years and still going strong



Motel Thamster

Happy hour followed with beers, wine, cheese, dips, nuts and chips. To me this is always a special time of our Bass Catch, to discuss the day, where people fished, their results and hard luck stories. Dinner followed, then Macman arrived after a big day in Camden and I think we finally retired about 11-30. It was a beautiful morning on Sunday, as Tham said rain, what rain. Not a cloud in the sky so after a feast of bacon and eggs I packed up as Tham & Craig headed across to fish the Gulguer reach. I thoroughly enjoyed myself so must make an effort to keep going to future events. I even won a soft-shell cicada in the raffle.

Thanks to Tham who coordinated the event with Ranger Gemma, organised free camping and so on. Thanks to all the folk who attended and helped during our bush regeneration day to give us free camping, and thanks to Derek as Bass Catch Officer.

Matt McHugh's Report

Back to Bents Basin again this year, but sadly a small bass catch turnout with a few hardy souls fishing the Northern Rivers and others with commitments. I was really keen to have another go at the Nepean, a river that I've found difficult for the most part, but with some good fish in recent bass catches.

Doug was away and I couldn't camp on the Friday night, so I decided on an early but simple launch at the Camden Bypass. There is an excellent ramp there with opportunities to fish upriver or downriver. I'd fished down river with Doug several years when we launched at Camden Airport, so I decided to head upstream most of which was new to me.



It was still dark when I launched, so I started with a ripple cicada. I was worried about the water quality with all the recent rains, but I needn't have been as it was coloured but looked good. It wasn't long before I had a few tentative swishes at first light. I found some steep banks on the northern bank and on one cast let the cicada sit for a bit longer. Probably 20 seconds and it was sipped, rather than a big surface strike. Not a big fish at 250 but a good start. From then there was a bit of a pattern with fish sipping cicadas that were left sitting on the surface, mostly under overhanging tree branches. This went on as it got light and even with the sun well and truly up.





By the time I got to the where the river turns towards Menangle, I had 16 on the cicada, the biggest at 285. I turned around there for the run back and changed to a chatterbait and started getting bites immediately. I was having trouble hooking up though with a lot of short takes but eventually started hooking a few. The tally being 22 when I got back to the ramp at midday. The fish really switched off after 10am and for the rest of the day and weekend the fishing wasn't nearly as good as the Saturday morning.

I headed to Bents and set camp and had lunch and decided to fish the down-stream stretch in the afternoon. The fishing was slow with only 6 fish in a couple of hours.

It was nice to camp at Bents Basin, a hot shower after a day in the kayak is just the ticket. I struck camp early

and headed back up to Caden to see if the early morning surface bite would eventuate but sadly, they were not looking up. I persevered with chatterbaits and divers for another 6. Up near the big pool and sandy beach I finally broke 300 with a solid fish of 320. Total for the weekend was 34 at an average of 220. A very good outing on that piece of water, well worth a float down from Menangle next time I think, or maybe even Douglas Park.

Looking forward to the next Bass Catch already.



Tham's Report

Everybody seemed to be somewhere else for this February's BassCatch. Lower turnout, but a small group camped for free at Bents Basin.



I fished with new member Craig Cross on Saturday. I thought we would just fish down from Bents and make our way back up, but when we dragged our yaks to the water, we saw that it's a foot or so above "normal flow" and it would be difficult to make our way back upstream. Bad planning from me! I should've at least checked it out before dragging our yaks down. We then drove to Camden and launched near the airport. It was 10am by the time we got there. It was a beaut day, but the fishing was slow. I managed 10 bass, no size to them.

The Rangers at Bents Basin had offered to lead us down to Gulguer Nature Reserve in our vehicles. Two years ago, Peachy, Rico & Jason were taken to the same section where they had a good day. I had arranged to be with Craig in his 4WD. The kind Ranger met us and took us along a locked fire trail to a secluded section of the Nepean above Bents basin. When we got to the end of the track, next to the river, it was quite a bush bash from the vehicle to the water. I found a spot to launch but we would have to manhandle our yaks to the water. It would have been fine for me with the Bass yak, but Craig had a larger SOT. He chickened out and refused to launch even when I said I will help him with his yak. It was rough going but we're talking about a distance of only 50m from the cars. So! We then retraced our steps back to camp; I thanked the Ranger profusely as it was a waste of time as far as she was concerned!

I was feeling annoyed, but what can you do??! We broke camp and I drove off to Belgenny Reserve at Camden. This was where Matt McHugh fished on Saturday and did well. It was 11.30am by the time I got on the water. I soon caught 2 more fish in first 15mins, but it totally shut down after that. Matt had come back to fish this stretch after breaking camp very early. I ran into him after about half an hour on his return to the ramp. He said it was very quiet and he only caught 6 bass in the last 5+ hours. I persisted for another hour or so and then gave up.

So, an annoying Bass Catch for me!

Scott's Report

Bass Catch 2021 was my first-time targeting bass, or any fish, on a fly. I'd been interested in fly fishing for Bass for years after picking up a book on fly fishing for smallmouth bass in a local second-hand book shop. This book led me to watching videos on YouTube about fly fishing for Bass in the US and Australia.

To add to my interest in targeting bass on a fly I decided to try and tie my own instead of just buying them. I found great resources online about the different patterns and started watching tying tutorials. Despite my local fishing shop having only a small supply of fly-tying materials, I chose to start sourcing everything I thought I needed from excellent Australia based online retailers; especially one called BWC Flies.



The pattern that most interested me was a surface fly known commonly as a Gurgler. Originating in the US the variations of the Gurgler were also successful flies in Australian sport fishing, especially when targeting Bass. Despite being a complete novice at tying flies, I found I could tie a functional Gurgler in a short space of time and started to find the practice of tying flies wholly rewarding. I set up a fly-tying station on my desk and it quickly became a good way to get away from work, the kids and unfinished projects around the yard!

On the Saturday morning of Bass Catch 2021 I was on the river by around 6am, launching my kayak from the car park at Yarramundi and heading upstream towards Devlin's. It was obvious to me straight away that my initial practice casting a fly rod standing up in the backyard was very different from the reality of casting from sitting down in a 'yak. Nevertheless, after a short while I was able to cast far and with enough

accuracy to get some hits on my Gurgler.

I was taking hits throughout the morning and finally by close to 10.30am I hooked and landed my first Bass, monumentally on my own fly.



After that fish I went on to land four more, the largest being 310, and all on the same topwater Gurgler. The fish were active that morning and I reckon if I had been using a spin or bait cast tackle, I would've caught a load more. Regardless, using my fly rod and own flies was a great experience. Since Bass Catch, I have gone further growing my interest in flyfishing and begun tying flies for Bream and Estuary Perch. I have also started purchasing flies and tackle for an upcoming trip to NT.

Thank you for reading. Cheers Scott

BASS CATCH POINTS SCORE 2020-2021

By Derek

Matt McHugh272 points
Garry Blount154 points
HS Tham..... 112 points

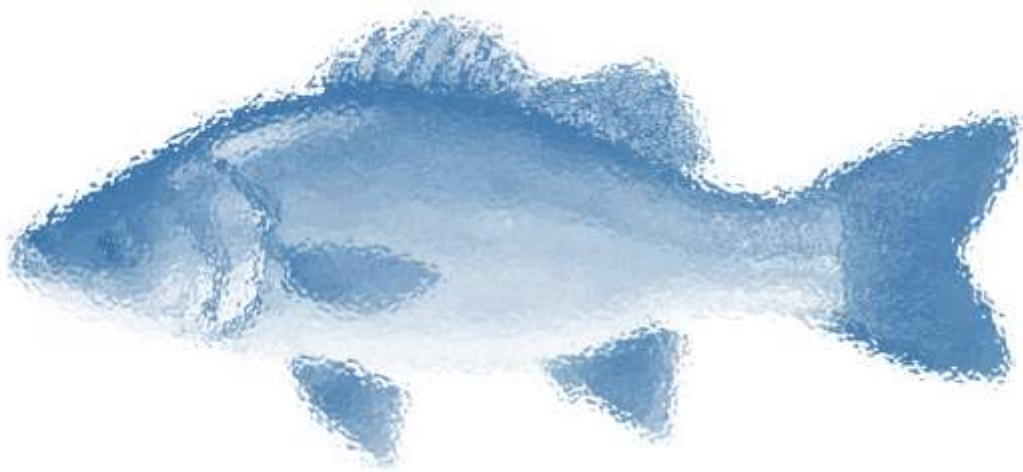
Biggest Fish – Garry Blount – 400

OCTOBER

Largest Fish	400
Smallest Fish	110
Most No. of Fish	28
Most points	108
Number of Anglers	11
Total No. of Fish	108
Total fish length	23378
Average fish size	216
Average No. of Fish/Angler	9.82

FEBRUARY

Largest Fish	325
Smallest Fish	110
Most No. of Fish	34
Most points	164
Number of Anglers	7
Total No. of Fish	91
Total fish length	18515
Average fish size	203
Average No. of Fish/Angler	13.00



KAYAK REPAIR BY PLASTIC WELDING

By Tham

***Disclaimer:** I don't know if this works for kayaks made of materials other than rotomoulded high-density polyethylene (HDPE)*

1. Find the leak or leaks - raise the yak & put some water in it.
2. Sand (coarse sandpaper) the area on your yak around where you'll be welding. In my case, there was a tiny leak right in the middle of the yak, where it had been repaired before, I used an angle grinder to rough it up. For a first- time repair, sandpaper should do.



3. I used an electric jigsaw to cut the SULO bin plastic to size.
4. For the heat gun I borrowed a 2000W model (thanks Doug!)



5. Hold the piece of SULO bin plastic with pliers and start applying heat to it from the heat gun. This takes a bit longer using a 2000W gun. More powerful heat guns however, have a greater risk of you melting through your kayak. Heat the area on your yak briefly before you put the patch on.

- 6 When the piece you're holding is very hot and starting to soften and droop a bit, start applying heat to the piece. Depending on the size of the patch, you will probably need to progress in segments. When the area on the patch is really hot and quite soft, use a spatula or old butter knife or some flat implement to press down on the hot patch and make the seal by concentrating on the edges & tamping down. Do the same for the whole patch until it's all done.
- 7 Let it cool and use the sander or angle grinder to smooth it out a bit.
- 8 Even though it wasn't leaking from the rear end, that is a much-abused bit of my yak. Repaired 3 times previously, I decided to put a good patch over it anyway.



Done!! It should be good
for another few years!

HS Tham



NORTHERN RIVERS BASS ADVENTURE PART 1

Despite detailed research and planning months in advance, we knew the success of our trip hinged largely on the weather. Unfortunately, the closer we got to hitting the road, the worse the forecast got. The Mid north coast and northern rivers had received significant rainfall in the weeks prior and we had question marks on what state the rivers would be in and whether the strong inflows would see Bass moving and holding further downstream as they often do in floods, or pushing up into headwaters and tributaries that they haven't been able to reach during dryer periods. There was more rain forecast for while we would be there which added further uncertainty regarding what the rivers would look like and how they would fish.

Our plan allowed for flexibility depending on weather and river conditions but was to focus on the Clarence valley before hitting at least one other system for a few days on the way back south. With the combination of research, information from the trip Rico, Doug and Damian had done a couple of years back, and reports from other Bass Sydney members and some mates who had fished the Clarence Valley systems, we knew we were unlikely to encounter big numbers of Bass, but were hoping for quality fish and of course the chance at a 50cm beast! We were conscious of keeping our expectations realistic, but were also hopeful of encountering Eastern Cod, which the guys had caught plenty of on their previous trip. Unfortunately, the trip was cut 3 days short due to heavy rain, but what eventuated was a true adventure in every sense of the word. For the most part, we had a ball!

Day 1

The drizzle had already started when Rico and I met at Brooklyn for the long drive north. Despite the rain and the forecast, we were both extremely keen for the fishing opportunities that we hoped would be available over the next week. First stop was Mo Tackle at Coffs to stock up on (mostly unnecessary!) lures. That range of tackle available in that place never ceases to amaze and it is always difficult to exercise restraint!

Next was a quick enjoyable lunch at Coffs Harbour Dutch restaurant made more entertaining by the schools of hungry Bream fighting over scraps of bread dropped into the small tidal creek below the deck. From there it was on to the Nymboida River to set up camp, organise the gear and hit the water!

When we launched it was overcast but dry and almost still. Rico commented that the river was up significantly from the last time he had seen it. The first thing that struck me was the scale of the system and how different the terrain in such a high energy system is when compared to the slower flowing systems we are used to down south. The substrate was nearly all rock, either granite or large sections of river pebbles near inflows from tributaries or at the base of rapids. The vast majority of it was also shallow, with the average depth in this section probably no more than 2 metres.

Despite lots of fantastic structure and countless casts, it took a couple of hours to register the first hit. After landing my ½ oz chatterbait deep in a shady pocket, I slow rolled it over a decent sized laydown tree snag in about 1.5m of water and was met with a solid thud and instant weight. The weight gave way quickly though and soon a small eastern cod in the

45cm range came into view and gave little resistance as I cranked it over the snag and back to my yak. I'd heard that they were all hit and no fight and this certainly rang true, however I was still stoked to land my first eastern. What a beautifully marked fish. After few pics it swam off strongly. This fish did wonders for the confidence levels and we both set off upstream in search of the next hit.



Almost straight after this fish the weather turned and the combination of a strong breeze and heavy rain soon had us shivering in our yaks. Despite being pretty uncomfortable and battling to position our yaks in the breeze, we pushed on. I missed another hit and managed to pull the hooks on two more small cod, but from there it was fruitless casting until just before dark.

In the late afternoon gloom and persistent rain, we approached the first set of real rapids we had encountered. There was a big deep pool and a few rocky islands just below the inflow and despite lots of casts with a mix of lures there was no action. We agreed that we would give the lower section of the rapids a crack and then head back to downstream to camp. At this point I decided to tie on a surface lure and took an-each way bet with a big lure. We knew Cod would eat massive lures and that larger Bass were also fond of big offerings. I positioned my yak in the eddy right below the inflow and fired the large "drunken mullet" fizzer across the base of the rapids. It was the first time I'd used this lure and was intrigued by the commotion it made during the retrieve. This noisy lure was a conscious choice given the fast flow and the noise of the rain on the surface of the water. After the first cast went unmolested, I was not overly optimistic of success, however as the lure neared my yak on

the second cast, I got one of those awesome surface takes that scares the crap out of you. Rico heard the huge boof from behind a nearby island and quickly paddled round to where I was. Given the amount of water it moved I figured it was another eastern, but was very excited to see a bronze-green flash and the distinctive broad scale pattern of a big Bass as it rolled just below the surface. After a short but torrid battle I slid the net under a beautiful bass and held it up for Rico to see. We both guessed that it was in the mid to high 400s and quickly paddled to the nearest bank to get a measure and some pics. This particular Bass was in great condition, carrying immense bulk through the shoulders right down to the tail wrist. At 443 fork and 470 tip it certainly raised our spirits and spurred us on for more casting! After releasing the big Bass, I commented that my trip had already been made – no matter what lay ahead my first Eastern Cod and a hulking mid 400s Bass in the first session was all I needed! I looked at my watch to gage how much casting time we had left before complete darkness and noted the time at 7.21pm.



After this, we left our yaks on the bank, grabbed a brag mat, pliers, some leader and few lures each and made our way up the rapid firing our big surface lures into eddies and likely looking pockets as we went. The huge boofs came regularly for both of us, but connecting was not proving easy. Soon another solid Bass managed to find the hooks on my lure on its third attempt, and I quickly released another beautifully conditioned 420 fork Bass. Next it was Rico's turn as his lure was smashed in the steady rain and fast flow. The 360-fork Bass gave a good account of itself in the flow and was soon released after a few pics.



Rico jumped ahead at this point while I made a lure change. Before I was done, I heard Rico's lure get monstered in a massive boof right next to the bank. Unfortunately, the excitement was short lived as the leader parted in an audible snap soon after hook up. After a few choice words, Rico quickly re-rigged and only a few casts later landed a lovely eastern Cod just over 50cm. After Rico's Cod, the action stopped as though someone had flicked the proverbial switch. We were both surprised that the action hadn't continued after nightfall, however were both pleased with the results from a brief flurry of activity right before dark.



The paddle back to camp was a challenge in itself. The wind had picked up again and an absolute blizzard of mosquitos made using our head torches and spotlight almost useless. After a few circles and some strenuous paddling into the breeze, we made camp to enjoy some dinner and a few relaxing beers before turning in.

Day 2

We had set the alarms for 5.30am but without discussion we both decided to turn them off and go back to sleep. We were spent after a big day and didn't roll out of our swags till 7.30am. Our plan for the morning was to push up one of the nearby tributaries, the Boyd River, and try our luck there. We were on the water at 8.30am and after a solid hour heading upstream, we did not find a single pocket of water over a metre deep. After briefly exploring on foot and casting an expansive section of rock bars and gentle rapids for no interest, we decided to head back down the main river and fish the rapid section where we had success the night before.

We paddled and cast all the way upstream to the rapids with the only signs of fish being two hits for Rico. I didn't have a single hit for the entire morning. After flogging the eddies and rapids for no further interest we headed straight back to camp for lunch and to ponder a plan of attack for the arvo/evening session.

We decided on a quick walk to explore the next section of rapids downstream from camp. After last night's action, our theory was that the active fish were holding in or below the rapids and the peak bite window was just before dark. We were unsure if these fish were using the cover of night to push upstream after all the rain, were using the pockets behind boulders to pick off easy prey in the flow, or a mix of both. After lunch our walk uncovered an incredibly fishy looking and somewhat deeper section of rapids with countless eddies and ambush points all within casting distance from the bank.

A plan was quickly formed to leave the yaks at camp, save our energy and walk the banks for the prime last light window. While exploring I took the opportunity for a relaxing swim/wallow in the refreshing mountain water while Rico headed back to camp for a rest. I soon headed back and also took the opportunity for a siesta. With the hustle and bustle of a busy life hundreds of kms behind in Sydney, the opportunity for a peaceful swim in stunning surrounds, an uninterrupted afternoon nap, and the chance at huge surface Bass at twilight, I was as relaxed and happy as I could be. I never take experiences like this for granted. Rico certainly agreed with this sentiment as we chatted while prepping our rods and backpacks.

Anticipation was definitely high as we crunched our way as quietly as we could down the pebble strewn banks of the rapids. After the success of the big fizzer last night, I had decided to tie on even bigger one (150mm), while Rico had settled on a beautiful jointed wooden surface crawler which had found its way into the basket at Mo Tackle. Both were an-each way bet on big Bass or eastern's. It didn't take long for the first hit. My third cast was bombed not far from my feet as the big fizzer entered a textbook ambush position in an eddy section immediately below an inflow. Again, a bronze-green flash in the clear water soon after hook-up was a dead giveaway for a Bass, and it was a big one. The fight was again short but torrid in the fast water and I was thankful for the pulling power of a 2500 thread

line and 16lb leader. As I slid it gently onto the wet pebbles Rico called it for 500. Could it be? I wasn't so sure but given that it was clearly bigger than last night's fish I thought it may go close. The story of the brag mat was 470 fork and 500 tip. And this fish was every bit as well conditioned as the others the night before. A great fish, but not the magic 500 forker. After watching her swim off into the crystal-clear rapids I checked my watch and was amazed to see that it was 7.21pm. Rico and I had a laugh and this became a bit of a running joke for the rest of the trip. 7.21pm was the magic minute.

After this it became a somewhat frustrating session. We walked the bank and had more than a dozen huge boofs just on dark and soon after, however agonisingly we couldn't convert a single one to a hook-up.

Just after 9pm on the way back to camp, in almost the exact spot I had hooked the big Bass earlier, Rico converted when his surface walker got boofed and he was on. The fish didn't play up much and the torchlight soon confirmed our calls with a lovely eastern of 52cm sliding gently onto the pebbles. It was a nice way to finish the session and the best cod so far.



After walking back to camp, we decided we needed a few more casts as Rico explained that he had caught a nice Cod from the shore on his last trip where the Boyd flows into the Nymboida. This was only a short walk from our camp so we had to give it a go.

After a couple more solid boofs over the shallow run right at our feet and no hook-ups, we assumed these were small Cod that were probably trying to bite off more than they could chew.

Two casts later we had a double hook up..... on two different trees! We both had to bust our lures off and given that it was now 10pm, I was more than content to cut our losses and call it a night..... but Rico had other ideas. On the walk back he decided that he would launch his yak and paddle back in an attempt to retrieve them. Given there was about \$50 worth of lures which we had both caught fish on hanging out there somewhere I couldn't blame him, but I was certain his chances of success were low.

Off he went.....and to my amazement after 10 minutes or so reappeared with both lures. What an effort! I thought it would be a miracle if he just managed to find mine, as I had a fair idea it was nowhere near the water line. But after locating it and attempting to knock it down with a paddle, he ended up standing on his yak and cutting the lure free. Thankfully his was easier to retrieve. After the effort he put in to get it, I told him to keep my lure, but he refused. I would shout him one at our next tackle stop, as there would surely be one on the way back south.

Day 3.

After a 5.15am rise, we left camp on foot for a repeat session from the night before. It was a stunning sunrise, with mist rising from the water and cloaking the surrounding hills, however the scenery was about as exciting as that session got. Persistence paid off for Rico, with one hit and then a second hit connecting for a small Bass at 234 fork. I only had two hits that session for no hook-ups.



We headed back to pack up and break camp before driving back to Grafton for a few supplies. From there we were on to Coombadjha for the next 2 nights. Tham had shared this location with us after he and Derek had stayed there on a previous trip a few years back. This was a private property open to fisherman on the bank of the Mann River just above its confluence with the mighty Clarence. It was also only about a 45minute paddle from the famous Clarence Gorge. The forecast looked better for our time here, with only 5-10mm predicted for each day.

We arrived at the property at about 12.30pm and were escorted down through the property and down a steep hillside to the camp spot beside the river. What a magnificent place! It had a freshly mowed level camping area complete with firepit and open-air pit toilet which was further down the bank for privacy. After a run down and property tour with the host Graham, he suggested our best bet for an afternoon/evening session was about a 30min paddle upstream to a huge pool on the bend below the mountain. He was a keen fisherman himself and thought our chances were very good, which certainly set our expectations high. We set up camp and then took the time for a leisurely float with a cold beer in the nearby flow. Refreshed and keen for more casting, we readied the gear and hit the water at 5.30pm.



The paddle upstream to the hole was a serious workout. A very wide, shallow river, fast water and several shallow rapid sections meant a couple of portages and lots of sweat before the flow slowed and water deepened. There was at least a couple of sections which we passed that I thought could be "interesting" in the fading light or darkness on the way back. But when we reached the pool, it looked worth the effort! Deep narrow gorge sections before an expansive pool that the host Graham had told us was 60ft deep in parts. We got to casting straight away, certain that action was imminent with the number of great ambush points we could see. However.....it wasn't until soon before dark at the base of another rapid section that the first hit came. I was connected briefly to what felt like another big Bass, but the hooks pulled after about 5 seconds. Soon after I managed another small eastern in the high 40cm range which scared the crap out of me when it bombed my fizzer less than a rod length from the yak. Two casts later I had another Cod smash the lure but somehow miss the hooks. This fish came half out of the water in plain sight but just missed everything. There was no luck for Rico in this session unfortunately.



We knew the paddle back down to camp was going to be an adventurous one given the speed of the flow and the number rapids we came up, and we had planned to head back before dark. But the two Cod hits in the fading light had spurred us on to keep casting until full darkness. We readied the yaks and tied down as much as we could, vaguely confident that we could pick the right line through the rapids with the help of a spotlight. However.....not far into the trip I took the wrong line. By the time I saw the hidden boulder just below the surface of the running water it was too late. The yak scraped the side of it, twisted to the right and over I went. I was able to stand and righted the yak straight away, but unfortunately the few things I hadn't or couldn't tie down were gone. These included 2 rod combos (can't believe I forgot to secure them!), the brag mat, a water bottle and the spotlight. After pushing the yaks to the side, I waded back out in attempt to recover what I could. Rico jumped off his yak and waded out with me.....what a guy!! I quickly recovered the brag mat and 1 rod outfit which to my amazement I felt with my feet. But the rest was gone. During the ordeal I also managed to lose a contact lens and get a bug in my eye. We vowed to paddle back in the morning for a more thorough search with the mask and snorkel which I had brought for exactly this purpose.

The bugs were again in plague proportions in the light of our headtorches during the paddle back and we had soon breathed in and swallowed a week's supply of protein! We arrived back at camp thoroughly defeated after a tough fishing session and my efforts rolling the yak. After a second bug had flown into my eye, it was not in good shape with skin from the inside of my eyelid hanging out and covering my pupil. We pondered the 1.5hr drive back to



Grafton hospital, but I decided against it with the hope that it would be improved in the morning. Despite the events of the evening, we enjoyed an awesome meal which Rico had pre-prepared, followed by an hour of amazing star gazing with a few cold ones. With absolutely no light pollution, the full glory of the night sky was on display with regular "shooting stars" and satellites easy to spot. Rico even managed to get some great pics with some super slow exposure shots. What a place.



Day 4

When we woke my eye was still not in a good way with my vision far from 100%. We had originally planned to paddle downstream and fish the deep pools at the confluence of the Mann and Clarence, and then possibly paddle down to the famous gorge to explore that. Given what had occurred and our plan to paddle back in search of my lost outfit, we decided to can those plans and head back to Grafton. I felt terrible for Rico as had it not been for my accident, we would have been fishing some famous water that day. But being the guy that he is, he didn't complain.



Our recovery mission with the snorkel was a failure, but at least Rico got some entertainment out of watching me swim and wade the river with a snorkel for 20mins.

After a stop in Grafton for lunch and some meds for my eye, we made our way south to Taylor's Arm and the The Pub With No Beer. We would be fishing completely different water here, but there was still the opportunity for big fish and we couldn't wait.



To be continued. Cheers, Jason.

RUSSELL STREET BUSH REGERATION SITE POST MARCH FLOODS

By Milton

Well, it was a shock to see our site last Saturday, pretty much total devastation, I guess like a bomb had hit the area levelling mostly everything. After 10 years of hard work the feeling was, where do we start. The only area that partially survived was the top section, but sadly many of our mature trees are laying at 45 degrees and a lot of the smaller shrubs seem to have died although one never knows as they may shoot again soon. I think the upper level is in reasonable shape considering and can be resurrected in time.



The photo above is looking toward the where the island was, the river was still pumping



Looking east with the main river in the background, all the casuarinas have gone



Same again looking east, our new plantings might be down at Wisemans Ferry



The left-hand photo is where we sit for lunch and the debris is 6 metres above

The right-hand photo shows Kerith and Lachlan looking at debris 20 metres up in the damaged casuarinas, simply unbelievable



The photo above is looking downstream, the gap you see in the row of Casuarinas on the left is the track location

A casuarina roll ball and river stones embedded on the left

The 4wd track on the right





Looking up the track with Nicole & Allan thinking about where to start at our best area.



What's left of the island



Above, looking down the track. The photo below is further down the track with the green Council sign to the left further in the distance, everything got pretty much hammered





Top Picture is the higher-level area where Alan & Nicole were standing and has actually survived better than expected. The bottom picture is the lower area which really suffered

Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon – *Mogurnda adspersa*

July 2017, Primefact 1275, Second Edition Threatened Species Unit



Figure 1: A Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon from the Murray-Darling Basin (Photo: G. Schmida)

Introduction

Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon is a small freshwater fish native to Australia. Two populations of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon occur in NSW; an eastern population found in coastal catchments north of the Clarence River, and a western population found throughout Murray-Darling Basin. During the early 1980s, the Murray-Darling Basin population experienced rapid and dramatic reductions in distribution and abundance. The population is now confined to small remnant populations in the Macquarie, Gwydir and Border Rivers catchments and a self-sustaining population created from captive-bred fish in the Castlereagh Catchment. Since all remaining populations in the western region are small, isolated and disconnected from each other, there is limited gene flow between populations.

There have been few recent records of the eastern population despite targeted sampling at those locations where the species has previously been found. Only two extant populations are known, one in the Richmond catchment and the other in the Hunter Valley. However, the population in Goorangoola Creek (Hunter River catchment) is outside what was previously considered the natural range of the species and

it remains unknown whether the population is endemic or recently introduced. Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon is listed as an **endangered species** in NSW. There are heavy penalties for harming, possessing (wild caught), buying or selling them, or for harming their habitat (see 'Legal implications').

Description

Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon have a rounded head with a small mouth and a rounded tail. They have two dorsal fins; the first being shorter and lower than the second. They are generally dark brown in colour along the back, fading to pale brown or cream on the belly. A number of distinguishing markings occur along the body, such as white and red spots and a blue wash along the flanks, all of which brighten during breeding, and yellow bars on the margins of the dorsal and anal fins. The three red-maroon bars on the cheek differentiate the species from other similarly shaped freshwater gudgeon species within NSW even at very small sizes (such as Coss, Striped and Flathead Gudgeons). Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon grow to around 15 cm in length.

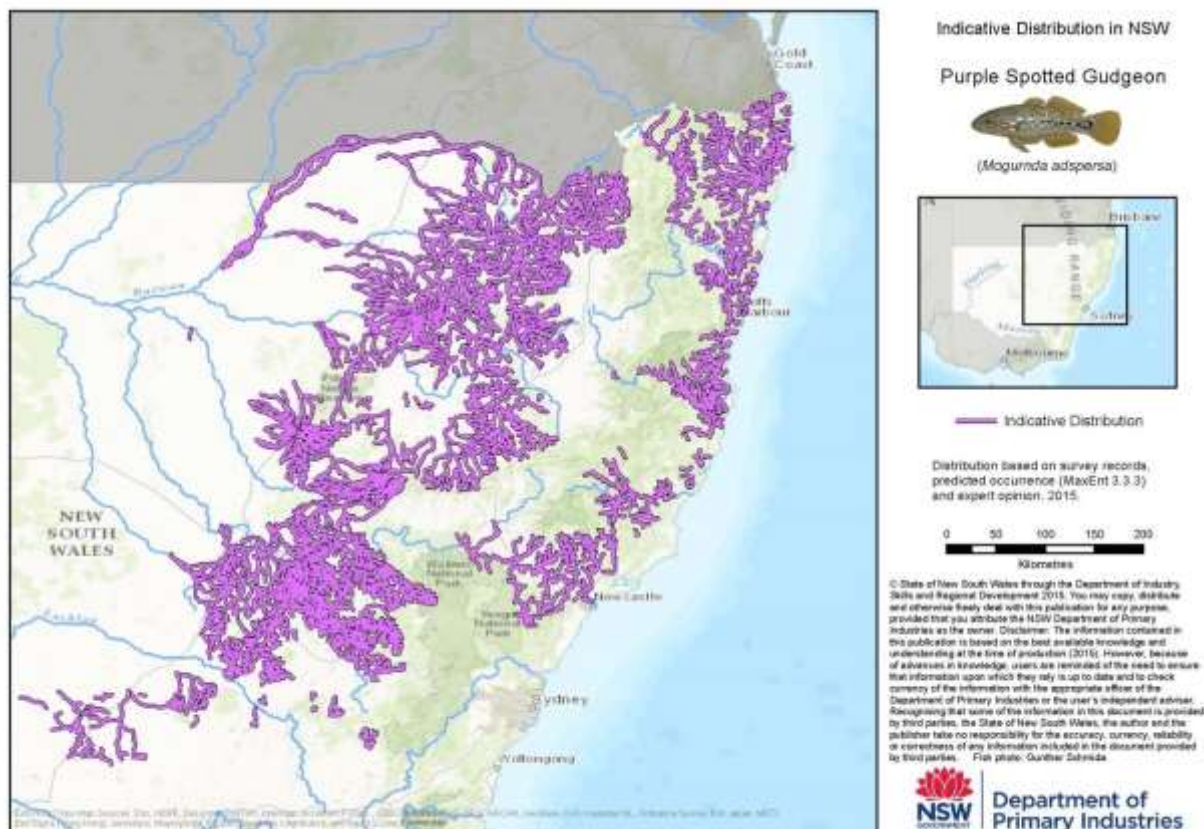


Figure 2: Current indicative distribution of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon in NSW, modelled from past catch data and environmental conditions.

Habitat and ecology

- Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon are a benthic species that can be found in a variety of habitat types such as rivers, creeks and billabongs with slow-moving or still waters or in streams with low turbidity. Cover in the form of aquatic vegetation, overhanging vegetation from river banks, leaf litter, rocks or snags are important for the species.
- Most remnant populations in NSW occur in small to medium sized streams.
- They feed mainly on terrestrial insects and their larvae, worms, small fish, tadpoles, and some plant matter.
- Males reach maturity at about 4.5 cm and females at about 5 cm in length.
- Males have an elaborate courtship display and spawning occurs over summer when water temperatures are warmer.
- Females may lay several batches of eggs per season (30 - 1,300 per batch). The eggs are small (2 - 4mm long), elongated, sticky and transparent. They are deposited in clusters on solid objects such as rocks, wood or

- broadleaved plants. The male guards and fans the eggs until they hatch (3 - 8 days).
- Newly hatched larvae are approximately 4mm long.

Why are Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon threatened?

- Predation by introduced fish such as Eastern Gambusia (*Gambusia holbrooki*) and Redfin Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*).
- Habitat disturbance by common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*).
- Loss of favourable habitat, particularly aquatic plants.
- Fluctuations in water levels and flow as a result of river regulation have a significant impact on the inundation frequency for wetland habitats including habitats important for Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon reproduction and recruitment.
- Thermal pollution.
- Increased turbidity and damage of stream banks by livestock access.

- Decreased water quality due to agricultural runoff and siltation.
- Local extinctions may not be naturally recolonised because of the species' inability to disperse the long distances required.
- Populations are generally small and isolated from each other, and therefore vulnerable to localised extinctions from severe events.

Conservation and recovery actions

- Develop and implement control programs for introduced pest species.
- Promote appropriate land management practices to improve water quality and river health.
- Allocate environmental water flows in regulated rivers to restore natural seasonal flow patterns and maintain connectivity and inundation of key habitat such as wetlands.
- Maintain bans on the taking of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon from the wild and enforce compliance with fishing regulations.
- Educate the community about the protected status of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon and how they can assist with the recovery of this species.
- Conduct further research investigating reasons for their decline and assess distribution.
- Prevent sedimentation and poor water quality by improving land management practices, conserving and restoring riparian vegetation and using effective erosion and sediment control measures.
- Report any sightings of the species via the NSW DPI online form: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/speciesprotection/report-it
- A full list of strategies that have been adopted for promoting the recovery of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon is set out in the [NSW DPI Priorities Action Statement](#).

Legal implications

It is illegal to catch and keep, buy, sell, possess or harm Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon (or any other threatened species in NSW) without a specific permit, licence or other appropriate approval, and significant penalties apply. For

endangered species, these penalties can include fines of up to \$220,000 and two years in prison. There can also be significant penalties for causing damage to the habitat of a threatened species without approval, through actions such as dredging river beds, removing large woody debris and constructing barriers that block the free passage of fish. Clearing that constitutes a routine agricultural management activity, and certain routine farming practice activities (other than clearing) are permitted, provided the activities are to the minimum extent reasonably necessary and all other relevant statutory approvals or authorities have been obtained.

The impacts of developments or activities that require consent or approval in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* must be assessed and considered by consent or determining authorities. Where such actions are likely to result in significant impact on a threatened species or its habitat, a detailed species impact statement must be prepared. Strategies to be adopted for promoting the recovery of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon are set out in the NSW DPI Priorities Action Statement.

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For further information

See the NSW DPI website: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Contact the NSW DPI Threatened Species Unit:
PO Box 1305, Crows Nest NSW 1585

Email: fisheries.threatenedspecies@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (July 2017). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent advisor. ISSN 1832 6668 PUB12/153

Figure 3-6: Examples of Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon habitat (Photos: D. Gilligan)



Figure 7 and 8: A Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon (Photo: G. Schmida) (left) and a Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon guarding larvae in captivity (Photo: M. Hammer) (right)



Feral fish multitude is something to carp about

MALCOLM HOLLAND

THE mammoth task of ridding Australia of carp has been revealed by a study estimating just how many of the feral fish infest the country's rivers and lakes.

The investigation, as part of the Federal Government's National Carp Control Plan, found in a "wet" year Australia's freshwater systems contained 357.5 million carp.

In an "average" year there

were 199.2 million carp.

Common carp are now the most abundant large freshwater fish in south east Australia.

They damage rivers by muddying waters and destroying native aquatic vegetation, and compete with native fish for habitat.

The estimate of their numbers by the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) used cutting edge modelling across a range of habitat types including rivers, lakes, billabongs, and estuaries.

Ninety six per cent of the carp in Australia are in eastern Australia, where they swim in 97 per cent of large rivers and 54 per cent of wetlands.

ARI said the information will help national and local carp control strategies and track river recovery efforts.

The National Carp Control Plan has investigated using a naturally occurring strain of carp herpes virus as a biological control agent for the pest.



A feral common carp.



Half a million Murray cod take to the water

MALCOLM HOLLAND

THEY may be tiddlers now but there are half a million of them and they will grow to giants prowling NSW's inland waterways, terrorising carp and even eating ducks for dinner.

The state government's annual Murray cod stocking season has just concluded, with more than 500,000 juvenile cod released into rivers and dams.

The juvenile cod were bred at the DPI Fisheries Centre at Narrandera and were released into selected waterways over the past two months.

The stocking sites include dams like Copeton, Blowering, Wyangala and Burrinjuck, along with drought-recovery releases within the Darling, Lachlan, Macquarie and Namoi river catchments.

This season's stockings will not only boost recreational

fishing opportunities but will also assist in the long-term recovery of Murray cod populations following recent drought and low river flow conditions.

Murray cod are one of the world's largest freshwater fish, growing to more than 1.8m long and over 100kg in weight, and hunt everything from crayfish to other fish and even attack birds swimming on the surface.



The iconic Murray cod.



Little fish does a Lazarus — twice

DAVID MILLS

THIS is both a story about a little fish in a big pond, and the one that got away — twice.

It's a tiddler. Adults tip the scales at about eight grams and grow to around nine centimetres. But judge not by size. The Purple Spotted Gudgeon is a miracle.

Its 2019 discovery in Third Reedy Lake, near Kerang, northern Victoria, marked the second time it has come back from the dead. Declared regionally extinct in the Twentieth Century — one of many native fish species wiped out since 1788 — it was rediscovered in the early 1990s, only to be deemed officially extinct again in 1998.

Its most recent rediscovery happened by accident, two days before the lake was set to be drained.



"We weren't looking for it," environmental scientist Dion Lervais, who made the find, said. "Because it had been listed as regionally extinct it wasn't

on the list to be looked for. These guys live up in as much cover as they can find. The hardest bit of habitat, up under a rocky nook or a bit of vegetation, that's where they are."

The discovery prompted further searches in 100 sites, with dozens more eventually found.

"It's a beautiful specimen; pretty striking when you pull it up in a net. It's pretty distinctive," Mr Lervais said.

Peter Rose, project manager with Victoria's Northern Central Catchment Management Authority, said the prognosis for the future local survival of the Purple Spotted Gudgeon was now good, thanks in part to recent funding for a captive breeding program. (Related species flourish in other parts of Australia.)

"In the region I work in, there are only 13 of 22 (native) species left, and of those six are listed as threatened," he said.



Sunday Telegraph March 28 2021

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