

April 2020

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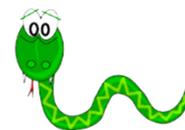


## President's Message



As the COVID-19 crisis deepens globally and our lives have all been changed, perhaps forever, Bass Sydney will hopefully carry on. As advised by Milton, we have cancelled the AGM with all of the Committee agreeing to stay on. It seems so minor to talk about our club while the world is in crisis, but I guess we all have to live our lives as best as we can. Good luck to all Bass Sydney members! Try to get out fishing if you can, but stay safe and be mindful of the "social distancing" rules.

Lyn's message - as I have been in deep hibernation for some time now, I'm like all hibernating animals – slowed down somewhat. Today I'm out of hibernation for a short while to complete this task – soooo, many apologies for being somewhat late in getting this newsletter to you all.





JEREMY'S LANE COVE RIVER ESTUARY PERCH



THAM'S PERSONAL BEST 43CM LANE COVE RIVER BREAM



THAM'S LANE COVE RIVER JEWY



DOUG AND JEREMY AT GLEBE ISLAND BRIDGE

## **THE BIG WET**

Milton Lazarus

After an incredibly hot and dry summer together with ferocious bush fires it finally started to rain, and rain it did. As reported in the media, Yarramundi, North Richmond and Windsor bridges were closed as the Nepean River rose and when this happens, we know it's a big one.

At our Russell Street bush regeneration site, it's been a struggle to keep plants alive during the hot dry spell and the only option was using watering cans. Alan's 1000 litre water tank on the back of the Hilux, pump and fire hose was a great help, thanks Al. A lot easier than manually carrying water up from the river by watering can and bucket.

The Penrith Electric Model Aero Club have an airstrip called Hart Field just near our bush regeneration site, a nice level mowed field area with good facilities for members to enjoy during a day of model plane flying. We often see them buzzing overhead when working on site. At the peak of the flood there was almost two metres of water over the strip, the BBQ furniture floated away and equipment in the shed destroyed. When the water receded, there were dead carp on the runway. This is a big first for that area.



Hart Field

Unfortunately, the sheer water force, volume and high level flattened some of our saplings and many smaller shrubs on the lower level just disappeared. One of our lady volunteers, Margaret, who lives nearby took some amazing photos to illustrate the situation.



During the flood peak and after. We have our BBQ sitting under the casuarina in the middle of the picture.



Looking down to where the track crosses the river.

After the flood from a slightly different position.



Devastation on the lower level.



Saplings flattened near the BBQ area.

We had a working bee in December, for watering – it was 35 degrees, January at 42 degrees was deemed too hot and of course February was a wash out. If mother nature is kind to us, we should have made March, but we didn't due to rain.

From Emu Plains I drove downstream to Delvin's Lane, a favourite kayak launching spot. The photo is taken from the high-water mark during the flood and looking down the road is my car in the distance at the bottom on the left. The photo on the right is Yarramundi bridge and the flood debris is 4 to 5 metres above the bridge deck, so all in all a pretty decent flood.

As Margaret said Mmmn, I'm not so sure about the 'decent rain' or about the 'indecent rain', please dear God could we have some moderation in the weather.

I certainly agree, just too much, all or nothing.

Cheers, Milton.



## CATTLE DUFFER CREEK DAM

Milton Lazarus

I'd been watching dam levels during the big wet and whilst some stayed static, others were on the rise. I'd always heard reports about fishing a dam on the rise and they were very encouraging, so with this in mind Alan, Brian and I headed up to fish a new unheard-of location from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Our first glimpse of the dam on Monday afternoon as you crest the final rise was, oh boy it looks just fantastic. The dam is essentially in a valley with the surrounding hills and it looked so lush and green you just wanted to rush down and get on the water straight away. It's a very pretty location, different to others, smaller, but I think it has more character and of course being full made it look so much more picturesque.



On arrival it was overcast with the odd shower, but no wind so after setting up camp we ventured out for a few hours to see if there were any Bass around the edges. Once on the water, we headed to a small bay with some green water plants towards the bank and proceeded to flick a few soft-shell Cicadas. Brian pulled two nice fish from this spot, interestingly Alan and I were also casting Cicadas, but slightly different colours so Brian's black and blue was the best choice. We noticed this trend during the week where a specifically coloured lure was the go-to whereas others cast in the same area didn't create any interest. Very frustrating.



After that the action ceased, we moved along the shore without any further hits. We kept at it for some time, but as the rain started, we decided a hot shower and a glass of red was a better idea. Brian towed his Cub camper and I set my stretcher up on the hard floor area whilst Alan pitched his trusty Black Wolf tent. A good arrangement, - I bring the boat and Brian supplies the accommodation. This place has a number of permanent residents living in small buildings, some attached to caravans and so on.



It's all a bit old, but the amenity block was half reasonable and we were lucky enough to use a sort of covered camp area as we were the only ones there - no stove or sink - but it was great with power to charge the boat battery and lighting plus tables and chairs. Terrific in wet weather.

It was cool overnight with rain and Tuesday dawned overcast again and showers, not really a problem and better than baking hot weather, at least no wind so probably ideal conditions. It was a good day for me catching some nice fish. Al had a tough day with braid and leader issues which cramped his style, but he managed a couple. Brian did well too. We worked different spots as there were fish rising here and there around the shore, but only hooking and losing the odd fish occasionally. We retired mid to late afternoon after the rain and wind started again. On Wednesday we all had a tough day, but the weather was better. Brian zilch and me one small Bass on a Taylor Made Basscada and Al three small fish.



Brian had to leave on Thursday morning so after helping him pack up we ventured out again. Alan managed five Bass and one Catie, me absolutely nothing. Alan had a fluoro pink Pony Head with a three-inch curly tail motor oil plastic. This was the go-to lure for the day, probably the last lure I'd clip on. I tried everything to no avail. Very annoying. The surprise of the day was Alan's 470mm Cat fish, a solid critter that put up a pretty good account of itself. Al wasn't prepared to hold it up for a photo due to that poisonous spine as he couldn't get the plastic lip grippers attached. We motored way up towards the top end of Cattle Duffer Creek. There's some lovely spots there, but alas nothing. Alan & I stayed Thursday night, enjoyed our last bottle of Merlot and discussed the week. Packed up and left on Friday morning.





Fishing dams can be a rewarding experience if the conditions are right, but there are risks due to submerged timber, unexpected storms and possible rock bars so you need to take it easy. We were heading up the dam in probably the widest part, in deep water, maybe 10 to 12 metres and travelling slowly when crash, we came to a sudden stop, the motor pivoted up and was revving it's head off. We all ended up in a heap on the floor. I just couldn't believe it. I stopped the motor and we sat there pretty much stunned. I assume we'd hit a submerged log floating just under the surface. At eight knots my boat is very bow up stern down. Not good, but luckily no injuries apart from Brain hurting his arm, not a mark on the motor leg and everything else seems ok. I assume the power tilt and trim hydraulic ram must have a pressure relief valve to cope with such a situation as it worked normally afterwards.





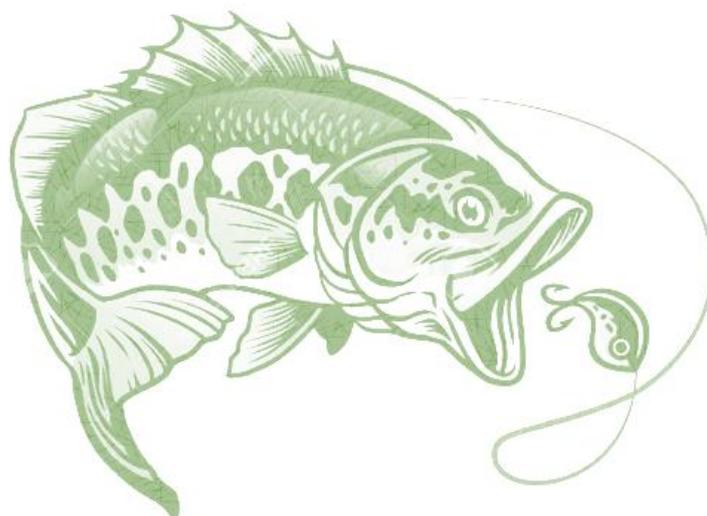
Wonderful to see the spillway working and water cascading down in the afternoon sun. This overflow will freshen up the river downstream after such a long dry spell so I think there might be some good kayak Bass fishing downstream soon.

The last 20 kilometres of road to this location is pot - holed dirt, very narrow, rough and it's tough on your car and boat trailer. All you can do is take it very slowly, stop now and then to check things and mind the blind corners. I was doing 20kph on the rough sections.

Anyhow a very enjoyable week at a new location up the north west with some good mates, enjoying happy hour each night, nice meals and finally the Bass Sydney Port Appreciation Club reconvened again after such a long break, so it was port, dark chocolate and tea to finish the evenings. And of course, a lot of fishing chit chat and laughs. We didn't need any rocking I can tell you. A great time which unfortunately doesn't happen enough.

As we know good productive fishing is all about timing and we were fortunate enough to time it right on this occasion. With dam fishing you can spend many fruitless hours or even days fishing with little or no results.

Cheers, Milton.



## HASTINGS RIVER FISHING TRIP – 28<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2010

Warren Chambers

On the recommendation of Alan Izzard and Milton Lazarus we made a trip to the Hastings, staying at the Travellers Rest Hotel at Long Flat on the Oxley Highway about 30km's west of Wauchope.

The hotel was typical country style and patronised by bikers, male & female, who stayed there to ride the Oxley highways ferocious bends to Gingers Creek at the top of the range to have a coffee, ride back to Long Flat, have lunch and then do it all again in the afternoon.

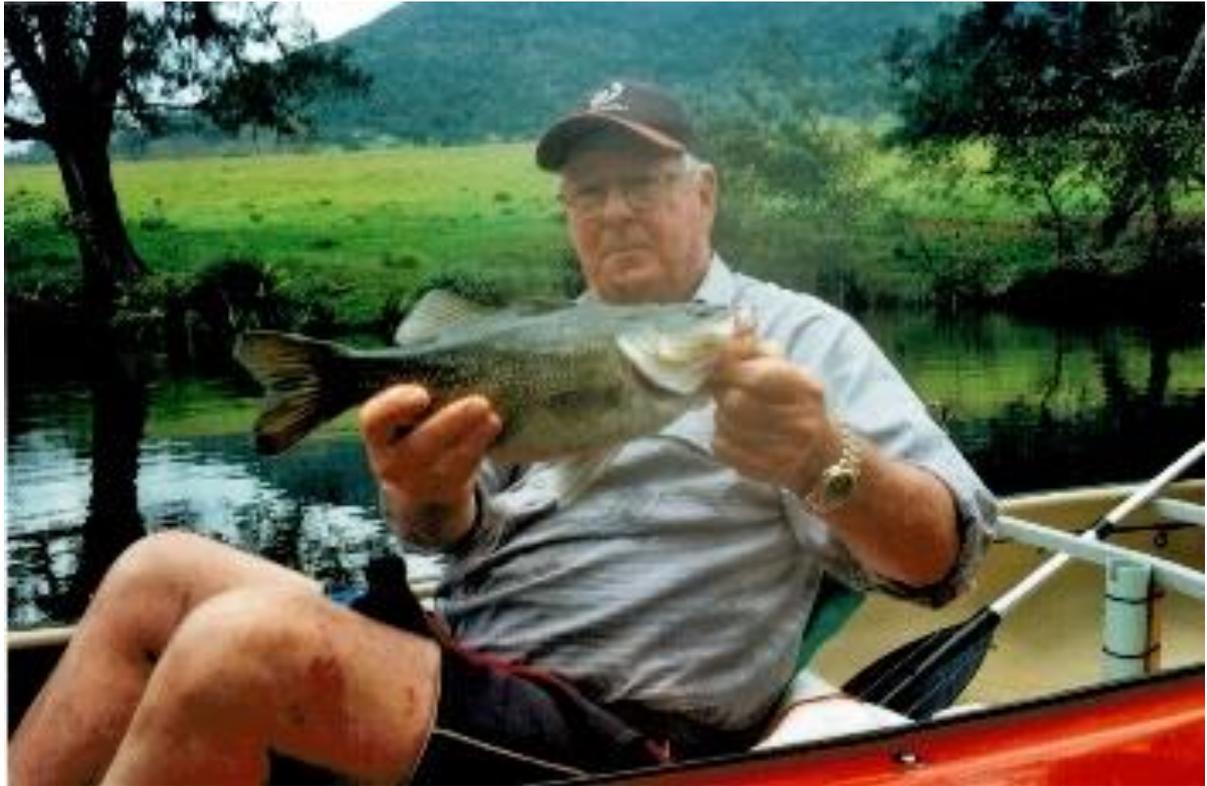
As fishermen, we were in the minority but the company was always good and the Licensee, Lynne Young, provided excellent meals. There were four of us, brothers Don & John Clark, Harley Roberts and myself.

At the suggestion of Alan and Milton we intended to fish in two 15 ½ ft Canadian canoes from Forbes River Rd to the Hotel at Long Flat.

We had no idea of what it would be like as Alan & Milton had not done the trip. At about 6.30am we left my station wagon at the Forbes River Rd and set off, catching fish almost straight away, and all good. There were numerous stoppages on the way to traverse rock bars, gravel shallows and tea tree entanglements.

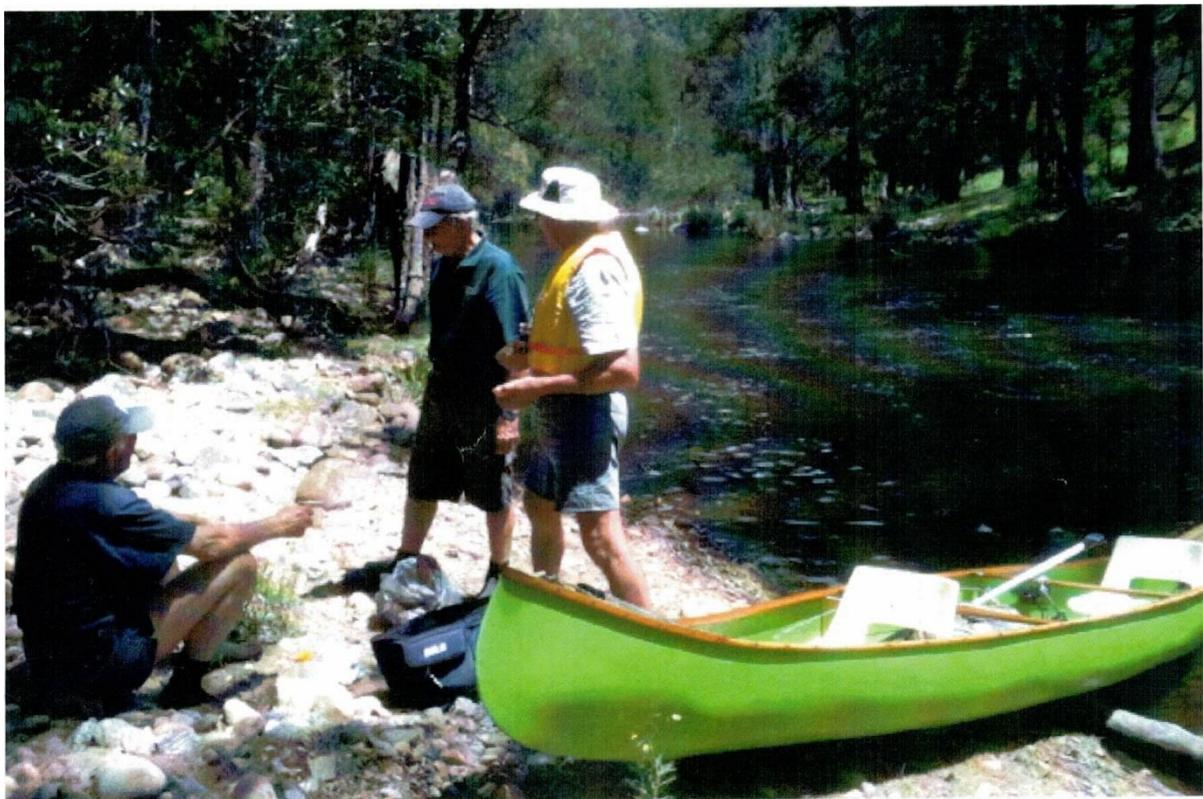


WARREN WITH A 390



HARLEY WITH A SIMILAR SIZE FISH

The time got away very quickly and we had no idea how far we had travelled and how far we had to go. But hey, we were catching fish.



SMOKO, DON, WARREN & JOHN - OCTOBER 2010



DON IN THE BOW AND JOHN UNHOOKING A BASS – OCTOBER 2010

Mid-afternoon we were caught in a thunderstorm, complete with lightning, as we were all carrying graphite rods, we quickly put them in the bottom of the canoes and “sheltered” under the overhanging trees.

We were saturated. The rain stopped and we pressed on, approaching a scary set of rapids. I said to Harley, “let’s not run them”, and instead we picked up our Canadian and bush bashed our way around them. We did this and waited at the foot of the rapids wondering what had delayed the Clark brothers, then along came John swimming beside a canoe half full of water, no sign of brother Don.

We pulled John into the bank and asked where his brother was. John was fairly agitated and said they had been rolled, Don had got his foot stuck under the front deck then eventually got it free and exited the canoe safely. John and the canoe were swept away whilst Don was trying to salvage gear washed out of the waterlogged canoe. Lesson learnt – it is a wise choice to have everything lashed down no matter the conditions.

The outcome – both paddles were lost, one rod and reel were missing along with two tackle boxes, a camera and Don had a Seiko divers watch torn off his wrist somehow. The items lost in the capsizing have never been seen again. I guess the fish there can now tell what time of day it is! We decided then to get travelling as quickly as possible as the brothers were paddling with their hands. Harley and I pushed on ahead to try and figure out where we were. We still did some fishing and usual story, after the storm the fish were ravenous.

By now it was nearing 5pm and we were starting to get concerned when suddenly we saw a large clearing, some tents, some caravans and vehicles. We were at the free camping area where the Ellenborough River joins the Hastings – beauty, what a sight for water logged fishermen.

When John & Don arrived about 15mins later I managed to arrange for an onlooker to take Don back to the Hotel to pick up his Landcruiser.

We subsequently went back to pick up my wagon, load up both canoes (minus the lost items) and go back to the Hotel pretty much exhausted.

Milton has checked the distances and advised that Forbes River Rd to Ellenborough is 22kms, and Ellenborough to the Hotel is 8kms. We were blindly (and unpreparedly) attempting a total trip of 30km's in one day!!!

We did have subsequent trips to the Travellers Rest which had changed hands after our first trip. The Licensee was now Craig, but his father and mother, David and Judith, were the real operatives. They were all good, friendly people who made us feel very welcome. David had been a butcher and was a very competent cook.

We did quite a few trips from Forbes River Rd to Ellenborough and always rated it successful fishing, can't say that about all other fishing trips.

The next day we went up the Hastings to just below Seaview and travelled down to an Eco Lodge complex which was situated a short distance from the highway It was "skinny" water, lots of fallen timber, no wild water and it was very good fishing right up to the time we got back to the vehicles.

It's interesting country as there is an olive plantation up the Forbes River Rd owned by a Singaporean Consortium, which marketed their products, olives and oil, under the name of "Yarras" which was the name of the original land holding in the area "Yarras Station".

Additionally, the Singaporean's conducted a Black Angus Cattle operation of approx. 400 head, all fine quality beasts.

The largest portion of their oil production went to Singapore in plastic vats on pallets.

In later years, Harley and I did trips from Ellenborough to the Hotel but ceased when the water levels dropped and made passage impossible. It was a comfortable day trip and we got to know the river and become comfortable with it. No more rapids!

Unfortunately, I have been unable to provide details of fish caught on the above trips. I used to keep good records of who caught what size fish, but in December 2016 my wife and I had to downsize and move into a villa and in the moving process fishing records were of no consequence. The size and quantity of fish aren't here to tell you but the memories of the great trips we had there will always be here to write and talk about.



After the debacle of our October 2010 trip Don bought this Aire raft from the USA. He had fished in them many times in Colorado, Chile & Argentina. It's about 4 metres long by 1.7 beam, has a 57lb Watersnake on the stern. Very comfortable to fish out of, but too wide for some rapids and it's not light to wrestle up the bank and onto the trailer.

Irish Bob on the bow, Don & John. My daughter Bronwyn is pleased all were wearing life jackets. Harley & I were in the Canadian as usual.

We would all like to do it again but father time now has our measure. (And Don doesn't want to lose another good watch).

Fishing companions for many years now – Don Clark 87yrs, John Clark 86yrs, Harley Roberts 86yrs.

Warren Chalmers (83yrs old)

*PS – My daughter Bronwyn, who typed up this document, is still waiting to read of any mention of the use of life jackets or safety vests!*



## BASSIN THE MANNING & BARRINGTON MARCH 2009

Milton Lazarus

After the Manning Bass catch Allan Izzard suggested we take a few days on the way home and fit in some casual Bassin' and maybe some drinkin' and of course lots of paddlin'. Good thinkin' we all thought.

We didn't need much convincing so Chris, Garnet, Gordon and myself signed on with Al. Gordon had come down from Queensland to catch up, sink a few cans and maybe catch a Bass or two.

We fished the Manning on Saturday and as usual it was tough going, but rather than fish the Manning again on the Sunday, we elected to relocate to Poleys Place on the Barrington River. The Barrington runs into the Gloucester River not far from Gloucester and the Gloucester joins the Manning, so we figured there could be a Bass or two there and it would be new territory for us all.

For those not familiar, Gloucester is the gateway to Barrington Tops and Woko National Parks. The area is very picturesque with high rolling hills and huge solid rock escarpments shooting straight up west of town. You can take Thunderbolts Way up through Nowendoc to Armidale or you can cut across the Northern part of the Barrington Tops National Park to Scone. Both fantastic trips if you have the time.

Poleys Place is a small working cattle property not far from the neat little town of Barrington. There is hut, lodge and bunkhouse accommodation, and lots of camping sites many of which are on the river. It's a bit rough and ready, but the showers were hot and we managed to enjoy them even though there were a few large groups there until the Sunday afternoon. Once they all left, we had the place to ourselves.



Arriving Sunday after lunch was a good move so we set up next to a camp shelter with benches and a sink. In the afternoon it was time to explore some of the launch sites further upstream with the view to fishing there over the next two days. We drove well up river, but the water is more suited to white water kayakers with big drop offs and lots of adrenalin rush. No thanks, we'll pass, too hard and risky.

On Monday morning we launched at the Rocky Crossing ford, well upstream of Barrington, but nice and safe for us lot. We fished up as far as possible. Eventually the rapids became too hard so we retreated and fished downstream until midday. The Barrington is a very pretty river, but only two Bass were landed from memory, tough fishing. One thing we did notice though was the cold water, hmmm not good.

Gordon was flying back home out of Williamstown late Monday, so a quick trip down mid afternoon had him on his way. On my return a surprise was in store.

To make Monday night on the Barrington a bit more memorable Chris our chef extraordinaire decided to cook a leg of lamb. A two-kilo leg mind you, complete with baked potatoes, sweet potato and pumpkin all cooked in two disposable aluminium roasting containers buried in the coals. It took around 2-3 hours, but was well worth the wait. Absolutely fantastic, chased down with numerous glasses of red and finished with steaming hot tea, coffee, pieces of dark chocolate and a delightful local port from Stroud, complements of Chris. Beat that guys, better than sausages and eggs.



WRAPPING THE ROAST



STARTING THE FIRE



KEEP FANNING



DINNER, JUST AMAZING



On Tuesday, we fished the Barrington from camp down to Relfs Road arriving there slightly wet mid-afternoon. The rapids were safe, but some of us did a little sub surface paddling. A great trip, pretty as, but alas not many bass. I managed to bag one. From memory so did Al and Garnet, can't remember about Chris.

CHEERS CHRIS - THANKS



THE BARRINGTON



NICE & EASY



A BARRINGTON BASS, ALL SMALL



OUR BEST FISHING MATE GARNET – NOW DECEASED



LOADING UP AT RELF'S LANE.

At this point it was obvious that no matter how hard we tried the results were going to be ordinary, so we decided to pack up and head home. The weather was fantastic with wonderful sunny days and cool nights. The fishing was ordinary and we were tired after the Manning, but you can't have everything. We fished lots of new spots and saw some pretty country. No complaints really.

As it turned out there was lots of Bassin', quite a bit of drinkin' & heaps of paddlin'. I went to the Manning with a sore back and came home cured. Must have been all that paddlin'.

Great company, lots of laughs and wonderful memories. Unfortunately, we don't do these great trips anymore. Life has become more complicated, the young guys have

married, now have families and can't get away whilst the older ones have the time, but don't have the will or the energy. We must all turn over a new leaf asap.

And now with the ever-increasing threat of Covid 19 who knows when we will be able get back to our normal life style.

Cheers Milton.



# The Big Trip, March 2020

HS Tham

I had been looking forward to my trip for a long time. My annual March trip away has been put on hold for last 4yrs for various reasons. 2020 was going to be it, but with the bushfires in December & January and then floods in February, it was looking like “where the hell can I go to catch a fish or two?” South Coast is out. A lot of the Mid-North Coast rivers also had large fires. I found that the Tweed catchment was one that had largely escaped the fires. It was in serious drought though, but the Plan was starting to crystalize when another spanner hit the works – coronavirus pandemic!! My plan when I left Sydney on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> March was as follows –

1. Lostock Dam with Greg Rouland for two nights
2. Leave Tuesday, 17/3/20 with Greg returning home and I continue up the coast to a mate's place near Murwillumbah.
3. Relax Wed, 18/3/20
4. Clarrie Hall dam on Thursday, 19/3/20
5. Solo day on the Tweed River above Uki on Friday, 20/3/20.
6. After fishing the Tweed, I will leave for Burleigh Heads, staying with old friends.
7. Some canal fishing or some freshwater around the Gold Coast over the next few days?
8. I was hoping to catch up with and fish with a couple of people from fishing forums while I was in Qld, but I couldn't arrange anything.
9. Leave Qld mid-week heading to Forster to fish with the Bream Queen of Forster.
10. Any time left over, I may spend another day or two at Lake St Clair before returning home.

Coronavirus changed most of the above! Essentially, my whole second week of holidays was cancelled. With talks of closing internal borders, I decided I had to leave and get back home before I'm unable to do so. So, I left Burleigh on Monday, 23/3/20 and after a monster drive, I got home Monday night.

*The following is what I managed to do in the first week, up to the day before I left Qld.*

## **Lostock Dam**

I arrived at the dam caravan park in the early arvo and Greg arrived half an hour later. Greg had his tinny so I didn't have to use the yaks at all this leg. The dam camping ground is actually on the river below the dam, but it's only a couple of minutes' drive from camp to the dam boat ramp. I booked us a cabin (on-site van) for \$55 per night. It was a pretty festy cabin, but it was OK for our purpose. There was plenty of room with a covered area outside, table, chairs, BBQ. The cabin had a microwave, jug, toaster, pots & pans, crockery, cutlery & fridge. It also had a double bed and two single bunks.



Brian, Milton & Alan and Les (from HNF) were there a few days before us. They had a pretty good few days. Their advice was to fish the gently-sloping banks and points where they had success with various subsurface and surface offerings. Our first arvo was a little windy and overcast with S/SE breeze. Normally, tough conditions for bass fishing. So it proved with a lot of casts unanswered.

That is, until Greg hooked up on a Jackall TN50 lipless crankbait (LCB). A nice bass that was 38-39cm FL was landed and then another bass around 34cm FL. LCB's are a lure that I have not used much. In fact, one of the earliest lures I ever bought after starting to lurefish for Australian freshwater species was a Cotton Cordell Rattlin' Spot that I've had for nearly 30yrs without ever landing a fish on it!



Greg's 39cm



Greg's 34cm

Eventually, I avoided a donut by landing a small bass in the 200's on a SSC.



The next day dawned cool, wet & windy. It is to be the one full day we had. It really was tough with wind, rain, then sun, then rain, wind, sun then repeat all day. We couldn't work out a pattern the previous day and it was even harder this day. However, somehow, I land 6 bass on the day with Greg missing out. With Greg's success on the LCB the previous day, I also tried one. I happened to have a few LCB's in my tackle box so I tied one on, a 50mm River2Sea LCB that I've never used after winning it in a raffle.



Cool, rainy Monday, 16/3/20



1<sup>st</sup> bass on the R2S LCB



It didn't take that long and I land my first bass of the day on the R2S LCB, a healthy bass in the 200's. I was to land 3 bass on the R2S LCB, another in the 200's AND a 45 forker!

It was the largest bass I've caught, dam or river, since my PB in 2015. Wasn't much of a fight though as it headed straight into a semi-submerged plant. I thought it would get away as it took ages to get it out from the vegetation.

As is the way, I then lost the R2S LCB to a snag!! What now!? I pick out the 30yr old Rattlin' Spot which is heavier and larger at ~60mm and tie it on my baitcaster outfit. I was to land another 3 bass on the Rattlin' Spot! It only took nearly 30yrs to come good, landing 2 in the 200's and a 41 forker. We explored right upriver which wasn't fruitful. Water quality seemed to decline upriver too.

Fishing luck is a funny thing at times. Greg got 2 nice fish on the first arvo while I land 6 on Monday and he only had a couple of hookups. We weren't doing much different to each other and even casting accuracy is largely irrelevant in this dam situation.

We were to check out of our cabin the next day, Tuesday. Greg & I decided that if the day looked good, we will fish the morning before heading our separate ways. If it looked like rain & wind again, we would give it a miss.



41cm bass on the Rattlin' Spot



Small bass on the Rattlin' Spot

Tuesday looked beautiful so we packed up and left the caravan park. Les turned up as we were launching at the ramp. We don't know how he went that day, but in spite of the seemingly good weather, we struggled. The good weather didn't last long either and the wind soon came up. Again, we couldn't work out the pattern. I'm not good at that. I was to only land 2 bass that morning. We had cast to the occasional swirl or boof we can see for no result. Greg had a couple of goes when we did see any activity. I eventually saw a good swirl close to the bank. I picked up the spin rod and cast a Sammy to the swirl. The Sammy casts very well on the spin outfit and a long cast landed close to where we saw the swirl. I gave it a twitch and it was smashed and after a good fight, I land a beautiful 43cm bass. I ended the day with a small bass slow rolling a Slimswimz.



43Cm Sammy fish

We got back to the ramp just before midday. Les nowhere to be seen. For our first trip to Lostock for both of us, and not being a dam fisho myself, I felt we did OK. We had tough conditions yet I landed 9 bass with 3 fish over 40cm and the rest in the 200's (nothing in the 300's!). Definitely worth another trip or two. The skirted jig bite didn't happen (yes, I tried). It is a different dam to St Clair, with the main difference being the lack of stands of dead trees. Those St Clair trees had great surface action.

I left the dam by around 1215h and had a long drive north. Thanks for your company Greg! Always nice to fish with you.

### **Far North Coast**

After a big drive, I got to an old friend's little farm near the village of Uki, a cute village on the banks of the upper Tweed R, upstream of Murwillumbah. Suffice to say my mate Col is "eccentric" and the accommodation, always an adventure!

I took the next day "off" spending it with Col, walking around his farm, doing a bit of stuff that needed doing, patting his cows, enjoying his company, checking out his latest engineering projects, etc. I had arranged for another old mate, Kit who I was to visit next in Burleigh Heads, to come down with his pedal yak to fish Clarrie Hall dam. I had brought both of my yaks and I was to use my big Native Watercraft pedal yak while Col would paddle my Bass yak. Kit is not a super-keen fisho and after a health crisis a couple of years ago, bought a cheap pedal yak. He had only used it once or twice since he had it. So Thursday was to be the Clarrie Hall dam day and then I was going to do a solo float down the Tweed on Friday.

It was a beautiful day for our Clarrie Hall day. We met Kit @ 7:30am in Uki and drove 5mins up the road to the dam wall. We paddled around for the next few hours with varying degrees of fishing effort displayed by the various people. I was desperate to catch a fish and even more for either of Col & Kit to catch a fish. Not to be! None of us got a bite of any sort and we gave up by around midday. The other 2 weren't disappointed at all! They just enjoyed the beauty, peace & quiet and pedalling/paddling around. We then gave the spillway a go with me hooking a nice bass on a buzzbait only to see my knot give way, losing both fish & buzzer.



Clarrie Hall dam, with Mt Warning in background



The boys

Friday saw me leave earlyish, with Col driving my car. He was to drop me and then I will call to be picked up. I have fished about half of his stretch of the Tweed in 2014 with Brad (Leper from KFDU & Yakbass) and BS member Damian. It was a lovely stretch with some damn good fish landed. On that occasion, we yakfished down the river until a point when we had to return to the launch site. I have always wanted to redo that stretch but to float right through. I had mapped it and found 3 possible exit points – first one around 7k, next one in the village of Uki around 8k and the third one around 9k. I will have phone reception for most of this stretch. I wasn't sure how long it would take me.

The Tweed had flooding recently and the water level was very good but looking a bit stained and felt cool. This day was also tough. Started nicely with a platypus sighting on the very first pool after launching, but very little action and nothing on surface. It took an hour before I land a small bass on a jigspin then a second one from the same snag.

This stretch is beautiful and is hard to believe that the action was so slow. After quite a while, I got to one of the best corners in the whole stretch. It was where Leper and I got a double hookup in 2014. This time, the SSC was ignored until I switched to the jigspin. It was taken by a monster fish that peeled serious drag before bricking me in undercut bank and slipped the hook. There was nothing I could do. A bit like me, bream and Cranka Crabs! So I lost the only decent fish of the day. After much portaging, filling the yak at a rapids, and battling through pain and cramps, I got to the first exit point. It took longer than expected and I was exhausted. Getting too old for this stuff!! I call Col and he came to get me.



Bank erosion from the recent floods



After thanking Col and laden with a few pumpkins, I set off for the short drive to Burleigh Heads where Kit and his wife Lyn live.

### **Gold Coast**

Lyn & Kit are very old friends. In fact, Lyn was my “Best Person” at my wedding many years ago. Lyn is a Professor of Genetics at QUT in Brisbane. She bought a house in Red Hill which is where she lives during the week. Kit mainly lives in Burleigh during the week. I had hoped to see their Brisbane residence during the second week of Leave.

By the time I got to the Gold Coast, the coronavirus pandemic had amped up considerably. Widespread hysteria mixed in with obvious indifference when I walked around the cafes, shops and restaurants which were, at that stage, still pumping. My original plan was to do some canal fishing (bream, jacks...) and maybe some bassing, but it was apparent through that weekend that things were turning very serious and I needed to get home before they close state borders! I had a lovely weekend anyway – eating, drinking and playing lots of mah jong. Kit and I managed to get out on the canals around Tweed Heads for only 2 or 3hrs. I worked the marina next to our launch spot with a Slimswimz for nothing. I then switched to a Hurricane crab and targeted the rock walls and pontoons/jetties. First cast at a rock wall saw the crab taken virtually on impact. A legal bream was landed after a good fight. Hmmm are the Qld bream stronger than their Sydney counterparts? A few minutes later, a cast to a pontoon and moored boat saw it taken and a hefty bream, nudging 40cm TL was landed after another strong tussle, but this bream made a fatal mistake by running out into the clear water instead of going back under the jetty.

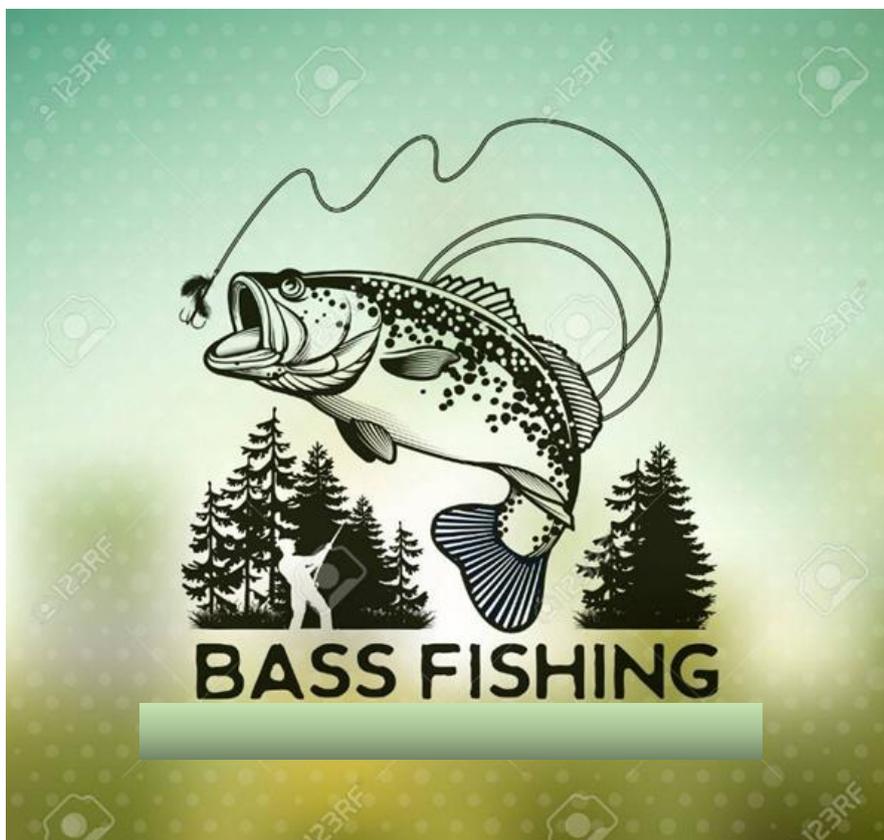
I left Burleigh on Monday, 23/3/20 for the massive drive all the way to Sydney and home. No SEQ bass.



No Forster bream fishing with Roberta. No second bite of Hunter Valley bass dams. My first big trip in 4yrs didn't quite pan out as I had hoped, but it was still great to get away. I return to a Sydney transformed. The following week is back to work, but I've been working from home since then. When will this crisis be at an end? Will our lives go back to "normal"?



HS Tham



## Yakin' The Flats Surface Style

*Chris Ghosn fishes the NSW flats armed with his kayak & spin rod in search of surface feeding estuary species.*

To my way of thinking the ideal fishing location would be one that consists of crystal clear water and pure white sand flats. This type of scene conjures up images of a tropical paradise & exotic destinations. For many years I would watch videos about species such as tarpon, permit and bonefish from overseas. I always wanted to do this, but could never really envisage the travel involved. Once the phenomena of fishing for whiting on poppers started, it changed the way us southerners viewed our estuaries as we had the opportunity to partake in the same method utilised in other areas on the more glamorous species, but right in our own backyard for classic aussie fish.

Recently I had a chance to visit a beautiful estuary along the mid north coast of NSW, a classic location that had acres of sand flats surrounded by gin clear water with a strong tidal flow. I was excited about the opportunity and was well armed with a light flick stick and an abundance of surface lures. We used our kayaks to push out past the deeper water so we could work our lures back across the flats to take advantage of the run - out tide. With the water swiftly draining out to sea I worked my pencil popper across the surface trying to imitate a fleeing prawn. I put plenty of action into it making the lure move constantly and making it spit water intermitently. I made a cast into the shallowest area I had come across



during the morning session and when only a few cranks in it was boofed in spectacular fashion sending water flying. It was exactly like a barramundi bite but only 1500 km south of the nearest barra river. Once the fish hit the lure it made a blistering first run absolutely smoking me across the flats. My rod arced in unusual fashion as the fish was only in a few centimeters of water. I was getting quite concerned about losing the fish so I paddled to an exposed piece of sand and decided to fight the fish from the bank. After a short fight I managed to subdue the fish and slide it up on the bank.

I was presented with 75cms of prime mega flathead that took a liking to my prawn imitation. What a start I thought - with the tide quickly depleting I didn't want to waste any time so I quickly released the big girl and jumped back into the yak to start casting again. My target species was whiting, but given the fight I just experienced I wasn't all that fussy. A few minutes later I really had the knack of getting my lure to work across the water the way I wanted it to and I was starting to get follows - the only problem was they were chasing it right to the kayak and



I would run out of water. It was getting quite frustrating. Next time I cast with the wind & was able to make a longer cast, once the lure hit the water I really dialled into working the lure at its optimum performance. Out of nowhere it was attacked from the side. This time there was no mistaking what species - it was the white almost transparent flash that gave it away - it was a stud whiting & I just could not believe how these things go on the surface. It was a very solid legal fish. It's amazing how hard these things can pull as they are little torpedoes in the water.



The reality being, fishing flats is nothing new as we all have likely fished a flat of some description, and they are everywhere and provide a great source of food for fish. The location is nothing new, but I guess the way we can fish it has changed, particularly for southern estuary species. If this was an article about fishing in the tropical north then it would be totally different as it has all been

done before. I think for us southerners the other thing that makes it appealing is we can have some fun fishing the topwater. Whilst they may have species like golden trevally, permirt, queen fish & a myriad of others that are big & can pull some string. Whilst southern estuary species lack size they certainly make up for in the excitement that you obtain by targeting them. Any style of surface fishing is highly addictive and in my opinion the best fishing you can do. Not only is it a lot of fun but it has now become, in some scenarios, as productive as using other methods & it has a distinct knack of producing a better quality fish. It is always worth noting that fish are generally only on the flats for one reason, which is to eat, so always take confidence in that the fish are there and are hungry.

### **Flats Outfits**

Gear for the flats need not be ultra-specific, but I do reckon there are a few considerations that need to be made. Long rods are definitely a benefit, 6'6" and up. I use a 7 foot rod generally & I know people these days are using as long as 8 foot rods. My personal preference is not that long, but I do like one that is a touch crisper than normal and reason for this is for the action I am trying to get out of the lure. If the rods are a bit softer it tends to hesitate to impart the amount of action required. There is a number of factors to contend



with whilst fishing on saltwater flats as you have wind, wave chop etc therefore nothing is a constant, so by having that slightly stiffer rod it helps with getting the lure out a long way and worked in such a fashion that will elicit a strike. In terms of rod sizes it hard to always use this as a guide because they do vary so much now, but ideally 1-3kg through to a max of 3-5kg, but as long as it's a light rod it will do the job. Outside of rods, quality sunglasses are a must, to not only spot fish, but to look for likley areas and it also helps keep the sun glare from annoying you. Leaders are an important consideration too. Whilst normally lighter & thinner is the go when it comes to this style of fishing, and results favour using heavier stiffer line, and using a loop knot tied directly to the lure, this is against the standard norms of finesse fishing, but this is a different kettle of fish, pardon the pun, and after a lot of experimenting can definitely say that opting for the heavier approach yields more fish. I think this is due to the fact that the lure tracks straighter and you don't get the lag at the start of your retrieve. The added benefit is if you hook a big flathead you have extra security of the heavier line to assist against an abrasive mouth. I use a 10 -14lb leader with strong preference for heavier fluoro carbon leaders.

## Lures

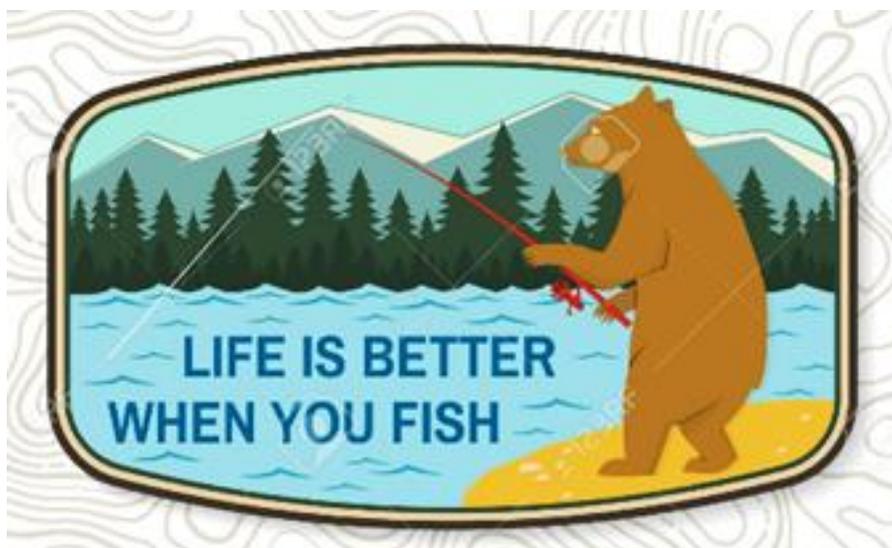
Fortunately, for us anglers there is now a great array of lures on the market to suit this style of fishing. Traditional cup faced poppers still have a place and it's what I started using. I think it is a great place to start particularly those in the 50mm size bracket. They are easy to use & there is a lot on the market by various manufacturers. I always have some in my lure box. However these days my favourite lures for working the flats are the prawn style stick baits with my favourite being the sugar pen 70. In terms of colours, I like clear colours with reddish purple through them. I also like natural looking colours as well when there is a little more cloud cover. When it comes to hooks, retro fitting lures with jig style hooks and removing the trebles is a great way to go. I have found it has increased hook up rates by at least 50%.



## **Yakin' Around**

Utilising the kayak in flats country is a significant advantage as it not only gets you out to the flats, but allows you to travel to other areas where you can either fish from the kayak or get out and fish from the bank. Being prepared is important, having some easily accessed pliers to release the fish is a must. You need to be well organised to not only release the fish quickly and safely, but it also allows you to get back into the action when you're on a hot bite. The kayak is a very stealth way to approach the flats and put you right on top of fish with little effort, providing the perfect platform to cast from. My last flats session included a real mixed bag of bream, whiting and flathead and in the process drifted over several other species that I was able to spot cruising along. I was working my lure when a pack of marauding whiting chased it time after time with out hooking up. It was exciting, but frustrating at the same time. I made a cast into slightly deeper water and the same thing happened again, this time I stopped the lure, pausing it for only a moment and when I went to retrieve it it was smashed in an instant - my little reel erupted and the fish pulled line at will. As I got it closer to my kayak I was expecting a whiting but came across a solid nuggety bream. The slightly different retrieve is what had done the damage, bream are suckers for a paused lure whilst whiting have a strong preference for the lure to be constantly moving. Making lots of casts is the name of the game. Don't waste time when you're on the water - take advantage of the tide and keep working your lure because you're only one cast away from catching a fish.

Kayaks provide the perfect vessel for fishing the flats. Using surface lures on the flats is a challenging and exciting method - it does not require a lot of gear, just one rod loaded with your favorite lure and you're away. Its proactive fishing & once your lure is hit, you will want to come back for more.



## BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Alan Fowkes

When Bass Sydney signed up for regeneration of the Russell Street site it was always a long term commitment. We undertook to work the site for at least 10 years and, whilst we're not there yet, we are rapidly approaching the 9 years mark – July 2011 was our first session.

Whilst it's always wise to set a timeframe when planning any undertaking, the reality is this project is not about fulfilling a time commitment but rather about leaving a legacy.

In past issues we've talked about creating structure at all levels through our weeding and planting efforts. We've talked about the importance of vegetation as a food source, as cover, and as a link in the wider food chain that supports life in both the terrestrial and aquatic spheres.

What we haven't yet talked about is the importance of vegetation as a site for nesting.

Different bird species have different nesting needs. The Brown Quail we talked about last issue nest at ground level. Australian Reed Warblers, not surprisingly, nest in the reeds. Many small birds like Silvereyes and Fairy-wrens nest in large shrubs or small trees. Other birds build nests high in the tree tops or rely on hollows in mature trees.

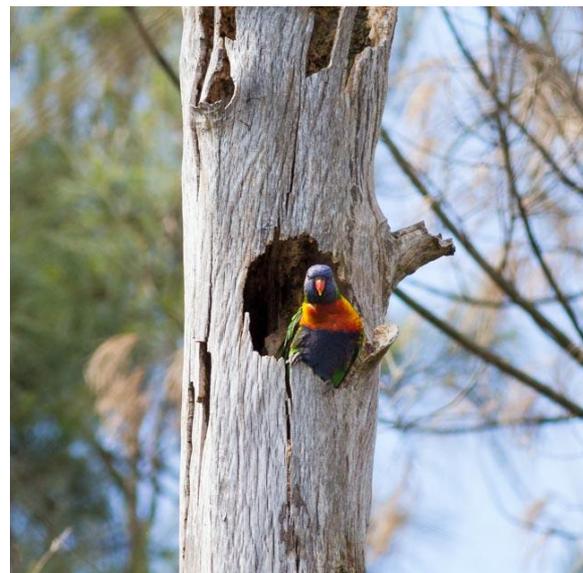
Our legacy must accommodate all of these needs.

Some of our plantings are already at a size and density where they could accommodate certain nest types. Other areas have been preserved as is (i.e. weedy!) to fulfil nesting needs.

But, of course, the generation of tall trees is beyond the time scale of our project. None of us will live long enough to see the eucalypts we've planted reach full maturity. This is the preserve of "legacy" – of doing what we do now so that needs may be met in the future.

Hopefully, some of the large trees we've planted will live long enough to be the site of nesting hollows in the making (such as by the galah on the left) or continue in death to provide nesting opportunities such as that for the Rainbow Lorikeet on the right.

Rome wasn't built in a day ...



Till next time.

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