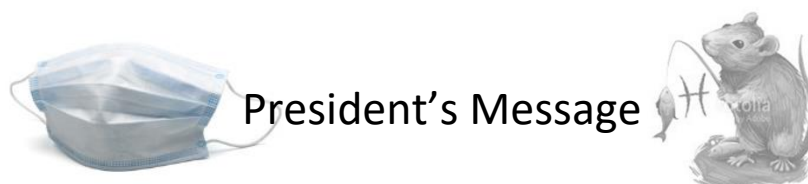




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President's Message

As we crawl slowly towards another bass season, many of us are desperate to start bassing again. The last bass season was a total disaster – drought, followed by fires, followed by floods and finished off by the global pandemic!!! Months into the pandemic, we have been teased by low infection rates initially but as the end of July looms, the situation is rapidly going downhill again. Victoria is locked down and we in NSW are looking nervously around to see if we will join Vic in experiencing high infection rates again. I wish us ALL the best of luck over the next few months.

We were going to have our first meeting in many months in August, but after some consideration, the Committee has decided to leave that until October. Hopefully, we will also be able to have our BassCatch on that month. The Committee has been nutting out the club calendar for 2020/2021 and I hope we can put it out, belatedly, this month. I may not be able to get out on club outings for a month or three as I have a major operation due in late August but I hope as many members as possible will avail themselves to the calendar events and have some fun.

Lastly, our bush care is starting up again this month. We need as many people as possible to lend a hand at our site in the next few months. If you missed August, please consider helping out at another month.

Blazeaid – A Very Worthwhile Volunteer Experience: Part 1.

Doug Chang

I was looking for a way to contribute to the drought and bushfire relief efforts back in early December and came across the Blazeaid initiative. I gave it a go for four days and found it a fantastic experience, which I hope to repeat again soon.

Blazeaid is one of the biggest volunteer organizations in Australia and was setup in response to the Victorian bushfires of 2009 by Kevin and Rhonda Butler who were amazed at the volunteer response to their need for assistance in rebuilding fences on their property.

My experience with Blazeaid started with their website www.blazeaid.com.au and a call to the Camp Co-coordinator at Wingham (closest camp to Sydney at that time). The website is full of information and John was very helpful. It is a very flexible arrangement, as you just need to show up at a camp with 24 hours notice and supply own tent, swag or caravan. Breakfast and dinner at the camp is provided and ingredients for your own lunch and snacks to take to the worksite are also given. It is very well organized with plenty of safety gear, spare clothing (even boots) available at the camp I was at, along with a very detailed safety briefing each morning before you head out in teams to the worksite. Blazeaid is very safety conscious with the volunteers.

Most of the Blazeaid volunteers are grey nomads with their own caravans onsite but during my time at Wingham there were also a number of university students on holidays and some overseas tourists who stayed in tents. People of all ages and walks of life come together to help others in need and you can really sense the feeling of making a meaningful contribution among the volunteers. There was even one couple who drove all the way from Melbourne to Wingham to help for two days. Unfortunately, with the most recent fires around New Year, they will probably be needed at camps much closer to home in Victoria now. I took along a simple stretcher swag, which I pitched under a quiet shelter at our main camp in the Wingham Showground. It has very good facilities including brand new shower block that was much appreciated by all after a hot dusty day in the field.



We went out to affected farms in teams of four or more with the main jobs being to remove old burnt out fences and replace them with star picket posts, wire and barbed wire and install some strainer posts. You quickly learn what is needed with farmers having their own specific fencing requirements. The work is not too strenuous and definitely a case of more hands makes light work. One farmer told me our team of eight was able to replace as much fencing in one day that would take him and his wife at least 2-3 weeks to do. No fencing experience is necessary and farmers are pretty patient in explaining to volunteers what is needed.

Many of the volunteers are in their 60s so the work is carefully paced and each team has a fully kitted out Blazeaid trailer full of the required tools including a “star picket whacker” which makes things much easier. You quickly build a great sense of team work with your group of volunteers and each evening when everyone gathers back at camp over a cold beer, we relay how much fencing each team completed in the day with friendly competition and exaggeration being the norm. I soon learned that a Blazeaid metre is a somewhat flexible concept but on average each team removes and installs between 200-500m of wire fencing in a day depending on terrain.



At both properties, the farming couples were very grateful and touched at the efforts of the volunteers and when you hear first hand from them at their difficulties through the drought and then bushfires you quickly realize how every little bit of assistance is much appreciated. The teams get real satisfaction each day in making a tangible difference to people in need.

I was shocked at the extent of the fires during both my drive into Taree then each day along the narrow roads to each farm and how close it came to many homes. Being a city slicker all my life, I have rarely appreciated just what impact drought and bushfires can have.

The organizers of the camps are doing a wonderful job managing both the volunteers and also leasing with the local farmers in need of help – some of whom are doing it very tough

both financially and mentally. There is a great team spirit among the volunteers and real sense of making a meaningful contribution to others. Each night we have a wonderful two course meal cooked by volunteers who stay at camp and on other nights, local groups come in to cook such as local primary and high school teachers manning the bbq for us. The local community really appreciates the efforts of volunteers as I noticed a regular stream of locals coming in donating cakes, snacks etc to us.

The satisfaction you get from helping people in real need can't be matched. I'm hoping that in my next trip to Blazeaid will be with my 17 year old son and maybe some of his mates so that not only do they get a chance to camp out, but to see what rural life is about and the impact of the drought and bushfires on people's lives well way from their usual suburban existence.

The Blazeaid website www.blazeaid.com.au is full of information on what you need to do and bring if interested.

Since this article I have gotten more involved with BlazeAid by helping setting up a camp down at Milton in January followed by becoming the co-coordinator for the Kangaroo Valley Camp in February 2020 till June through the virus. This is another big story in itself, which I will cover, in a separate article.



Dreaming of Bass Season

Steve Peach

It's the depths of winter in Sydney at the moment, and a low-pressure system is pouring down rain all along the east Australian coast. Not much of a time to be out fishing, but about this time of year I start yearning for the opening of the bass season on the 1st September. These are wild bass in our coastal rivers, you can still fish for stocked impoundment bass over winter as they are unable to spawn per the picture below. But the wild river bass are really special, and fishing for them is very different to their stocked impoundment cousins.



In September when the season opens, many of the wild fish are likely still lower down in the brackish water, waiting for a good spring rain or perhaps some big spring tides to make their way back up the rivers to the fresh. The fishing in September is often not that easy, but it never seems to dampen my enthusiasm. At this time of year, the action is all sub-surface, sinking minnow patterns around snags or rock walls and fluttering them in front of the bass. It's about getting the fly right into the structure and then fishing it slowly, keeping it in the strike zone as long as possible. I like slow sinking or hovering rabbit strip patterns, particularly in olive, with a bit of flash – but the main thing is it needs to move enticingly in the water without too much effort, so natural materials like rabbit strip or marabou work really well. The bass almost invariably hit the fly on the pause, and the strike and the fight can be savage!



When the weather starts warming up in early summer comes a real highlight of the bass season – the first sound of cicadas in the trees. Once you hear them start to sing, it’s time to tie on a surface fly, particularly a cicada pattern.

By this time of year many of the bass have moved back up the rivers to the fresh water, though there are significant numbers of bass who remain in the tidal reaches of the systems all year.

Cast the cicada in tight to cover, particularly under overhanging trees. On the bright summer days, the key is to find the shady patches where the bass will sit on structure. This is not like trout fishing, you can slap the fly down on the water with some noise and rather than spook and swim off, a bass will more often come to investigate. Patience is key, after landing the fly in the perfect strike zone it pays to let it sit still for a good while – 10 to 15 seconds typically – before giving it a bit of a twitch and letting it sit again. If nothing happens then a short twitching retrieve will sometimes trigger a strike, but most often the bass hit it while it’s dead drifting. I’ve seen bass come up and sit under the fly for a while with their nose almost touching it, before suddenly and violently engulfing the fly. It’s a truly addictive fishing experience! It will test your skills to get the fly right back in to where the fish are sitting. And the fight to pull bass out of gnarly structure is more like a bar room brawl than your typical refined trout fight.

Land based fishing for wild bass is limited but there are spots where it can be done. A small boat with an electric motor opens up a lot more water, but the best opportunities for bass fishing come with a kayak. It takes a little practice to get used to fly fishing from a kayak, but once you do a whole world of fishing possibilities open up to you. When you invariably catch your fly on a snag or in a tree it’s relatively easy to go in and retrieve it. And you should be doing that often, if you’re not getting snagged or caught up, you’re not trying hard enough!



If you haven’t tried wild bass on fly yet, give it a go, they are a fantastic fly target and one of my all-time favourites. All we need now is for this rain to end and spring to begin, then bring on the bass!

Tight lines guys!

BURRILL LAKE JUNE 17

Matt McHugh

It has been a very strange year. First the bush fires and then the Covid-19 problems. Thankfully for NSW fishermen, we have still been allowed to get out and about. It was a relief though when the lockdown ended, and we were able to travel and see friends.

I was a victim of Covid-19, my job at FOXTEL was ended after 13 years and I was meant to have a knee replacement before the lockdown started. I decided to go ahead with it the minute they allowed elective surgery to start again. As soon as the knee was sufficiently recovered, I was raring to get out. A day trip with Steve Peach in his boat and a few blackfish trips with Doug had me back into it.

As soon as the restrictions were eased Doug and I decided to head for Burrill Lake for 2 nights. We rented a cabin at the Holiday Haven Park right on the lake. The aim of the trip was to target blackfish in the mouth of the lake, explore the back of the lake in the tinny and have a go for drummer on one of the surrounding rock platforms. We took a healthy supply of weed and cabbage with us, thanks to Milton and Brian.

We drove down on a Wednesday in forbidding conditions and arrive to find it windy and cold, but the bridge looked fishable and the tide was rising into a late afternoon high. Most importantly we could see long rods and floats! After checking in we prepped the boat and headed to the ramp. It's 100m from the ramp to the bridge and we moored with two anchors just on the edge of the drop-off and had the reach to ourselves. The fishing was steady and we caught 10 or so, healthy good-sized fish. Most of the fish were on weed with only a few on cabbage. Lots of fun, Doug used his centrepin and



had a good time getting the hang of it. I also used a centrepin and we did well to manage the two of us with long rods in the boat.

That night we headed into Ulladulla for a Schnitz, great value, giant schnitzel meals with great chips. Well worth the visit.

The Thursday forecast was good, so we planned to head up into the lake to look for whatever might eat a lure. Only a couple of casts in and Doug hooks something on a soft plastic. It had a bit of weight to it. I saw a huge silver shape and presumed he had hooked a big EP, before he announced that whatever it was had gotten off. When he pulled it in, he had half a whiting that had been bitten off by something big and with sharp teeth, presumably a decent sized tailor. That was it for the morning, not really anything to report on the lure fishing front in the lake. A summer trip would tell a different story I suspect.



We still had half a day though, and plenty of bait, so we attacked the blackfish again. This time we didn't have the pick of the spots, but we still managed to catch a big bag of them. The most interesting part of the afternoon was seeing some massive flathead in the crystal-clear water just out from the boat ramp. One of them was truly huge, close to a metre, and we saw it several times.

A top day, great company, and beautiful weather, topped off this time by dinner at the Ulladulla Ex Servos Club. Doug had a Lamb's fry and I went for the nachos (which I wouldn't recommend).

We had to head back to Sydney on Friday and out of our cabin by 10:30, but there was an early high tide and some promising rock platforms and gutters close to mouth of the lake screaming "drummer". This time we had a loaf of fresh white bread and some cooked prawns from Coles. We got to the spot



(thanks, Brian, for the tip) when it was still dark and rigged up. The sea looked safe enough and we found the spot safely in the dark. It turned out to be a great drummer spot on the high tide with a very forgiving bottom and some nice white water. I was using a 12-foot 6 wrap Snyder with an Alvey, 19-pound mono, pea sinker straight onto a 1/0 hook. Doug was using something similar. I got a few taps on bread first cast and they felt very much like drummer, they are tricky biters sometimes. It wasn't long before I was into a solid fish, I got stuck into it straight away and kept it clear of the rough mouth of the wash, letting it fight it out in the safer water at the back of the wash. At 40cm it was a solid fish, I'd forgotten how much fun they are to catch, really testing out your gear and skill. I soon got another, almost the same size, and from then on it was a string of undersize fish, Doug also getting amongst them. The tide got out a bit, the sun got up a bit, and that was that.



We packed up and filleted the fish, which took ages as we kept quite a few. And then a leisurely trip back to Sydney via the pie shop in Ulladulla (top pies) and the donut shop in Berry (top donuts)! It was a really good quick get-away, Burrill has plenty of options and a nice spot with Ulladulla only 5 minutes away.

Cheers

Nowendoc River Fishing

Warren Chalmers

From about 1965 I was fishing regularly with a friend, Arthur Abbott, in the Nepean system from Windsor through to Douglas Park. Living in Penrith we fished much of the time in the Castlereagh area in the vicinity of "Nepean Park", the two storey white house built by Joseph Single which withstood the large flood in 1867 and now sits on 40 acres of land excised from the takeover by the Lakes Scheme.

In the mid 1990's Arthur and his wife, Heather, were training to be Grey Nomads and attended many caravan and camping shows. They met up with Mark & Mary Stepowikow who had recently acquired the Knorritt Flat camping resort west of Wingham on the Nowendoc Road, and had some brochures which showed the camping area and recently refurbished small amenities block.

We planned to make a visit as Mark had informed Arthur how good the fishing was in the river. Arthur got involved in changing caravans, modifying them and making small trips prior to many longer trips to FNQ, but did not get to Knorritt's.

Our mutual friend, Geoff James, asked me one day if Arthur and I had any plans formulated, I said, none, as Arthur was about to go away so he suggested that as he was a Mercantile Agent Process Server with an impending commitment to do a 20minute job in Taree which he usually would have subcontracted to an associate in Newcastle, that we leave early one morning, he would do the job in Taree, and then we would go and have a look at Knorritt Flat.

We did this and in the month of October, around 2000, we made our first visit during the week, nobody else at the camping area and caught many bass up to mid-40's in the short run downstream to the first set of rapids. We only fished the evening we arrived, morning and night of the next day, and travelled home the next day. (not bad to hook it onto Geoff's 20min job).

We were back again in 2 weeks, we had established a positive rapport with Mark & Mary who told us nobody else would be there during the week and we could sleep & cook up in the pavilion – seemed too easy and very inviting.

From then on, over the years Mark & Mary would come and have a few drinks and a BBQ with us in the evening.

The amenities were always well maintained, lawns mowed and it was very picturesque among the large paulownia trees which had not been trimmed and allowed to spread.



Knorritt Flat Camping Ground



The Camping Ground Pool

Only two occasions we had company, there was one when we caught the advance party of 2 caravans coming for a family reunion of about 50 people at the weekend. On the other, in November, there was an elderly couple in a van at the downstream end of the camping ground who had a fire going during the day. They came from Taree and used the fire to make Christmas puddings the old way, the mixture was wrapped up like a cannonball in calico and cooked in a boiler for about 2hrs. They had a large family to cater for but gave us a half pudding, very nice. (shows you can meet different people in different places).

By now we were wondering what other parts of the river had to offer, so initially we walked the downstream rapids, went under a low level road bridge and got into a large pool, about 5 acres, which was adjacent to the “Round House”, Mark & Mary’s neighbour on the eastern side.

This house was an electronically propelled roundabout which could have certain rooms programmed to follow or avoid the sun depending on the season, all day. The owner / builder was an electrical contractor who did light and sound for rock concerts and venues. The home featured on "Homes & Gardens" and on the ABC TV Channel a few times. It was very interesting as Geoff and I spent about 2hrs having a look over all the equipment one day with the owner.

This pool was usually productive particularly out in the middle amongst the weed beds.

Mark did tell us he had taken people upstream and dropped them off to travel downstream to the camp. It turned out these were usually young people floating on Li Lo mattresses.

First trip was a little hard as we didn't know the terrain from where he dropped us off at Rock's Crossing. That was of no importance as very early in the day we had a double hook up after evading a brown snake that was swimming across the river and wanted to take a direct line across the Canadian between Geoff and I. It took a couple of smacks with the paddle before I persuaded it to not come aboard (fortunately a wise choice by the snake much to our relief). Geoff being in the bow seat did not see what the commotion was about, the double hook up was Geoff a 48 and Warren a 46, a very good outcome.

We did the Rock's Crossing quite a few times, got ambitious and asked Mark to take us further upstream for a future trip.

Mark took us to McQueen's Bridge on the Nowendoc Road which was actually a crossing over the Rowley's River just below "Number One"

Number One is a cattle property below Cooplacurripa Station, 24,000HA, largest station on the eastern seaboard, up to 8000head purchased by Rifa Salutory (yes, that is Chinese purchased in 2015) and is now for sale again. The objective was to provide beef solely for export to China.

I have heard the Chinese got burnt in this exercise.

As usual, we had no idea of the terrain or how long the trip to Knorritts would take, (no mobile phones with map or GPS apps then), Mark certainly didn't know, but off we went, catching fish, so why worry!

At one point our progress was blocked by a large tree fallen across the river which was only about 5metres wide, the banks were steep so Geoff took a rope downstream while I lifted the canoe bow up onto the log and he pulled and I pushed the Canadian over the log into the water downstream.

Geoff then walked across the log to the western side of the river and started to look around some bushes, I had no idea what he was doing. When he came back to get in the canoe he said while he was pulling on the rope there was a bearded man watching from the cover of the bushes and when Geoff had a look where he had been standing, he could see foot prints (Geoff was a former detective). The bearded man was the infamous Malcolm Naden (maybe a lucky escape for us).

We carried on until we came to the joining of the Rowley's and Nowendoc. We did not know we were at the junction because it was obscured by a large growth of bottlebrush and the stronger current coming in from the Nowendoc swept us sideways, smashing us into rocks and tipping the canoe. Geoff was thrown out and I managed to stay in the canoe half full of water and swim it to a sandy beach. Geoff joined me about 5mins later, his clothes covered in brown and green slime off the rocks in which he had been tumbling about (like in a washing machine) in. (much to our families dismay, we didn't wear life jackets then – times have changed now though)

Crashing into the rocks put a split about a foot long in the fibreglass, but as it happened when the canoe was half full of water it was ultimately (and thankfully) above the waterline. It did not trouble us, had it patched when we got back home. Once we got down to Rock's Crossing, we had an idea of the time frame and made it back to camp. We opted to not fish that night, it had been a big and wet day.



Tricky water upstream of the camping ground



A lovely pool near the camping ground

We never fished the large pool at the camping ground, where children & dogs swam during the day, but I am aware that our fellow member, Chris Ghosn, caught a 530-fork measurement in the pool one night.



Sometime in between the Knorritt Flat fishing we tried Wingham upstream to Abbott's Falls, the last of the tidal water. Found that to be occasionally good but tide was critical.

On various occasions we gave this area a severe flogging as we had met and a talk with David Seaman and his fishing companion, Brian Everingham. David lived at Halliday's Point and he fished there quite often and was very successful with nocturnal fishing. We never fished a night.

On occasions we fished downstream towards Cedar Party Creek but were plagued by lousy flathead!

I have a friend, David, who lives at Wingham and fishes well upstream on Cooplacurripa (he has connections) but it is fishing on foot and terribly hard going. May be this year the Nowendoc / Manning will be good as there is no weed at the present time.



A great time to be on the Nowedoc casting surface lures

Without a canoe and limited to a small boat I think fishing there will be only in the Wingham / Abbott's Falls section when we get the word. Previously when fishing there we have stayed at the Wingham Hotel, half a km from the Wingham Brush boat ramp, and had meals (and a beer or two) at the Australian Hotel and New Moon Chinese.

When can I go again?

Warren

Bents Basin Working Bee

26th of September 2020

8:30am -12:30pm

Where: 525 Wolstenholme Ave,
GREENDALE NSW 2745.

<https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Bents+Basin+Camping/@-33.9328177,150.6410219,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x9d095e8241ef2013!8m2!3d-33.9328177!4d150.6410219>



On Saturday the 26th will be our third working bee with Bents Basin State Conservation Area.

We will gather at the office by the main gate at 0830 for a quick briefing and Covid-19 procedures, then head over to the work site. The worksite location may be different from the one shown on the Google image. Work will finish around 1230 followed by a BYO BBQ lunch. There will be a lucky door prize for all attending the working bee and will be drawn at lunch time.



Bring a wide rim hat, long sleeve shirt, gloves, water and sturdy (work) shoes. All tools needed are provided on the day, however this will be confirmed in due course.

There is time afterwards to cast a line and catch a few fish or drive down to Wallacia and launch your kayak there. Kids and partners more than welcome, the more the merrier!!

Any questions please contact.

Rico on 0424 339 053

or

Tham on 0423 347 922

Members of Bass Sydney and any visitors participate in this Event at their own risk and are solely responsible for their own safety and should be aware and compliant with current maritime safety rules such as use of personal floatation devices. Members and visitors should make their own decision about safety requirements and whether conditions on the day of the event are suitable or not for their participation. Participation in this event is purely voluntary and at the sole discretion of the member or the visitor. Neither Bass Sydney Fishing Club Incorporated nor any of its organising Committee members accept any liability whatsoever for any accident, harm or damage otherwise suffered by any member or visitor because of participating or attending this event.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2020/2021

BS Outings Calendar 2020/2021			
Month	Date	Outings	Comments
August	28-30/8/20	Lostock or St Clair	Committee to organise
September	6/09/20 & 26/9/20	Bass Season Opener - Colo R Bents Basin volunteer day	Colo R 6/9/20 Bents Basin 26/9/20
October	Capt Baldy - Oct Long Wkend & H- N BassCatch 17 & 18/10/20	H-N BassCatch + Capt Baldy's Trout	H-N BassCatch - camping at Shaw's Farm? Capt Baldy's Trout - Tham to organise (Oct Long Weekend 3 - 5th Oct)
November	LCR - 14/11, Williams BC 21 & 22/11/20?	LCR BassCatch + Williams BassCatch + Shoalhaven/Clyde weekend	LCR BassCatch & after-hours key. Choice of Shoalo/Clyde or Williams R BassCatch
December	Xmas dinner - 8/12/20, Bidgee 26- 28/12/20	Xmas dinner + Murrumbidgee Cod trip	M'bidgee weekend. Details TBC
January	16/1/21	Georges R day outing	
February	wkend 20 & 21/2/21	H-N BassCatch	H-N BassCatch - camping at Bents Basin?
March	5-7/3/21 & 20 & 21/3/21??	Karuah R or Manning R & Williams BC	TBC
April	3/4/21	Middle Harbour day	Roseville launch
May	7-9/5/21	Wyangala dam trip (cod, GP's & carp in dam & trout in tailrace)	Cabins available at Wyangala Waters C'van Park, next to dam wall.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Alan Fowkes

It was one of those beautiful, balmy summer afternoons on the river somewhere downstream of Russell Street.

We were working our way slowly and contentedly towards the top of the pool, casting to the edges and enjoying some success. Under a breathless sky, dragonflies flitted just above the glassy surface and moorhens dabbled peacefully in the weed beds. There was no hint of the carnage to come.

It came quickly and silently. A shadow passed over us from behind and grew rapidly in size as two metres of wing span sped lower. There was a splash and a purposeful beating of wings as the adult White-bellied Sea-Eagle lifted back into the sky clutching one unsuspecting moorhen in its talons.

Many years later, I'm still waiting to experience this sort of action again and yet I'm sure it happens every day on the Hawkesbury /Nepean. I imagine you've all seen these majestic birds out on the river and they clearly don't go hungry.

Of course, the White-bellied Sea-Eagle is just one of many bird of prey species that inhabit the area. I've sighted seven different species at Russell Street so far and I haven't yet seen the Osprey that Margaret told me about!

Whilst the Sea-Eagle (and the Osprey) is adept at plucking victims from the water, they and others can also be seen hovering over the open fields of the floodplain or perched on high vantage points looking for rabbits, mice, lizards, snakes or birds that might make a tasty meal.

The Black-shouldered Kite below at left was one of several species seen cruising the thermals that day whilst the Swamp Harrier at right (1st year plumage) was seen to plunge into long grass on the bank below our first plantings. Perhaps the fact that he came up empty that time explains the angry stare – or more likely he/she doesn't like blokes pointing long lenses at them!



Till next time.

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