

October 2020

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President's Message



Welcome to the new bass season! I hope it's better than the last one! By all indications it should be a good one with no drought and we're officially in La Nina. We just need to survive COVID-19! I have not been out bassing yet and anticipate that the Bass Catch will be my first bass outing for the season. I'm looking forward to it as I don't recall the last time it has taken me until the October Bass Catch before I get on the water after our bronze battlers.

I hope we get a good attendance at Bass Catch. I think it's very important that we get out on the water, out in our tents or campervans and that we get together as a group to celebrate surviving 2020 and importantly, to re-build some social bonds that have been difficult to maintain with lockdowns, social distancing and lack of face-to-face meetings.

So, please make an effort to fish the
Bass Catch
 and to get together with your club mates.

Bents Basin

By Rico

After a year of cancellations, bushfires, floods and now Covid, we finally managed some bush regeneration at Bents Basin on Saturday September 26th.

The turnout was great and thank you to the members, daughters and friends who came along to help out. It was blowing a gale from the south west and very unpleasant.

The target species was the infamous African Olive. The previous times we were there we cleared above the dam and the results were great, hardly any new growth of Olives in the old area.



We continued cutting & poisoning and by morning tea we already had a nice pile of cut down Olives laying on an area beside a large heap of soil.



We finally made a clearing to the dam by the end of the day.

There are a few wombat holes around, so we had to watch our steps.

Looking forward to the next time we can go and finish the area around the dam. Hope to see you there.



If all goes well, we'll have our February Bass Catch here again, so thanks again to all who came along and helped the club out.

Afterwards we enjoyed a BBQ and a chat with Ranger Gemma White.

Cheers,
Rico.

Bass Sydney's Regeneration Work

By Alan Izzard

Some 12 or more years ago Bass Sydney decided that maybe the best way to attract new members was to get involved in Riparian Rehabilitation. At about that time the club was asked to endorse a fingerling stocking into South Creek by Greening Australia. We replied that we did not believe restocking would in any way be a benefit and that restocking was a waste of time and money. The gentleman running Greening Australia at the time asked to attend a Bass Sydney meeting which was consented to and at that meeting he challenged the members to put their bodies' where their mouths were and come along to a regen. day on South Creek, to which we agreed.

And that was the start of the Bass Sydney Regeneration Programme.

As GA was dependant on grants to keep working, we soon ran out of projects with them and started looking for others that we could work with. We removed a mountain of Lantana at Shaw's Farm on the Nepean River bank and possibly a larger amount at Woods Reserve on the Grose River. At around this time I attended a meeting with the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers where they had a gentleman who was high up with the then Minister who was in charge of Reserves and he informed the meeting that the Minister, Kelly I believe, was looking for fishing clubs to take over the management of riverside reserves. As the saying goes, the rest is history. After many hours driving along the Hawksbury /Nepean looking for a reserve we finally gave up and approached Penrith Council about doing some regen. at Russell St. After letters from the Fish Habitat Network, National Parks and Landcare we were finally given permission and the keys to the gate. Nine years later and over 2000 hours the site is looking fabulous - the Lantana and Balloon Vine has retreated somewhat and all the plantings we have put in are now growing magnificently - at least the ones the dropkicks haven't driven over or cut down anyway. My thanks to all Bass Sydney members, their family members and friends who have contributed, special thanks to Alan Fowkes and Milton Lazarus.

I have decided that now is the time for me to take a step back and hand control over to Penrith Council's Justine Vella who will now do the organising. However, this may not be the end of my regeneration work. I am looking at another organisation that is doing some work on Cattai and Little Cattai Creeks. Time will tell. We have already sent letters of support to the Fish Habitat Network and OzFish and I am ever hopeful that they will get the funds to spend on these new projects.

Alan Izzard

RUSSEL STREET

by Milton Lazarus

Our work day in October was set aside for planting. We had 250 tubes to put in which is a daunting task at the best of times, but luckily Penrith Council had dug the holes a few days before, and on the day inserted water crystals and a fertilizer tablets, so all we had to do was plant and fit shrouds. Luckily in the end we had 14 people planting, but only four Bass Sydney members. Our two amazing ladies Kerith and Margaret, Margaret's son and his three girls plus two Council people, a local lady Nicole and one other. What a great team, everyone got stuck in and we achieved an excellent result, so thank you to everyone who helped.

After nine years and over 2000 hours Alan has decided to step back from the project a little. He is finding the long drive with our trailer in tow and during the dry months, his 1000 litre water tank, pump and hose etc. all of which is a big effort and somewhat tiring. Therefore, this day was his last official attendance. To mark the occasion at morning tea and show Alan their appreciation and what his vision has done for the locals at Emu Plains, Kerith baked a terrific fruit cake. Kerith and Margaret then presented Alan with a plaque and sang him a song called "Rising of the Moon" by Kate Wolf, a lovely soothing song about a flowing river and with Kerith on guitar it was a touching moment for all and I think Alan was taken by surprise. Kerith said a few words as she presented Alan's plaque and her emotions were obvious.

"Rising of the Moon" by Kate Wolf

<https://youtu.b/eNwcFTK928kE>

Kate was an American folk singer who died in 1986

At the age of 44 as a result of leukemia



The team pressed on till about 1pm and after our Council members Lachlan and Ben left, we set up the BBQ's and cooked for those left. Must admit it was nice to sit around, rest, eat lunch and catch up as the BBQ hasn't been on the agenda due to Covid. I'm sure there were a few tired bodies on Sunday as it was 33 degrees and hard work.



The plaque reads:

Bidens Pilosa,

Presented to Alan Izzard in appreciation of your initiative, friendship, leadership & commitment to riverbank transformation at the Russell St Nepean generation site.

Your hard work has contributed to countless fish, birds, plants & pollinators, human beings and the well-being of all life on our planet. So, thank you.

October 2020.

Oh, by the way Bidens Pilosa is Cobblers Pegs or Farmers Friends, those little elongated seed like burrs that attach themselves to your clothes everywhere and drive you crazy trying to remove them. Unfortunately, our site has many.

Cheers, Milton

RICO'S LOCAL PATCH

Fishing the local again after a year of drought and being clogged with weed.

After the first hour, I thought the only thing interesting to report will be that a kingfisher was flying along the shore with me and a white bellied sea eagle getting chased up and down the river by a bunch of crows.

Just after seven o'clock I changed from a Jackall chubby to a jig spin and that got some interest. Two soft hits, but no hookups. So, I changed the plastic. Lots of times the lures came back with algae on it, but the water was fairly clear for the Georges.



Two casts later, I pulled a little 15cm model out of its hiding. Another two or three casts later, a massive hit and hookup, it pulled very hard and I gently got pulled towards the bank. It came out and hid under the logs and branches next to the yak. I was in trouble!! This was a big fish. Haven't had anything like this in the George's up till now. Lucky, I got the fish out (and later noticed the frayed leader). I saw the fish and got really nervous, hope it doesn't spit the hook when trying to land it. One scoop and she was in: YES!!! that's maybe my first 40! Quickly wet the measurer and laid her on it. The hook fell out in the net, something to sort out later. She measured in at 386FL and 415TL, so close!



But as an old mate said, TL is the right measure, cause if you go to the doctor, he doesn't measure you from your head to your balls! 🤪 the fish was so fat too and in very good condition. All the fish I caught were like that, even the little ones had a bit of a belly. Quick few snaps and off she went. Caught another 4 small ones and a 32FL after that, off the water by 10. Glad I went.

Cheers Rico.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

by Alan Fowkes

Well, this is my last “Bird of the Month” column.

I guess what I never *did* mention was that these have stemmed from a personal project to document and photograph as many bird species as I could on our Russell Street site over a 12 month period. The 12 months expanded to 15 and I’ll no doubt continue to go chasing photos there on a semi-regular basis but the formal part of the project is now officially complete.

What I hoped to gain from the exercise was documented evidence of just how valuable a site this is from a wildlife perspective and to confirm that our bush regeneration activities are maintaining or enhancing that value.

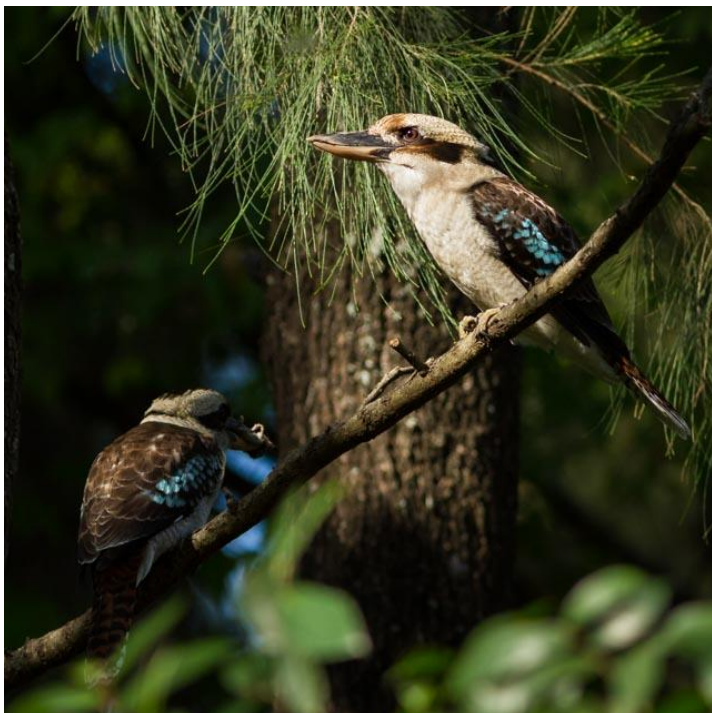
I’ve compiled a list of bird species sighted in each month of the year and have also started to document ad hoc sightings of other wildlife such as wallaroos, skinks, water dragons, turtles and various insects. Not to mention BLOODY cats and foxes amongst other vermin like rabbits and the mouse in the beak of the Kookaburra below at left (you’ll have to look hard).

In total I sighted 93 bird species (stop press: now up to 94!) of which only six are introduced. These were spotted at an average rate of almost 45 species per calendar month over an average of 8.8 hours of birdwatching per month. If only I could consistently catch fish at better than five per hour!

Of course, you have to keep in mind that I’m a novice birdwatcher and just one guy. Over the same period, a bunch of real twitchers documented 124 species (<https://ebird.org/australia/hotspots> and search “Emu Green” if you’re interested) with more than 160 species seen over seven years.

Bottom line is that the birds are thriving and our worked areas are frequented by them. Our work has preserved mature trees, increased plant density, increased plant diversity and improved vegetation structure. We have improved food supply, preserved nesting options and benefitted the instream habitat through our actions.

We should all be proud of the work done.



Russell Street Bird List

Summary of Observed Species by Grouping:

| Grouping | No. |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Identifiable Groups: | |
| Birds of Prey | 7 |
| Cuckoos | 4 |
| Finches | 4 |
| Honeyeaters | 11 |
| Kingfishers | 3 |
| Parrots | 7 |
| Pigeons & Doves | 5 |
| Robins | 2 |
| Swallows & Martins | 1 |
| Water Birds | 15 |
| Wrens | 2 |
| zz: Other Larger Birds | 12 |
| zz: Other Mid-sized Birds | 10 |
| zz: Other Small Birds | 11 |
| Total No. Species | 94 |

BlazeAid Journey Part 2

by Doug

After spending about four weeks helping set up the camp at Milton, I was asked by the President of BlazeAid if I wanted to establish and coordinate a camp at Kangaroo Valley (KV).

Parts of the KV were badly hit by the same fire that affected the Milton properties but if you only stayed on the main road through KV, you would have no idea about the devastation just 4km off the road.

After paying my first visit, meeting some key locals, council liaison and finding a potential camp site, I had to spend a few days on coordinator training down at the Adelong Camp before the final ok was given to start the camp at the end of February.

I was very lucky my family continued to allow me time away to fulfill my volunteering bug but I planned to finish up personally by end of June to come home to support my son through his HSC.

These few months were an amazing experience in a whole different number of ways. Meeting so many wonderful locals and volunteers, navigating the hazards of Covid resulting in having to move camp a number of times as well as tapping a close friend's business to help to get a donation to fund our last few weeks accommodation in order to finish off nearly all our jobs.

In the KV, the bushfire damaged properties were in three main areas – Budgong, Tallowa Dam Rd and Jacks Corner Rd. The devastation is hard to describe and at times, simply unimaginable. The stories of loss deeply affected us all as well as the generosity not only of the local community but also our friends and family when it came to helping out.

There are so many stories and experiences to recount that will last with me forever. However, it is certainly a challenge and I think four months were enough for me at this stage. I'm keen to volunteer again but next time purely in a worker capacity with a few friends and family.

Rather than go through the whole experience in lengthy detail, here's a few photos to reflect the time and some of the notable events we experienced:

Our initial camp location on Tallowa Dam Rd had a large shed that survived the fires and that we used as an office and kitchen. Two of the four portaloos can be seen and



there were also four portable showers nearby. Volunteers stayed in tents, caravans or their own vans. The property was previously a bush camp used to train media reporters in survival skills before being sent to overseas danger zones, It was completely surrounded by fire and other buildings on the property were destroyed.

The timber decks below were rebuilt thanks to the work of the couple with me who ran a building firm in Sydney and whom I first met in Milton BlazeAid camp. The materials were the result of a generous donation arranged by Macman from a mate of his and it allowed us to pitch a number of tents for use by backpackers and keep them dry.



This was my sleeping quarters for the first month, under a previous awning structure which the local SES arranged to cover with a tarp roof. Was ok during autumn but wasn't keen to spend winter here.



In late March we had to downsize camp due to COVID and relocate to a more isolated property better equipped for winter conditions. Luckily, a local B&B house was made available to us and we were able to support a crew of nine volunteers there for the next two months. I was back in Sydney during this time, co-ordinating

remotely. The 4WD truck in the background enabled us to keep working and moving materials. Hino Wollongong loaned it to us. Again, you can see how the fires surrounded most of the properties and how close it came.



The same truck was also at the centre of one of our last day dramas getting bogged on a property making a final delivery of donated goods. After many phone calls, a rushed trip by the Hino rep from Wollongong and a very panicked property owner, we managed to extricate it thanks to a few snatch straps and a nearby excavator. No harm done.

By the time we were able to ramp up operations again in May, the bush was already showing signs of regrowth. Below are Jeremy and his son, Cameron who came down to help for a few days.



I was also fortunate enough to get access to a number of loan vehicles including this very nice Hilux from Nowra Toyota. We were also loaned utes from Nissan Nowra, much camp equipment from locals and caravans to help accommodate backpackers, with some of them being driven down from Sydney and beyond for our use in KV.



One of my personal highlights was being able to get my daughter Jacinta and her boyfriend Casey to come down and share the BlazeAid experience just as my son Justin did in January up at Wingham camp.



The other highlight was some of my relatives from my father's side coming down from Sydney for the weekend. Most of these relatives and their partners have rarely been out into the bush or rural properties, so doing fencing work and seeing first - hand what bushfires can do was a real experience for them. The "odd" man out is Murph who guided this team and they were in very safe hands thanks to his extensive experience as an SES incident controller.

He was also the one responsible for bogging and extracting the truck a few days later.



We were also fortunate to have a group of Nowra based retirees who were very committed to helping their KV neighbours. For over five months, this team of 6 - 10 volunteers would travel up from their homes in Nowra to rebuild fences in the Bugong area. They managed to keep this up during the height of the COVID restrictions and stay safe. They made a massive contribution to the 20 or so properties in the area and made many lasting friendships. Their standard of fencing needed to be seen to be believed.

While the COVID prevented Milton and Brian spending a few days at the camp, I did manage to rope in a well-known Bass Sydney member and Nowra local for two days' work - this was after he managed to enjoy two earlier dinners at camp without lifting a finger but he more than made up for it with his post driving efforts. Damien Balfour was in the thick of the COVID preparations at his Shoalhaven hospital so I was



very grateful he was able to get the time to come join us. We also got BlazeAid to donate surplus eye goggles to his hospital when they may have been short of these essential supplies. Damien fitted in well with all the UK backpackers he was working with in his usual fashion. I also planned a bass fishing trip from Hampden Bridge down to Bendeela with him but that was another victim of the virus. It's on the cards for next summer though.



Finally, my last task before heading back to Sydney for good was to drive along a road and install missing caps on top of the strainer posts. I had Damien for company on this final effort and he caught me in mid-pivot driving home that last cap or possibly just making sure that strainer post was in the ground securely.



Some of the key statistics from our KV Camp were:

- Total properties worked on 59
- Total KM fenced 45km
- Total KM cleared 33km
- Total volunteer days 1243
- Total number of volunteers through the camps 145

Overall, I can say my 2020 BlazeAid experiences have been some of the most rewarding things I've ever done. Volunteering does indeed come with tremendous benefits for all participants and I look forward to further developing my fencing skills and making more friends in the future.

From what I gather, the bushfire fencing work is still needed into the forthcoming summer and no doubt the virus has hampered a lot of rebuilding and volunteering efforts. So maybe there is an opportunity for a BS group

to do some volunteering up north especially in those areas where we need to see if the bass and their riparian habitats have recovered yet?

Fears rare Aussie fish species may die out



Mark Lintermans.

MORE than 20 fish species will become extinct in Australia within the next 20 years, unless there is urgent conservation action, according to new research.

The threatened native freshwater fish are small or tiny species and include the Daintree rainbowfish, Barrow cave gudgeon, red-finned blue-eye, little pygmy perch and stocky galaxias.

The study, part of a larger project by the Australian Government's National Environmental

Science Program to identify species at high risk of extinction, assessed fish species from every state and territory and was led by veteran freshwater scientist Associate Professor Mark Lintermans from the University of Canberra.

"Most of the species we identified have had large reductions in their distributions, and now only occur in one small area. This presents a new threat as a single catastrophic event, like a large bushfire, could potentially wipe

out the species in one hit," Prof Lintermans said.

"These species were already imperilled before the 2019-20 fires, and many are now in even more dire straits.

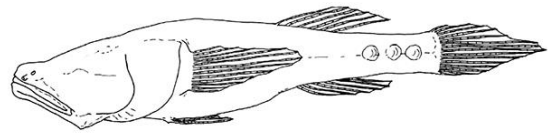
"For example, before the Black Summer fires we believed there were up to 2500 Yalmy galaxias, a species only found in the Snowy River National Park.

"Since the fires, surveys have so far found only two individuals, one male and one female."

Unfortunately, I forgot to document the date of this article (Lyn) printed in a weekend edition of The Telegraph



Daintree Rainbow Fish



Barrow Cave Gudgeon



Red Finned Blue Eye



Little Pygmy Perch



Stocky Galaxias

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