

Our field trip to Yarramundi – near Richmond - on 15-02-2015.

Outside it was dark and gloomy with heavy overcast clouds, and the ground was still wet from the overnight rain. I asked myself “Will the field trip be on today?”

I thought “Will this doom and gloom cheer up to a sunny day?”

And then I thought “Will I get out of bed?”

Well, all thoughts aside, I made ready for the field trip to Yarramundi. I picked Lyn up on the way and we both discussed the ominous dark low hanging clouds. As we drove closer to Richmond rain looked most likely and our expectations were diminishing for a successful day. Rain held off and we arrived at Richmond railway station about 9.30am. After checking if anyone else had arrived we decided to leave the car park and grab a coffee at Maccas just on the other side of the rails. Lucky we did because John and Derek rolled up and conversation soon turned to where would others be waiting? The decision was made that Lyn and I would wait on the other side of the rails in the railway car-park while Derek and John kept vigil at Maccas.

About 10.20am we headed toward Yarramundi Bridge and as we passed Maccas we noticed that Derek and John had been joined by Chris and Effie. Once at Yarramundi we were greeted by others who were waiting at the survey site. Jesse and his family had snagged a great spot under the shade of a She-oak tree and soon we were all loading our gear close by.

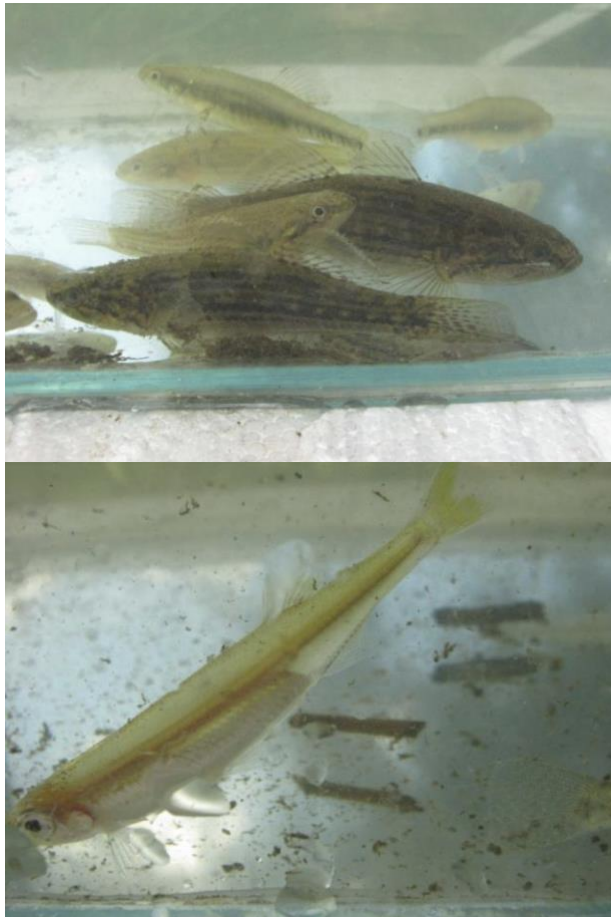


The day was becoming hot and humid and the shade was already a welcome relief, although those black clouds could still be seen not that far away. This was a great spot with plenty of room in the car park and a nice wide embankment to the river which gives plenty of open space for families to run around. There is a small jetty for feeding those fishes or climbing comfortably into a canoe. The clean, clear water was inviting many to have a swim. It wasn't very long before traps were being set, nets were being dipped, and canoes were being paddled. Oh, and Val was being lifted. Yep, Derek had found Giant Val close to the bank and much of it had already been dislodged. All it needed was picking up. Maybe it was pulled up by ducks or washed up by recent flooding who knows, but it was on the banks and in the water just waiting for a bag to put it in. Mick and Christine had quite a few Freshwater

Shrimp to show for their efforts, and Mick also laid claim to some of the Gambusia that came through the camp, he has a turtle that likes eating them. Ron and Lyn tried scooping up some Smelt off the end of the jetty and were joined by Derek who showed them how to lure the Smelt into the dip-net using bread.

It was with one such method that a lone pacific blue eye was found amongst the many Gambusia that were caught. Others came hither a thither with catches such as Cox's Gudgeon, very nice Empire Gudgeons, and some healthy looking Striped Gudgeons, as well as a Carp Gudgeon. Soon John's photo tank was quite full and many photos were taken.

There were many areas of interest along the river. Large areas of still water which were draining back into the river across low bank lines and small pools of water left behind in ditches. Small inlets in the bank also provided still water where water plants grew and Gambusia congregated in large numbers



There were also some shallow sandy areas which stretched out almost to the other side of the river and beds of Giant Val could be seen midway waving with the current. Most of the river bank was easily accessible with tracks through the high couch type grasses. Chris and Effie returned from canoeing, and John paddled in a short time later. They all remarked on how well the river looked upstream and how many schools of Herring were seen along the way. From the bank we could often see schools of Nepean Herring and there were Mullet and Eel sighted. John and Lyn took some video of the schools of Herring as they fed at the rivers surface.

There were many other creatures seen along the banks. A few of these remarkable creatures were Ducks (quackus quackus), Pelican (bulgus beakus), Water Dragons (wettus lizardus), Crane (longus beakus), well you get the picture.

The day became very humid and hot and there was no breeze. A smell of blood and bone wafted across from the farms on the other side of the river and from time to time it became quite strong. About an hour later a slight breeze could be felt which brought relief from the humidity and also blew the odour back across the river. It wasn't too long after this that we started to pack up and get underway for our journeys back home. There were river-stones all around and I meant to get a few for the tank, they were all nicely rounded and of perfect size, but I forgot. I guess that's a good excuse to go back another time.

Everyone had a great time with good company. There was also the added bonus of getting so many species of fishes. What a great day and thank you to all who attended for bringing out the sunshine.

*David Matheson,*