

FIELD TRIP TO YARRAMUNDI

ANGFA NSW Field Trip Report. Yarramundi Reserve at the junction of the Nepean and Grose Rivers.



On the morning of Sunday, the 14th of November 2021, a group of around 15 members met at the Agnes Car Park next to the Nepean River at Agnes Banks. Along with some long-time members, there were a number of new faces, eager to experience their first ANGFA field trip. This was also an exciting day for existing members, as the impacts of COVID, and the extended lockdowns had put a stop to almost all club activities for nearly two years. The site had been selected as it had not been sampled in a number of years. In fact, this site was planned as a field trip earlier in the year but was cancelled due to excessive rain. In the past, a variety of species had been observed; gudgeons of all types, mullet, tandanus, smelt, galaxias, shrimp, and even turtles. A variety of aquatic plants were also expected, including vast beds of giant vallisneria. So, hopes were high for some exciting finds and an assortment of species.



Arriving at the car park, the first thing that greeted us was a scale of destruction we had not expected. Almost all of the she-oaks along the bank had been flattened, their roots ripped up, limbs broken, and debris piled up against them. Most were dead and leafless. Others had managed to survive and were now living their life at a 45-degree angle.



The expected Vallisneria beds were nowhere to be seen, replaced instead with reeds and weeds. Despite this, we were still hopeful of catching a few nice fish, as a little down the river, a handful of people were catching decent sized mullet on rod and reel.



Assembling all of our traps, nets, buckets, hats, and sunscreen, the group split up to start the search. Eagerly, people began dip-netting through the reeds and amongst the exposed roots. Even so, the fish were few and far between. Initial catches were of solitary gudgeons, or glass shrimp.

For the next few hours, we explored the river, which was cool and bedded by smooth pebbles, and had a very decent flow, likely being released from Warragamba. Empire, firetail, and flathead gudgeons were caught in moderate numbers, as well as a few of the ever-present gambusia. Glass shrimp and even a couple of larger

macrobrachium were caught too.

Having spent a decent amount of time searching the Nepean side of the junction, we decided to try our luck on the Grose side. We all jumped in our cars and drove just down the road to Yarramundi reserve, where we met John Buckley who had been fishing at the junction hoping to catch trout washed down with the released water.



Here we tried our luck again, this time adding a seine net to our arsenal. The damage to the trees was much less on the Grose River side of the junction, though the Vallisneria beds I had seen here before were long gone. Some of the new members were keen to learn how the seine net worked, and enthusiastically tried their hand at it. However, even in this location, and with the aid of a seine net, our haul was limited to a handful of gudgeons and a heaping of smelt. With the river slowly rising (it appeared as though even more water was being released from Warragamba) and the skies darkening slightly, we decided we had caught all we would catch and called it a day. While some slowly made their way back along the river and up the hill to the carpark, others decided to break out a late lunch at some nearby sheltered benches.

A fun, if slightly disappointing, day was had by all. A welcome relief from the endless lockdowns, and a nice introduction into ANGFA fieldtrips for the new members. And with the new year I expect there will be many more fieldtrips in store.

Richard