

INFORMATION SHEET

Snowy River Bass Stocking 2007

Australian Bass are a native fish of the Snowy River; they were once found throughout much of the river. Recent studies have shown that the Bass in the Snowy River have stopped breeding (with the last major recruitment in 1988), so the population is in danger of dying out.

Where has Bass occurred in the past?

There are recent records of Bass being caught at Willis, on the NSW/Victorian border. There are photographic records of what looks like Bass at Corrowong Falls. This is important as it suggests that Bass could sometimes get past the Snowy Falls. There are historical reports of 'perch' (a common name for Australian Bass) being caught in the Snowy River at Paupong and Dalgety. It is not known how far up the river Bass used to travel, but they have been found at altitudes of up to 800 metres in other rivers.

Who is organising the stocking?

The stocking of bass is the major recommendation from the Snowy River Native Fish Recovery Plan – which has been developed by government and community organisations in NSW and Victoria.



Australian Bass

There are two stocking programs working together. In NSW the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) is undertaking the stocking. In Victoria the stocking is being done by a community led committee, involving the Orbost Angling Club, East Gippsland CMA and Victorian Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries).

How many Bass will be stocked?

In the NSW section of the river, from Dalgety to the Victorian border, 80,000 Bass will be stocked this year. It is planned to put another 170,000 Bass into this

section of river over the following two years. Up to 250,000 Bass are also planned to be stocked into the Victorian section of the river (150 km long). Local landholders, angling clubs, the Monaro Acclimatisation Society and community organisations will be invited to help stock the Bass into the river.

When will stocking occur?

The Bass have been bred for this year and will be stocked in late November or early December.

Where did this year's fish come from?

The Bass for stocking were bred by Narooma Aquaculture under contract to SRCMA. Because of the low numbers of fish in the river, breeding occurred from two male fish combined with four female fish.

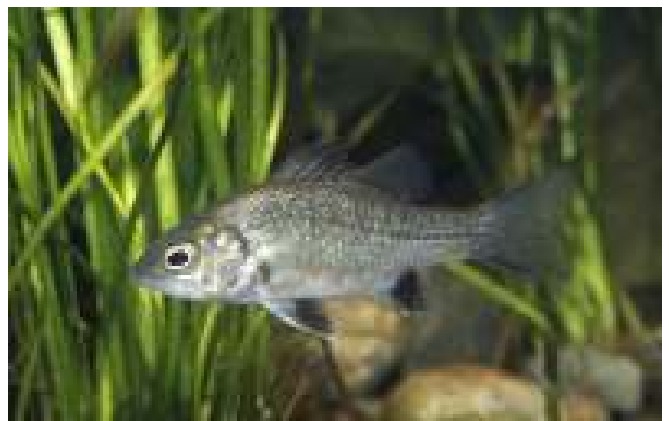
More Snowy River fish have been caught recently to boost future breeding numbers.

Has stocking happened before?

About 10 years ago Native Fish Australia (East Gippsland) stocked around 13,000 Bass into the Victorian section of the river. Breeding attempts over the past 3 years to stock more fish have failed.

Are Bass good to catch?

Australian Bass are recognised as being an excellent sports fish which can be caught on bait, lures or flies. They can grow to 4 kg in weight and over 65cm in length and are an exciting fish to catch.



Juvenile Snowy Bass

Are Bass good to eat?

Bass are an excellent eating fish, with firm white flesh. A spawning closure applies during June to August each year for rivers. At other times the combined bag limit is 2 per day, with only one fish larger than 35cm permitted.

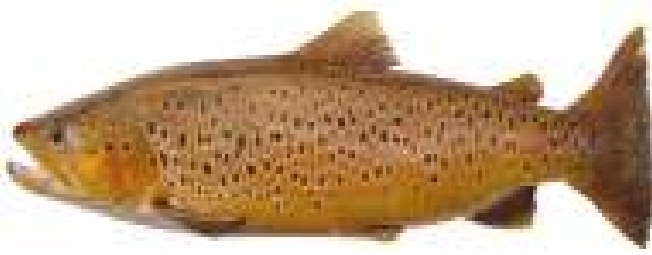
How fast do they grow?

Australian Bass can be slow growing and it is thought they will take 3-4 years to become a suitable size for catching and eating.

Will trout be stocked?

SRCMA believes that a mixed fishery is both achievable and desirable for the Snowy River. Bass and trout are known to occur together in several rivers, including in a tributary of the lower Snowy River.

The Monaro Acclimatisation Society and local angling groups will continue to stock trout into the Snowy River and natural recruitment is also expected to continue.



Brown Trout

Will we know if the stocking is successful?

A monitoring program is being put in place by NSW Department of Primary Industries to monitor the success rate of stocking, growth rates of fish and to provide information on how many fish should be stocked.

What will be the benefits of Bass stocking?

It is hoped that the Snowy River will be re-established as a high class recreational fishery. The Snowy Water Inquiry estimated that a healthy Snowy River could

generate up to \$20 million per annum in economic activity. It is recognised that recreational fishing for Bass will make a major contribution to this economic activity.

Will these Bass breed?

Australian Bass travel down to the estuary to breed in salt water. The juvenile fish hatch in the estuary and swim back up the river. Because there has been no known natural recruitment in the Snowy River since 1988 it is not expected that stocked fish will breed in the short-term. It is likely to need an improvement in river/estuary condition before natural breeding starts again.

Will stocked Bass migrate down the River?

Once Bass reach sexual maturity they make an annual migration to breed. However, not all fish migrate each year and they need the right flow triggers. It is thought that Bass stocked above Stone Bridge (a natural barrier to fish passage under current flow levels) will remain in the river for many years and create an excellent fishery. Once Bass migrate down the river it will depend on river flows as to how far they can travel back up the river. As river flows and Bass numbers increase it is expected that Bass will push further back up the river each year.

How well will Bass survive?

Australian Bass are well suited to river conditions in the Snowy River. They can tolerate both low and high water temperatures and feed on a broad range of organisms. They are expected to thrive in the Snowy River, especially over warmer months when water temperatures are above 20 degrees Celsius.



For more information contact the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority on 02 6452 1455

