

RBM NEWSLETTER



The Official Newsletter of RBM Aquaculture, Mid West Yabby & Fish Traders, Australian Crayfish Project and Robert B McCormack

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RBM Newsletter August/October 2006

Hi All,

It's been a while since I've sent out a newsletter. I started this Newsletter in August but only finished it now in October. There are several reasons for this, firstly, I did not do much crayfish chasing over summer. It's just too hot in the steaming jungles, but that is not the main problem it's the insects that go absolutely berserk in these areas over summer. I do a lot of my work at night as many species actually come out of their burrows and wander the creek bed or even the forest floor at night. I have a head torch that I wear and this attracts bugs, it gets so bad in some areas that you can not even see the ground because of the clouds of midges swarming in the light.

A typical days Cray fishing in summer usually results in 2 leach bites, 1 tick bite, one spider bite and 2 hornet bites as well as the odd mosquito bite and then the ingestion of hundreds of flies and bugs. Most of the things that bite me are harmless but every now and then something hits me big time, its good if you know what it is but most of the time you don't see it. My trouble is that I'm a bit paranoid these days, something starts crawling on me or biting me I just flick it off automatically, its flicked back into the jungle with dozens of other critters and you don't know what it was except it was small and dark and now my arm hurts like hell and is swelling nicely.

In summer I need a tent in the high country at night as there are just so many bugs you need to hide, even then with a light on in the tent, every square inch of the outside of the tent is covered in small midges, my silver grey tent becomes completely black just with bugs, it sounds like rain inside as they constantly bang on the tent.

When it's cooler it's really good, always the odd bug but never much of a problem, it's really cold, ice and the frozen tents but it's a much better working environment.

I have also spent a fair amount of my time in court and preparing for court, luckily that's over now and winners are grinners. As many of you know I sold my crayfish farm and Australian Bass Hatchery that I had owned for over 20 years to a Vietnamese person called Mr Hong Ly. My Ly was short money at settlement on my property and I stupidly in good faith allowed him to settle short the full amount. Mr Ly wrote cheques for the money owing, and asked me to hold off cashing them as people owed him money and money was coming. He looked me in the eye, shook my hand, said he was a man of his word and that I would get all my money. Hah! Well as you can guess the cheques were not honoured by Mr Ly. When I went to the courts to get payment he stated that I had fraudulently written the cheques out to myself and that he did not owe me any money and counter sued me. It was all very nasty and sordid. He refused to go to court but I persisted and after 26 times at Court and 2 years I finally got the case to trial. I won totally and completely and Mr Ly admitted to the Judge that when he wrote the cheques he had no intention of ever honouring them. I won my cheque claim and costs and Mr Lys counter claim was thrown out of court and I got full indemnity of costs for that so a great outcome. All I now need to do is get the money out of him and once again he is attempting to weasel his way out of paying ignoring the court orders.

Another reason I didn't do much over summer was money. Its really expensive chasing crayfish full time like I have done for 18 months so I am now working to renew the coffers. I work as a hatchery manager for Aquablue Seafood's through the week and chase yabbies on the week

ends. Its great working for Aquablue. Its one of my consultancy customers, I did the design and licensing for the farm so now I get to follow through and work on the farm that I designed. They are a great bunch of people to work with and its a pleasure to go to work, we are breeding Australian Bass at the moment and starting to breed Snapper then Golden and Silver Perch next month. I will be working on a newsletter for them so you can read all about it if you re interested. Will be a link in next newsletter.

Also doing lot of work with the NSW Aquaculture Association and that has taken up a lot of my free time. I do their Newsletters as well. If you are interested www.nswaqua.com.au

I have been concentrating on 2 new species that I have found and am trying to gather information on them. *Euastacus maccii* is a real problem as I am having great difficulty catching specimens. I know lots of you will have a problem with me naming a species without describing it but I need to call it something for my filing system so this is the name I've picked. I will describe it eventually if I can find 12 good males to do full descriptions on. It's a 3 hour trip to the closest site and the last 3 trips its been dry. I can dig down about 600 to 900mm and then hit a compacted gravel/clay/rock layer that I just cant penetrate so will have to wait till we get good rains in the high country. The drought will break eventually.

Then there is *Euastacus giro* 1 & 2, still don't know if they are variations on the one species or 2 separate species or just a variation on *Euastacus polysetosus* & *E gamilaroi* that they are meant to be but do not match the description. Will get some DNA tests and go from there.

Anyway its winter now and I am in full swing chasing crayfish so stay tuned for further updates.

PS Winter has come and gone and only just getting around to writing this newsletter.

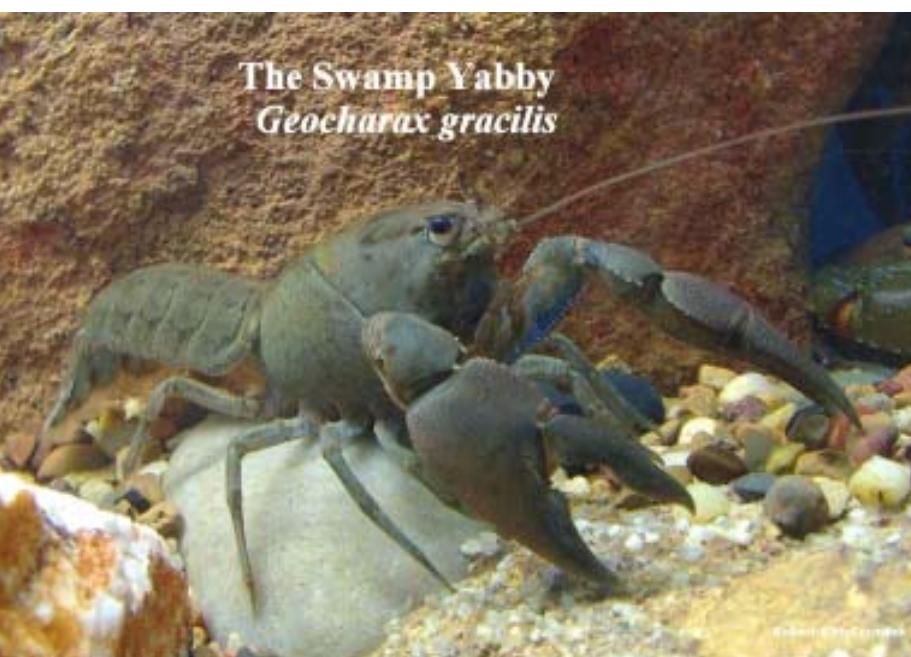
RBM Aqua Website Correction

There was a glaring mistake on my list of crayfish species <http://www.rbmaqua.com.au/afcp-list.shtml> for the crayfish *Geocharax falcata* I had it listed as from the Glenelg River in South Western Queensland. Well that's just plain wrong, these little critters are found around the Grampians and in the headwaters of the Glenelg River in **Victoria**. Well only 1000 plus kilometres off. I had been talking a bit with Steve Chara and David Royal from Victoria on the *geocharax* species and *falcata* in Victoria. Both Steve and David advised some areas to try and capture specimens. There are also some rumours circulating on another unknown species of *Geocharax* in Victoria. Anyway I never noticed this glaring mistake and if it was not for the vigilance of Martin O'Brien from Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Melbourne, I may never have noticed it. I

have corrected the mistake, if anyone else notices a similar one please let me know.

Thanks Brian, keep up the good work its much appreciated.

PS I have been meaning to get to the Grampians and catch some *Geocharax falcata* but the last 3 expeditions in Victoria this year have been in other areas. Looking at doing another over xmas so stay tuned for further updates. I did on my second Victorian expedition this year manage to capture a few *Geocharax grasilis*.



Geocharax gracilis from Kawarren Victoria





Euastacus australasiensis

Steve Chara from Victoria spent a week with me chasing crayfish. Steve is very interested in learning all he can about crayfish and spent some time with me seeing just how the different species lived and how I captured them. Steve and I spent some time in the Blue Mountains 2 hours west of Sydney catching the Sydney Spiny Crayfish *Euastacus australasiensis*. The pictures are at Minnehaha Falls near Katoomba NSW Australia.



The Sydney Spiny Crayfish
Euastacus australasiensis





Euastacus rieki

Spent some time up in the Alpine regions of NSW over winter chasing various species. One was *Euastacus rieki* and we got most of ours near Smiggin Holes. I was expecting this species to be relatively difficult to find but we had no problems at all. They are a burrowing species that does not seem to be found in the main streams, we found all ours in the swamps and wet areas. They were a deep burrowing species but the soil they lived in was easy to dig though very cold work. We managed to dig quite a few out despite the cold and then pumped a load more up with our crayfish pump.





Euastacus claytoni

Spent some time in the forests inland from Eden NSW. Managed to find loads of *Euastacus claytoni*. Just some photos for your interest. Also found a species I can not identify, you may hear more on that next newsletter.





Engaeus affinis

When I was down in Victoria I met up with well known crayfish identity Dave Royal. You would all know Dave from his web site Crayfish World www.crayfishworld.com.au. I'm an early starter so came over to Dave's for breakfast and as he was cooking me bacon and eggs for breakfast he mentioned that he could easily capture some *Engaeus* for me in the local creek. I had spent several days before meeting Dave chasing *Engaeus* species of crayfish and let me assure you they are a really difficult species to capture. Being a skeptic I didn't believe him and needed to be shown the error of my ways. After breaky Dave took me down the road to Darebin Creek which is more like a drain through the suburbs of Melbourne. He said he catches them just under the rocks so I turned over the biggest rock I could find and sure enough there was a nice size crayfish happily living under that rock. That's my 3rd *Engaeus* species I had ever captured so I was ecstatic. I had a great time with Dave and later that day went *E. armatus* fishing with him.





Engaeus from Wilsons Promontory

Spent some time down in Victoria on Wilsons Promontory chasing Engaeus species of crayfish. Engaeus are very hard to capture and I had to work very hard to capture these two species from the Promontory.





Dave and his fishing truck



Juvenile



Euastacus armatus

Went *E. armatus* (Murray Lobster) fishing with Dave Royal whilst in Victoria. Dave is an expert on all things *armatus*. Dave took me to his secret spot and we caught a load of small ones in no time. Murray Lobsters grow huge and have bright white claws, but when small they don't look anything like the adults.



Chris with an *E kershawri* and me with a *E armatus*



Hardcore Collecting

Chris Lukhaup from Germany spent 10 days with me traveling around the country catching and photographing freshwater crayfish. Chris is a world renowned crayfish photographer and crayfish expert that was a perfect companion to spend 10 days chasing crayfish from southern Victoria, through NSW to southern Queensland. We captured a mass of different species, the photo above is half way through when we made it back to my place here at Port Stephens NSW. Each container has 1 or 2 specimens in it and represents different species. These are the sample crayfish we had captured and they were all photographed over two days then we headed North to the Queensland border to get more species for photographing.

Chris was great, full of energy and enthusiasm and meticulous in his photography. I learnt a lot from Chris and had a great time. Following are just a few of the species we captured and or photographed and the places we went.



Euastacus dangadi



Trapping *Cherax cuspidatus*



Chris raking the pond



Chris catching E. dangadi in Stockyard Creek Kempsey NSW



Euastacus s.p.



Euastacus hirsutus



E. kershawi



E. neodiversus



E. sulcatus



Engaeus s.p. Victoria



E. valentulus



E. reductus



E. yarriensis



Chris ATVing to the Creek



Gramastacus s.p. NSW



Fenuibranchiurus s.p. NSW



E. woiwuru



Euastacus brachythorax

Went with Chris Lukhaup from Germany on an expedition to Brown Mountain west of Bega NSW to catch a few *Euastacus brachythorax*. Chris and I had been crayfishing all day and doing quite well. Generally I just need 30 minutes on site and I have my specimens needed and then off to the next. Well by the time we got to Brown Mountain it was dark so we had to just hike down the mountain in the dark to the creek to get a few specimens. It was cold and miserable and a totally deserted area, we were it. Being dark the first thing you do is spotlight the creek to see what is out and about. That unfortunately was unsuccessful so we started turning rocks. I left Chris to work his way downstream and I headed upstream about 100 metres. It was very uneventful except for a platypus that actually had a go at me. Now I had always thought that platypus were very quite reclusive animals that avoided human contact and would hide from you. Well, as I was searching this platypus pond for yabbies this animal came screaming out of the depths right to my feet where it snapped its bill at me then did a U turn splashing me with its tail and tore off into the depths again.

Well that was unusual but nothing too strange, I continued searching for critters and got a couple of big ones and a couple of little ones so headed back to find Chris. Chris had also got a few so we sorted the catch, threw back all except the 2 best, took some photos of the area and trudged back up the mountain and drove into Bega for the night. The trouble is that somewhere between arriving at Brown Mountain and arriving in Bega we had lost 1 hour and 11 minutes. Our watches had stopped for exactly 77 minutes. Now this was straight out of the X files, you just don't lose 77 minutes. When I talk to people about it they all start talking about alien abductions and anal probes!! Well all I can say is that I checked that my underwear was on the right way and all was good.





Euastacus guwinus

Went to Morton National Park with Chris Lukhaup to Tianjara Creek to get a few *E. guwinus*. It was a great little creek with lots of crayfish. It was a very scenic spot well worth the visit.





Around the mountains with Jason Coughran

Spent some time with Jason Coughran from Lismore. Jason is my hero he has described more new species in NSW than anyone else lately and has more still to describe. Jason took me in hand and showed me where to find a few of the new species from Northern NSW that he has found and described. Had a great time with Jason and hope to do it again soon. Jason has a DVD called The Field Guide to The Freshwater Crayfishes of Northern NSW. I've got a copy and recommend it to anyone interested in the crayfish of Northern NSW.





Just a few big ones for your interest.



Cherax destructor
Hows this for a large yabby. 318 gram, 77.19 mm OCL.



Cherax rotundus
This is a good sized one 272 gram, 79.0 mm OCL.



Euastacus yarriensis
Hows this for a large blue yarriensis. 270 gram, 78.95 OCL.

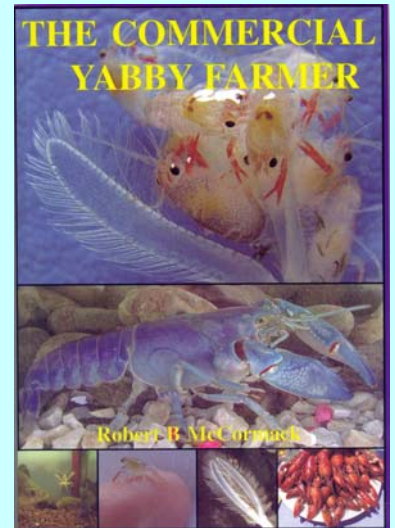


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Robert B McCormack

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