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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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P.O. Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne 3001

www.vffa.org.au

April Meeting ... with John Waters

NOTE: Meeting is on Wednesday, April 16, at the Celtic Club.

Our guest speaker for the April meeting will be John Waters, current Australian Fly Casting Champion. John competed in the 2013 Australian Championships and was placed first in every category, finally winning by a significant margin. He has been one of our top casters for a number of years now and is heavily involved in casting instruction.

John was delighted to be invited to speak at our April meeting and we look forward to hearing him on April 16 (NB: members are reminded that the April meeting is one day earlier than usual because Thursday April 17 is the eve of Good Friday.)

The Meeting will be preceded by Dinner at the Celtic Club, which will commence at 6:00 pm.

All members are invited to attend the Dinner, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 12 noon on Wednesday, April 16 – either by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message, or by sending a **text message** to President Terry Rogers on 0438 553 326.



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Advance Notice – April Meeting

Our guest speaker for the April meeting will be the current Australian Fly Casting Champion John Waters. John competed in the 2013 Australian Championships and though competing against some very strong competition managed a first placing in every category, finally winning by a significant margin. He has been one of our top casters for a number of years now and is heavily involved in casting instruction and tuition.



John was delighted to be invited to speak at our April meeting. We look forward with keen anticipation to hearing him on Wednesday April 16 (members being reminded that the April meeting is one day earlier than usual because Thursday April 17 is the day before Good Friday.)

Advance Notice – May Meeting

Our guest speaker for the May meeting will be Rick Dobson, well known to members as the owner and manager of the Aussie Angler store. Rick knows all the latest fads and trends in gear and will be talking to us about the recent innovations and developments in fly fishing and fly tying equipment and materials.

So if you want to hear all about the latest rods and reels and vests and waders and fly tying gear, plus heaps more, then come along. Rick has promised to bring along a selection of the finest and best, so you'll be able to see it and handle it too.

Mark it in your diary – Thursday May 15.



March Meeting

Our guest speaker for the March Meeting was Mick Hall, widely known and highly respected as one of our most credentialed fly tiers. In an effort to understand the bugs that feed the trout in the Eildon area Mick has spent countless hours researching and photographing these various insects.

At our March meeting he spoke particularly about the mayflies he has observed in the Thornton area, and his talk was based on a PowerPoint display of truly amazing pictures. The detail in the photos of the various duns and spinners and their transition from one to the other was incredible, and the various features and trigger points were plain to see. We saw for example that the male duns had much larger eyes than the female duns, and they had clasps used when mating, and the emerging male spinners grew a third extension on their forelegs. All these were clearly visible in Mick's photos.



The two major species of mayflies that he spoke about were the Baetids and the Leptophlebiids. The Leptophlebiid duns apparently required water temperatures of at least 12°C to hatch, whereas the Baetids would hatch with temperatures as low as 7°C or 8°C, so these are the ones that are around all year. Mick suggested that it was commonly believed that Baetids were only found in autumn, but this wasn't the case and in fact these insects come off at all times during the season.

Many of the duns and spinners didn't fully pump up their wings – the photos showed hills and valleys in their wings. Hence, for example, the blue winged olive wing could be represented using the EP (Enrico Puglisi) Quicksilver material. In tying flies to represent these various species the trigger points need to be emphasised, with the wings being a particularly important trigger point.

Mick acknowledged that he wasn't aware of the exact number of different species of mayflies in the Thornton area because there were some species that only appeared for a few days each year, and hence these weren't particularly significant for the fly tier. However 80% of the mayflies in the Breakaway area were members of the Leptophlebiid species, the dominant members of which were the Devonshire Duns, the Sandstone Duns, and the Honey Duns.

Mick also spoke about the Kossie Duns and the species that we call the Black Spinners, which are from a deep chocolate brown to black in colour. They also had different coloured eyes - from milk chocolate brown through to black, with all variations in between. These variations were all clearly visible in Mick's photos.

In comparing the importance of duns with spinners Mick indicated that the duns were actually on the water for some time whereas the female spinners only briefly returned to deposit their eggs and then perhaps appeared as spent spinners on the water.



Male Dun



Caenids caught in a web



Male Spinner



Another Leptophlebiid Dun

In tying flies to represent the various duns Mick assured us that parachute hackled flies gave the best representation of the duns on the water. He ties a pattern to represent a spent dark orange spinner, a common species in the area, and uses the Spirit River company's Golden Stone dubbing tied on a size 14 hook. This is a deadly fly fished in the evenings on the Rubicon River and Big River, but it sits low in the water and is hard to see in the gathering gloom, so Mick ties an indicator in his leader about 30 cm from the fly.

Mick said that there are actually two Rusty Dun species commonly seen in the area, one being a Leptophlebiid and the other a Baetid, with the Leptophlebiid being a stockier insect in size.

In tying flies to represent these various duns we need to keep in mind that generally the insects found in Spring are a little larger than those found in Autumn. So a size 12 is the better size for early in the season while a size 14 matches the autumn duns. Baetids are best represented by flies from sizes 14 to 18.

To represent the nymphs of these species the nymphs of the Leptophlebiids should be tied on sizes 12 and 14 hooks. Mick's gold beadhead nymph, which he has used to great effect in the local rivers, is tied on a size 14 Mustad R72 hook, a 2X long nymph hook. The Kamasan equivalent is a model 830 hook. The colours are uniformly a dark chocolate brown, this being also true for the stone fly nymphs found in the rivers around Thornton. For the Baetid nymphs the best fly to use is Sawyers Pheasant Tail Nymph in sizes 16 and 18.

Mick showed several photos of the flies he has devised to represent these bugs in their various life stages – nymph, dun and spinner. Those wishing to obtain Mick's flies will find them being sold in 70 or 80 local tackle stores. For those who like to tie their own them many of these patterns can be viewed on Mick's Website - <http://www.kossiedun.com.au>.



A spinner stuck emerging

The Fly Talk and Bugwatch links in this site give photos and tying patterns for many of the flies.

Mick's presentation was given a prolonged and generous round of applause, and many members remained behind to discuss flies and fly species with him at the conclusion of the evening. Well done Mick – a very impressive and informative presentation.

Web Fish

Cast regularly at vffa.org.au

About the VFFA web site:

The VFFA web site has a comprehensive coverage of VFFA events, meetings , trips, ...updated monthly making it easy to track dates and times.

Features of VFFA web site:

- Monthly Newsletter delivered to members in full colour.
- Live access to more than five years of past Newsletters
- Newsletter in PDF format for easy reading on computers / iPads / tablets & smart phones
- Newsletter in PDF format that can be read and saved on iPads and tablets like eBooks
- Calendar of all activities that can be synced with all you digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

President's Message

As this issue of the Newsletter goes to press, the Big River Weekend, on April 10 – 13 at “Chateau Pilkington”, will have been “run and won”. A detailed report in the next Newsletter will, I am sure, encourage those who have not had the pleasure of attending one of these unique experiences to make a note in their diaries for next year.

Our March Meeting, held on March 20, saw Mick Hall giving an excellent address, a summary of which is detailed elsewhere in this issue. The Guest Speaker for our April meeting, on Wednesday April 16, will be John Waters, the current Australian Distance Fly Casting Champion, and again this Newsletter contains more detail on John and his amazing record. Following this, at the May General Meeting on Thursday May 15, our Guest Speaker will be Rick Dobson, the proprietor of Aussie Angling, and again there are further details on Rick's topic in this publication.



With these excellent speakers kindly agreeing to give up their valuable time to address our members I am now asking all members to have a big think about the last time they attended one of our General Meetings, which, when all is said and done, are organised by your hard working Council for your benefit.

There are about 250 individual members of the VFFA, 135 of which have joined the Association between January 2000 and now. Thirty of these are either interstate or overseas members, and a further 50 members reside in country Victoria. If we leave out these 80 members, even though a number of country members make the effort to attend some of our meetings, we are left with 170 local members of which a solid core of 30 to 40 regularly attend meetings, and of these there is a group of some 15 who never miss a meeting.

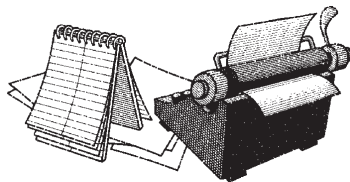
The point I am attempting to make is that there are 120 local members who we never see. I concede that many of our members are either aged and/or infirmed and are only able to enjoy their membership through receipt of our excellent Newsletter. However this still leaves at least 100 members who are missing out on the full benefit of their membership by not attending any of our meetings for reasons that are difficult for me to comprehend. This is an appeal to those members to fire up their enthusiasm for the VFFA and to make the effort to attend our General Meetings, or at least some of them. Also, feel free to bring a guest - they do not need to be members. I can assure you, you will not be disappointed.

When you respond to my fervent plea, make it a big night out by attending dinner at the Celtic Club prior to the meeting. To do this you need to advise your intention to dine by phoning the VFFA Message Service on 0498 254 497 and leave your name and the names of any others in your party. Bookings are open from the day prior to the meeting and close at mid-day on the day of the meeting.

In closing this message I wish to extend my sincere condolences and sympathy and those of the Council and all members of the VFFA to David (Choco) Grisold, an Honorary Life Member and a Past President of the VFFA, on the recent death of his father. Our thoughts are with David and his family at this sad time.

Best Wishes, *Terry Rogers (President)*

From the EDITOR'S DESK



“Fly fishing – a delightful excuse to linger in beautiful places.” Yes, I know, I’ve used this one before, but it’s the best definition of our beloved pursuit that I’ve come across.

A few weeks ago fellow member John Pilkington was telling me about a memorable evening when he fished his beloved Big River near Enoch’s Point. Those who’ve visited this area know just how captivating and attractive the river is there. John was fishing a pool he knew well in anticipation of an evening rise. And right on cue a fish started rising. But just as he prepared to cast a platypus paddled across the tail of the pool, totally unfazed by John’s presence. Then as the platypus reached the far bank John saw a lyrebird strutting along the edge of the stream. He then caught the fish.

This sequence of events stayed with him, and in his words, “was a rather spectacular trifecta”. He was later invited to write of this experience for the *London Fly-fisher’s Journal*, comparing and contrasting the rivers and fishing we have here in Australia with those in Southern England where John’s London friends do their fishing. John has fished the Test, and other rivers there, so was in a position to draw some comparisons.

I happily confess that I have fished the Test too – just once. Back in June 1987. I was in England (my first ever visit there) at the conclusion of a tour by a brass band I played with. I’d hired a car, made my way to Winchester to take some photos of the beautiful Itchen River (where G.E.M. Skues did much of his fishing), then scooted across to see the Test at Stockbridge. A few kilometres upstream from Stockbridge there’s a bridge over the river, and about 100 metres down the river I spotted a fly fisher laying out a very smooth and elegant cast. So I parked the car, grabbed my camera, and took off down the bank. As I approached the angler he became quite heated and indignant, telling me in very clear language that I had no right to be there. I was trespassing and should clear out pronto. And he had a fair case – I’d been four weeks away from my dear wife’s meticulous washing and ironing so looked rather scruffy in tired jeans and a grubby windcheater. But I was ready for the rebuttal – I hastily explained that I was a fly fisher from Melbourne, Australia, and had heard and read so much about this famous river. Would he mind if I took just a couple of photos and then I’d be gone. I then buttressed my appeal by whipping out a letter from the secretary of the VFFA, confirming that I was indeed a law-abiding and respectable member of a prominent Australian Fly Fishing Association.

Everything changed in a flash. I was now warmly greeted as a fellow member of that wonderful fraternity of fly fishers. Of course I could take some photos – as many as I wanted. And yes, I could follow along for a while and chat with my newly acquired angling colleague as he cast to the rises. And fish were rising in numbers, which I found intriguing. It was a cold day, perhaps 13°C, and heavily overcast with a blustery breeze, yet there were rings of trout all over the surface. They were rising to dark brown duns that looked huge - almost as big as butterflies. I completed one roll of film and dropped a second in the Nikon. Then came those magic words – “Would you like to have a cast?” “Oh please!” My first effort hooked and then tragically lost a trout that felt really solid. It had absconded with the fly. The owner of the rod, whose name was Warren Gilchrist, apologised – he was experimenting with some new knots for tying on flies, and

yes, he'd had some trouble with that one. Another fly was attached, another cast made, and this time the knot held and I landed a grayling of perhaps 1½ lb. Warren viewed my capture with the same disdain we might display here when fishing for trout and dragging in a redfin. But I was stoked. I'd actually caught a fish from the Test.

A few hours had passed and it was time for me to leave. We exchanged addresses and I still receive a Christmas card every December from Warren, usually with a brief paragraph describing his year's fishing. I doubt we'll ever meet again, but I remain grateful indeed for his kind hospitality and the memories I have of a truly engrossing afternoon.

Rivers are wonderful. The Test is very different from my usual haunts. The grass along the edges was mown to create paths and there were small huts to retreat to when it rained. Downstream from where I fished there were magnificent homes with lawns running down to the river edge. It was all very manicured and neat. The river flowed swiftly and smoothly, and was a little like a canal, at least in the few hundred metres that I saw. But to walk the banks and see rising fish and reflect on the rich history and the wealth of magnificent fly fishing literature associated with this famous river was a truly enthralling experience.

A feature of rivers is that they're all so different, each having their own unique personality and characteristics. To anglers they all have a special attractiveness, and of course are infinitely more attractive and appealing when they have trout in them. As autumn now recedes into early winter our river fishing will soon close, and another season will draw to an end. But autumn often provides some of our best stream fishing, so I trust we can all find some time in the next month or two to fish a river – perhaps an old friend, or maybe even a new one.

In any case tight lines, *Lyndon Webb*



Civilised fishing – rain shelters and nicely mowed paths



Warren tying another knot



Warren held the camera while yours truly had a cast

Fishing the St Joe River in Idaho

(... Jim Blakeslee)

The benchmark by which I judge magnificent fly fishing rivers would have to be the upper reaches of the St Joe in northern Idaho. That's the reason I need to go back to fish it from time to time, just to remind myself how lovely it is, irrespective of the time and effort required to get there. It is a beautiful river surrounded by majestic peaks and bordered by huge, ancient fir, cedar, hemlock and spruce trees. It is managed as a wild native cutthroat trout and bull trout fishery with no stocking, and it is catch and release and fly fishing only.

If you are the type of Aussie fly fisher who is prepared to fly to America; drive to the end of the road in the Bitterroot Range on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains in the panhandle of Idaho; put on a rucksack loaded down with food, camping and fishing gear; then hike at least a few hours upstream from the Spruce Tree Creek Campground before setting up camp, then the best is yours to experience too. Probably the only other fly fishermen you will see are those prepared to walk in with you, as most of the day hikers and fishermen will only go an hour or so upstream from the campground before starting to fish.

The further upstream you go the fewer people and the more elk, moose, deer and bears you are likely to see. If it is late summer the grasshoppers will be hopping into the river to be sucked down by the trout, and the river level will be lower, warmer and more easily wadeable. The reason the bears are there is the abundance of bear food. There are lots of huckleberry and thimbleberry patches along the trail that follows the river. The bears, fortunately, are mainly the more manageable black variety intent on eating berries. If you happen to see one, probably feeding, you can shout at it or throw a few rocks and it will lumber off, leaving the berry patch to you. Then you can concentrate on collecting a hat-full of huckleberries for yourself to have as an after-dinner dessert or to put on you breakfast pancakes. Add a dab of butter and a splash of maple syrup and you are in heaven. Oh, I forgot to mention that the trout are also bigger and less wary up there.



Peter Conrick describing one that got away



After the St Joe Jim visited a famous Californian fishing store



Some nice trout guys

My last trip to the St Joe was in August, 2013. We had flown to the USA to attend a wedding in Washington. After the wedding it was only a five-hour drive from there to the St Joe, so it was an opportunity too good to miss. I travelled there with my wife Tricia, my sister Carol, and good mate Peter Conrick, who was the father of the groom. We hiked in and had a fabulous week fishing the river, along with some of the alpine lakes nearby. The weather was sunny and hot. So, if not swimming, we kept cool by wading up the middle of the river "wet." We had the most success on deep pools at bends in the river, or casting towards the bank where logs or large boulders gave cover for the fish. During the day my fly of choice was a #10 Latex Hopper for the cutthroats. There were lots of them too, mostly in the 1 to 2 lb range with a few to 3 lb. They would take the fly with gusto and put up a good battle before being released to fight another day.

For variety, when the sun was off the water in the evening we tried casting sculpin patterns. We allowed these to swing downstream and across in the deeper pools, sink a bit, then were retrieved with short jerks, hoping to catch trophy bull trout that are voracious predators feeding mainly on smaller fish. The bull trout, actually a type of char, can grow to 7 or 8 lb in the St Joe. They were once plentiful, but are now considered rare. I guess that's why we didn't see any, let

alone catch any. Still, it was a bit of a heart-stopper when, every now and then, something slammed into the sculpin fly and the line ripped off the reel! Was it a disappointment to then find that it was just another 2 to 3 lb cutthroat that came to the net? Not really. Just lots of fun!

After a few days we were sick of dehydrated bushwalker food and felt like eating fresh fish. So we shoved a gas stove and frying pan, salt, pepper, oil and lemon into a day pack with our fishing gear and hiked for a few hours, gaining 1,000 metres of altitude up a mountain to Bacon Lake, where it was OK to keep a fish. The high altitude cutthroats were ravenous, and took a #16 Quill Gordon mayfly imitation with abandon. We were hungry, too, after some hours of hiking to get there. So straight into the frying pan they went! And a delicious lunch they were, too. On the way down we stopped in a good patch to collect huckleberries for dessert. We saw fresh bear scat, but luckily no bears and, not wishing to be too greedy, decided we had collected enough berries and made tracks for camp.

At the end of the week we hiked back to our cars at the Campground. It was all over but had been a memorable fishing trip. Tricia and I continued our travels, heading further east towards Montana. Peter would drop my sister Carol at the Spokane airport for her flight back to San Francisco, then continue west to his home in Seattle, Washington. We hugged and said our goodbyes. As we went our separate ways I wondered when the next time would be that we fished together (all left-handers by the way), and whether it would be on a river as good as the beautiful St Joe



Tricia Blakeslee is a fine angler too



It all looks great water Jim

The Wisdom of G.E.M. Skues

(For those who want a quick potted history, George Edward MacKenzie Skues (1858 – 1949) was a British lawyer, author and very prominent fly fisherman most noted for the invention of modern-day nymph fishing and the controversy it caused with the Chalk Stream dry fly doctrine commonly adhered to by fly fishers at this time.

Mick Hall recently came across some material written by Skues and has passed it on for publication in our newsletter. It's quite a coup to have Skues writing for us! The original article runs to 13 pages, so we will print parts of it over a couple of issues. Skues was writing about fly tying, and in this issue we read his thoughts on selecting tools and materials. Next month he will tell us how to tie a fly. This is truly a fascinating read, and our sincere thanks to Mick for making it available.)



Introduction

During the early years of the 20th century, apart from his classic works, G.E.M. Skues wrote a huge number of articles, most of which were published in *The Fishing Gazette*, *The Field* and the *Journal of the Fly Fishers' Club*. These writings have been reproduced in full or part over ensuing years. His amazing life has been documented in a number of works, the latest being Tony Hayter's *G.E.M. Skues The Man of the Nymph* and is deemed to become a classic in its own right.

In 1911 the Earl of Suffolk released a four-volume work entitled "*The Encyclopaedia Of Sport*", with contributions from many of the noted sportspeople of that era. This work included a large article on fly tying by Skues. Owing to the rarity of this work, I have taken the liberty of reproducing it here in full. I hope you enjoy the read. Mick Hall

From *The Encyclopaedia of Sport*, Vol. IV, *Rackets to Zebra*, Published by William Heinemann, London, 1911. Edited by the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire.

FLY DRESSING FOR TROUT AND GRAYLING

WET FLY AND DRY FLY

G.E.M. Skues

The dressing of flies is not a modern invention. Aelian, writing about the end of the second century of our era, describes fishing with the artificial fly as practised in Macedonia; and Oppian, writing about 176 AD, refers to the practice of fly fishing for a sea-fish called the scarus. And though the next reference to the subject in literature occurs in the book *On Fysshynge with an Angle*, published in 1496, and ascribed to the legendary Dame Juliana Berners, yet, judging from what was known of it in Izaak Walton's day, the art was even then encrusted with tradition. It had probably been introduced into England by the Romans, and had come down from mouth to mouth, or from manuscript to manuscript, largely, no doubt, through the monks.

On Fysshynge with an Angle gives certain particulars of dressings of flies, but no instruction in the methods of tying. Walton himself, in his first edition (1653), gives a transcript of the instructions in Barker's *Delight* (1651); and in his second edition (1655) he falls back on Leonard Mascall's *Book of Fishinge with a Hooke and Line* (1590), and copies Mascall's instructions verbatim. Walton was therefore no inventor or refiner.

The advance in the art during the succeeding centuries has been slow, many writers who pretended to authority contenting themselves with merely copying from previous authors. In the *Compleat Fisherman* of James Saunders (1724) there is the first mention of silkworm gut. Successively there followed Bowlker's work, *The Universal Angler* (1766), Geo. C. Bainbridge's *Flyfisher's Guide* (1816), Ronald's *Flyfisher's Entomology* (1836), Hewett Wheatley's *Rod and Line* (1849), which advocates eyed hooks; and several other improvements much in advance of his time; John Jackson's *Practical Flyfisher* (1853), Blacker's *Art of Fly-making* (1855), Stewart's *Practical Angler* (1857), and Theakston's *British Angling Flies* (1862).

In Francis Francis's *Book of Angling*, published first in 1867, the art of fishing with a dry fly is first touched on by a standard author, though a century earlier the method had been suggested for casual use. Indeed, in the same century appeared eyed hooks and the Pennell jam knot. In 1876 appeared *A Quaint Treatise of Flees and the Art of Artyfichall Flee Making*, Mr Aldam's reprint of an old Derbyshire manuscript, with addenda by Mr Aldam. In 1885 appeared Mr F. M. Halford's *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them*, a work in which the first serious and adequate attempt was ever made to describe the minute processes of fly dressing. And although it purports to be confined to giving instructions in dressing floating flies, yet it is so clear, so careful and so readily be picked up from its pages. An extension of the subject, bringing it up to date, entitled *Dry Fly Entomology*, has also been published.

Though doubtless from the first some effort, more or less crude, was made to imitate natural insects, yet Ronald's (*Flyfisher's Entomology*) was the first, in 1837, to set side by side upon the same page pictures of the natural flies and the dressings claiming to represent them, and to append to the descriptions the scientific names of the various insects depicted. Bainbridge's work in 1816 had given certain coloured pictures, more or less meritorious, of some of the natural insects, but not of the dressings representing them. Theakston's work gave minute verbal descriptions of some ninety different insects, with a careful black and white life-size drawing of each. These works gave a great stimulus to the study of angler's entomology, and led incidentally to a steady improvement in the dressings of flies.

In addition, anglers dress imitations of caterpillars and of insects in their larval and pupal stages, and flies typical of a class which we may call general flies, sand flies which may be termed fancy flies, resembling no insect except in shape; for even where no particular insect is imitated, the aim of the dresser is to suggest an insect of some sort. The methods of imitating them are very various; and in deciding whether to adopt one method rather than another, the dresser should ascertain the character of the water to be fished with it.

The aim being to suggest some living insect, the dresser must seek to present to the fish the colours, the shadings, the harmonies, the attitudes, and the motions of life. Thus, where the surface of the stream is smooth so that the natural flies float down on it without danger of immersion, the best imitation the angler can offer to the fish is one as precise in colour, size, shape, and attitude on the water as can be contrived consistently with strength and durability. Motion must be omitted. Here what is known as dry fly fishing comes into play. In tumbling, shallow mountain streams, the colour and action of life only can be suggested, as any attempt to

portray the attitudes of the natural insect as it is when at rest would be thrown away; and the action of something struggling for life in a boiling torrent is much more likely to be attractive to the fish. Hence the Yorkshire school, addicted to the use of soft hackles and discarding wings, and the Devonshire school, which employs brilliant cock's hackles, again without wings. For big, heavy waters, such as Tweed and Clyde in spring, strongly built flies with divided wings of several thicknesses of feather are often employed. Derbyshire affects lightly built floating flies and bumbles; the Usk, big spare lightly dressed flies with a very knowing rake. There are, in fact, endless varieties in detail in the dressing of flies to suit the various rivers of these islands; and that is why it is well to get flies of a local dresser, or, better still, to be master of all modes of dressing them. There are seven styles of dressing the common blue dun.

Implements – It is only possible for a few to make firm work on small eyed hooks without the assistance of a vice; and most amateurs will find a vice an advantage in dressing sunk as well as floating flies. The form is not very important, provided that the jaws are strong and well tempered, yet small enough to allow the forefinger and thumb to come down upon and grasp the hook shank in the operation of winging. The vice should be provided with a clamp for fixing it to a table. The most beautiful vice is Mr Hawksley's, made by Messrs Holtzapfel, of Cockspur Street, price 35s. In addition, the operator needs a pair of straight, fine-pointed dissecting scissors, a pair of curved oculist's or manicure scissors, one or more pairs of hackle pliers, a watchmaker's pliers, a sharp penknife, and a dubbing needle. A stout needle, fixed in a wooden shaft, makes an efficient dubbing needle.

Materials – The dresser must have tying silks of various colours, wax, gut, hooks, varnish, floss silk, dubbings, herls, tinsels, wires, hackles, both from poultry and other birds, wings and other feathers of various birds, and dyes.

Tying Silks – Pearsall's gossamer silk, spun for the purpose, are the most convenient on the whole. Naples silk and glover's silk are also used by many. The essential colours are cream, straw, primrose, yellow, orange (two shades), crimson, and (for north country streams) purple. It is well to have also green, ash, black, brown, and Mr Aldam's Indian yellow. All these silks darken very much when waxed.

Wax – It is therefore desirable to have some transparent wax in addition to some ordinary harness maker's wax.

Gut – will be required, if the flies are not dressed on eyed hooks, and of fineness appropriate to the work in hand.

Hooks – These are either eyed or ordinary, and are to be had blue, bronzed, or japanned. The bends used are Limerick, Sneck, Kirby, and Round, and the sizes run from 000 new scale (the smallest) to No. 4, and very occasionally to a larger size for trout, grayling, and dace, but much larger sizes are used for chub. Eyed hooks have either upturned, downturned or straight eyes. Sizes under No. 4 are not found to hook well in wet fly fishing, and it is better for this purpose to dress flies on gut. On the other hand, for dry fly fishing eyed hooks present enormous advantages. Mr H. S. Hall's Snecky Limerick bend with upturned eye is probably the best bend for this style of fishing.

Varnish – A small bottle of ordinary spirit varnish, very thin, and stoppered with a cork rubbed with mutton fat to prevent it from sticking to the bottle, answers all purposes. The varnish is applied with a fine porcupine quill, or a needle mounted like the dubbing needle.

Floss Silks – These must be bought off tackle makers, and a large variety of colours is of service. The essential colours are white, primrose, yellow, orange, and claret. All shades of green and olive, ash, red-brown, and purple are desirable. Floss silks are used for wrapping round hooks to imitate the bodies of flies.

Dubbings are used for similar purposes, only they have to be spun on the tying silk to make them adhere. They consist of crewels, wools, baize, furs of various animals (hare, rabbit, fox, squirrel, mole, water-rat, opossum, etc.), mohair, seal's fur, and pig's wool. The function of dubbing is to represent the filmy, semi-transparent covering which modifies the base colour of the natural fly. Thus the mole's fur or water rat's fur, with which the iron blue dun is dressed, serves to indicate the soft inky envelope which in the sub-imago covers the delicate claret spinner within. So this fly is properly dressed with a plum or claret-coloured silk, which shows through the envelope of dubbing. It should be noted that in a wet-fly, where the body is dubbed, it is of great importance that the tying silk should be of the right colour, for when the fly is wet, the silk will, especially in bright sunlight, show right through the dubbing in a most incomprehensible manner; and if the colour of the silk be wrong, the fly will not do. It is better to be wrong over the dubbing than over the base colour.

Waxing has a very modifying influence upon the colours of silk, greater or less according to the nature of the silk and the wax. With ordinary harness-maker's wax, white silk becomes dark leaden dun, cream a dark olive, primrose and yellow other and lighter shades of olive, olive nearly black, orange a dirty yellow brown, and crimson a deep red. Dubbings cannot, unless they be composed of one fur only (and even then not always), be successfully described on paper. The dresser should, if possible, match the dubbing with the natural fly, wetting the material and holding it to the light. If dubbing be made of more than one material, it should be well mixed by pulling and tearing until the colour is uniform throughout. This process is called "testing".

The dubbing is applied thus. A sufficient portion and a little over is taken in the hand and picked out so as to form a long fine taper. This is rolled in the palm of the left hand with the two middle fingers of the right. The taper roll is then placed along the tying silk, with the fine end towards the fly, close up to the hook, and is rolled on to the silk with the forefinger and thumb. The silk is then twisted tightly from right to left (assuming that the dresser is winding over the hook and away from him), until it has taken hold of the dubbing for a sufficient length. The silk with the adhering dubbing can now be wound on to the hook. The object of twisting the silk from right to left is to prevent the dubbing from working off the silk. If twisted in this way, each lap of the dubbed silk serves to fix the dubbing tighter. In some flies only a little dubbing is put under the breast or round the shoulders. In other patterns the dubbing is used to represent the legs of the fly only. In dressing duns, it is well to pick over the dubbed body with the pliers to remove any inequalities.

Herls – Green and bronze peacock herls, including the eye feathers and black ostrich herls are essential, with wing and tail feathers of adjutant and condor for those who can get them. Strips from the tails of golden pheasant, cock pheasant, turkey, blue macaw, magpie, and others, breast feathers of the common goose, wing and back feathers of the heron, lapwings, toppings, and many more, are useful at times.

Tinsels – Flat gold and silver tinsel of two widths, fine gold wire, fine gold and silver twist of two thicknesses, and (for chub flies) stouter oval gold and silver twists should be procured.

Hackles – are the most important part of the fly-dresser's equipment. They are procured from the necks and saddles of poultry, and from the necks, breasts, backs, rumps, and wing coverts of

numerous other birds. The following are the most important: - Corncrake (shoulder and under wing), young curlew (shoulder), dotterel (shoulder), golden plover (shoulder and breast), red grouse, moorhen (under wing), brown owl (shoulder), partridge (breast, back, and rump), pheasant, cock and hen (neck and breast), sea gull and sea swallow (shoulder), snipe (shoulder and under wing), starling (neck, crest, back, shoulder, and under wing), thrush (under wing), and wren (tail). They are all easily procured, except the young curlew, the dotterel, and the sea swallow. Many others are mentioned in books of fly dressing, but are only of occasional service.

Poultry hackles are had from the necks and saddles of domestic fowls, both cock and hen. The colours needed are badger (black centre and cream-coloured points) to be had from Dorkings, black, blue (the smoky dun colour known as blue by fishermen), and as many shades as possible from nearly black to the palest smoke-colour, to be had from Andalusian and blue game fowls; cinnamon, cochybondhu (a hackle with black centre and list, and red in the interval), cream cuckoo (a freckled hackle from the Plymouth rock), furnace (black centre and red points), ginger (a series of shades from cream to light red, including ginger cuckoo), grizzle (a freckled or spangled sandy or rusty blue dun), honey dun yellow dun, and copper dun (blue duns of all shades edged or freckled with sandy or rusty ginger or red of all shades), from cross-bred Andalusians and blue game fowls, red of all shades, from a hot orange, ginger to deep mahogany, and white.

In addition, white, ginger or blue hackles dyed in canary, onion dye, green olive, brown olive, and medium olive (a good variety of shades), and white and black hackles dyed claret. Blues, honey duns, sandy gingers, and badgers are the most difficult to procure good.

Few hackles approximate to perfection, but there are innumerable useful hackles falling short of that degree of excellence. Good hens' hackles are easier to get than good cocks'. Hackles, and indeed all birds' feathers (except rusty duns), are in best condition from December to March. For floating flies, cocks' hackles are immensely superior to hens'. Cocks of two years old and upwards yield the best hackles for that purpose. For wet fly work softer hackles are better than stiff ones. Poultry hackles should be fine and clean and bright in the fibre and as much as possible of the same colour back and front.

The large saddle hackles of cocks, their beard hackles, and the broad, glossy hackles on their shoulders are used for representing the whisks or tails of upwinged flies (Ephemeridae). These are also represented by the white and blue feathers from the neck and breast of a guinea fowl, dyed or plain as required.

Other Feathers – Wings of the hen, blackbird, bullfinch, chaffinch, coot, corncrake, fieldfare, grouse, common gull, jay, lark, partridge, peahen, cock and hen pheasant, snipe, jacksnipe, starling (old and young), thrush, and woodcock should be had. Also tails of the great tit, partridge, pheasant (cock and hen), some broad, glossy feathers from under a cormorant's wing, and some loose-fibred feathers from a moorhen's breast.

Dyes – Crawshaw's dyes or the Diamond dyes in the following colours: magenta or wing, red spinner, orange, canary, green olive, brown olive, and medium olive, green drake, slate, and iron blue.

With the above equipment the amateur will be well set up. Few more feathers are required, but a piece of bottle rubber should be procured, some white horsehair, and some tawsey ends of gut for dyeing, some chaffinch quills, and some pike scales to wing black gnats.

(Next month Skues will tell us how to properly tie a fly.)

Catch and Release and Fish Survival

(Some time ago I came across an article describing some experiments that investigated the effect that the time a trout is kept out of the water has on its likelihood of survival when it was released. The results confirmed obvious expectations – the longer the trout was kept out of the water the less likely it was to survive after release, with a 30 second exposure to air being dangerously close to the limit.

I couldn't find the original article, but there were others on the web. Below is a summary of some common recommendations if you want your released fish to survive.)

First - research indicates that 90% of fish caught on flies will survive after being released.

Rule 1: Speed Does Not Kill

The faster you can get a fish in the better its chances of survival. The longer the fight the less chance the fish has of surviving. A fish played too long can become too tired to recover. Prolonged exertion causes lactic acid to build up in the fish's muscle tissue, which causes the muscle cells to start decomposing from lack of oxygen and greatly decreases their chances of surviving. This can also adversely affect the flavour of the meat in fish you keep.

Rule 2: Get Wet

Lifting a fish out of the water dramatically decreases its survival chances. The longer a fish is out of water the less its chances of survival. Try to remove the hook while the fish is in the water. If this is not possible then use a landing net with a wide mesh made out of soft material. If you must touch the fish ensure your hands are wet. Never touch a fish's gills.

If you must lift a fish in your hands, hold it under the gill latch in one hand and just in front of the tail with the other. Never lift a fish out of water by holding the belly area. This will almost certainly damage internal organs and reduce survival chances dramatically.

Don't suspend fish (especially large fish) by the line, lower jaw or gills as this places enormous strain on the throat latch and will possibly cause fatal injuries. In fact large fish should never be removed from the water if you intend to release them. And of course never lay a trout on dry ground.

Rule 3: Unhook Quickly

Barbless hooks are much easier to remove and do far less damage. The longer you take over hook removal, and the less care you take over removing the hook, the less chance of the fish surviving. Use a pair of forceps, long-nosed pliers, or a purpose made hook-out to quickly remove the hook.

If the fish is deeply hooked in the throat or stomach cut the line as close to the hook as possible and leave the hook in the fish. Fish have strong digestive acids that dissolve metal. Studies have shown that fish released in this manner have a higher survival rate than fish that have had hooks torn from their throat or stomach.

Rule 4: No Throwing

Throwing a fish back into the water will decrease its chances of survival. The major problem with tossing a fish back into the water is that the fish can go into shock, and float belly-up. In a river the current will take the fish downstream and away from any chance of re-catching it and of reviving it.

Revive the fish before releasing it. Gently hold it upright underwater by the tail and cradle its belly if necessary. Hold the fish facing the current when in a river or gently move the fish back and forth in still water to help move water through the gills. Give the fish as much time as needed to recover and swim away on its own.

Rule 5: Avoid Photo Folly

If you must take a photo do it very quickly - remember every second the fish is out of water is reducing the chances of its survival. Make sure the 'happy angler' has wet hands and holds the fish just in front of the tail and under the gill latch. Never put a hand under the gill covers or hold a hand under the stomach area, as this may damage internal organs.

Don't pose and take one photo, then repose and take another, and so on. Instead get the photographer to fire off a rapid series of shots in very quick succession. This is what the professionals do, and is the reason they get better shots

Rule 6: Consider the water temperature

Fish that are already stressed by warm water temperatures or low dissolved oxygen conditions cannot handle the added stress of being caught and most likely will not survive after release. If you are catching fish in summer when water temperatures are already marginal, don't plan on catching and releasing a lot of fish. When the water temperature is high fish tire much more rapidly due to the increase of lactic acid that builds in their system. When fishing warm water get the fish in as soon as possible, so use a heavier line than usual.

Rule 7: Consider Weighing Your Fish with a Ruler

You don't have to measure and weigh your fish if you are going to release them. If you must know how big your fish is then measure its length and girth quickly and release it. Don't hang fish from scales because this will injure the fish's gills, internal organs (due to weight), and possibly tear the gill cover. It's safer to measure the length and girth of your trout then use this formula (all measurements in inches): $\text{Length} \times \text{Girth} \times \text{Girth} \div 800$ will give the weight in lb. (Then multiply this 0.454 to convert the weight to kg).

Why Do Hooked Fish Die?

Fish that are caught and released may die for several reasons, but the two primary causes are stress and wounding. Stress results from the fish fighting after being hooked. Internally, the physical exertion causes an oxygen deficit in the tissues, forcing the muscles to function anaerobically (without oxygen). This causes lactic acid to build up in the muscle tissue, and then to diffuse into the blood. Lactic acid acts as an acid in the blood, causing the pH of the blood to drop. Even slight changes in pH can cause major disruptions of the metabolic processes, ultimately killing the fish. If the fish is quickly released its blood pH usually returns to normal and the fish will be unaffected.

The other primary cause of mortality is wounding by the hook. Injuries caused by hooks can range from very minor to lethal. The degree of injury is dependent on the location of the hook wound. Higher mortalities will occur in fish that are hooked in the gill or stomach areas, while lower mortalities occur in fish that are hooked in the lip, jaw, or cheek areas.

This Month's Yarn

(... from August 1966)

"I've been led to believe," said Alf, while the lunch glasses was spirited away to be refilled, "that a lot of the rainbow trout now on sale here come from Japan."

"They come here frozen, of course," remarked McTaggart. "But those Japanese rainbows, when they're alive, have some quite interesting national characteristics. I'll give you an example. It's not well known but about twenty years ago the Upper Rubibyrene River was stocked with some of these Japanese rainbows, probably as an experiment. It turns out they proved very difficult to catch, mainly because they were well versed in some of the principles of jujitsu."

"One of the ideas in jujitsu is that if a fellow tries to pull you in a certain direction you suddenly move in that direction, and this surprises him and he loses his balance. Now these rainbows did exactly the same thing. When you hooked them they would suddenly and very quickly swim in the same direction in which you were exerting pressure on them. You were immediately in real trouble with loose line everywhere, and invariably your hook came free."

"Now there happened to be a very big Japanese rainbow in a deep pool not far from the local pub up there, and lots of blokes had hooked and then lost him, despite using heavy tackle and letting him swallow the bait. This was because he had developed a karate trick."

"A karate trick?" questioned Terry, who was lingering on the edge of the conversation.

"Well that's the best way I can describe it," replied McTaggart. "This fish had developed a sharp-edged operculum at the back of his gills, and he used it with a very adroit movement to slice through the leader and thus escape."

"But I suppose you caught him," groaned Alf. "As a matter of fact I did," said McTaggart. "That's how I found out about this operculum - I cut my hand on it. To catch him I used a tactic I learned years ago on the Wingiwoba. When this fish rose to my fly I whipped my rod tip to the side and this sudden movement caused the fly to bypass the fish's mouth and hook him in the tail. And as he hadn't learned to swim backwards he couldn't use his jujitsu tactics to get away. So I got him!"



Tichborne Watercolour - The Take.

Fishing the South Island in 2013

(Here are two accounts of fishing New Zealand's South Island in late 2013. Hubert Reichelt and Trevor Stow have been fishing there together for several years.)

Hubert fishing the Mackenzie Basin

Since my retirement I have more than doubled the time I devote to fly fishing. The start of my spring fishing coincides with the season opening for the high country rivers in New Zealand's South Island. I now fish for two weeks in the Mackenzie Basin for rainbow trout, followed by another two weeks in the Gore district fishing for brown trout. For the first fortnight last November I was on my own, as Trevor Stow, my regular fishing companion in New Zealand, could only be away from his business for two weeks, and he prefers fishing at Gore anyway.

During the twenty-five years I have fished the Mackenzie Basin I have befriended a number of farmers on whose properties I can now stay and fish the rivers that flow through them. When I fronted up at the first farm last November I was told that a 'hundred year flood' in the area during the spawning season had pushed the trout back into the lakes, with few remaining in the river. I found this a little hard to believe as on all previous occasions when I had fished this river it was teaming with rainbow trout.

The next morning I started early, but after an hour's fishing hadn't spotted a single fish. I hadn't even spooked a fish. I turned over some rocks and found only the odd nymph or caddis larva. I also saw that the pools were filled with rocks and gravel, and the banks were washed out in places. In fact the river in this lower section looked like a drain with very little structure. I suspected that if the floods were the cause of the absence of fish, then there might still be fish in the headwaters, as the catchment there is smaller so less water would flow into the river to cause damage.

I felt I needed to check this proposition so I stopped fishing and began walking along the bank trying to spot fish. After a couple of hours the flow of water was discernably less, the rocks in the river were larger, and I started spotting fish. From then on it was business as usual, and I finished the day with 23 fish between 2 and 3½ pounds.

When I got back to my hut I was aching and weary from stumbling over rocky terrain all day. The next day I was still quite stiff with a few remaining aches and pains, so opted for a quiet lunch with a glass of red and some leisurely fishing which yielded another 3¾ pound rainbow.

I next checked the Ahuriri River, which had colour from the snowmelt and was running high. It was fishable but it wasn't possible to spot fish, so I looked up another friendly farmer to seek permission to fish a spring creek on his property. This is a very challenging fishery as the water was gin clear (if the cows are not in it), the water level was low, and the fish extremely alert. A rod tip poked surreptitiously over the bank was enough to send them darting off - and this at the start of the season! After many attempts I managed only four browns, the best just on 4 lb. This is a fishery that makes you very humble because the countless missed opportunities emphasize just how much more there is to learn.

Another favourite river in the basin is the Twizel River. In a normal season it holds a lot of rainbows in the first two weeks following Opening Day. However last year it was also showing signs of the big flood and fish numbers remaining in the river were low. I walked downstream



Nice water Hubert, but big hills too

from the bridge for an hour, and then fished back, taking five fish with the best at 3¾ pounds. In a normal season you can get as many as this after only a fifteen minute walk from the bridge.

Late one afternoon I had a chat over a beer in the Omarama Pub with a guide who owned the local tackle shop. He suggested I check the Omarama Stream, as it had not been affected by the flood. I was pleasantly surprised by the ease of access for anglers and the quality of the fishing. This stream flows through flat farmland, has grassy overhanging banks, and fish that were not hard to spot in the clear water once you worked out where they are holding. The stream is only five minutes drive out of town, thus allowing an angler to have a meal and be back on the river in time for the evening rise. Each time I fished it I caught two or three browns on a size 16 nymph.

My next move was to another farm where I had access to the Grays River - the home of some big browns. Unfortunately this time the river was coloured and running a banker. I caught only two smallish fish late in the evening - hardly worth writing home about considering what this river delivers under good conditions.

However this farm gave me easy access to the upper reaches of the Hakataramea River - a stream you need to get to early in the morning to avoid fishing behind other anglers. Although it had also been flooded the fishing picked up when I got into the gorge section where the riverbed consists of solid rock, forming a stable structure for the fish to hold. Halfway through the gorge there is a pool that can just be crossed in chest waders at low water level, but not the case this time. So I turned back. On the way back I caught a fish I had missed earlier, and as I was releasing it I heard a voice behind me muttering, "I wouldn't mind a fish for dinner tonight." It

was the farmer who owned the land around this part of the Hakataramea, and he was somebody I had always wanted to meet. I explained that I was most unlikely to get another fish as I had already fished this section a couple of hours earlier, but I promised him a nice brace next time I fished there.

I had caught nine fish on this day, the largest 3½ pounds, so it was a fitting end to my 2013 visit to the Mackenzie Basin. The following day I was up very early to pick up Trevor at the airport in Queenstown.

Trevor's Account of the fishing around Gore

New Zealand's South Island is a wonderful place to be in late spring, so long as the weather is half decent. Last November Hubert and I arrived in Gore following some recent rain and cold weather. As a result the Mataura River was a little on the high side but fishable, and fortunately the weather improved while we were there.

We commenced fishing in our usual style, checking out the Mataura River and visiting some smaller tributaries. The Mataura was tough going and the tributaries were a mixed bag. The Otamita River was very low but the Waimea River nearby was flowing nicely. The Apirima River was also in good shape and fished well, and the Waikakia Stream was slightly discoloured but looked fishable.

We headed up to the Cattle Flat to fish some backwaters on the Mataura and the nearby Tomogalak River, a small tributary, but when we arrived we found the tributary flowing a banker and quite dirty. So we called on a local farmer who informed us that they had received an inch of rain the previous evening and that the Mataura, the tributary and our backwater were all dirty and unfishable. This had been a localised rain event that happens in New Zealand from time to time; sadly it had ruined our fishing in the area.

But there's always a "Plan B" so we headed back to the Waimea River, which has a different headwater and where we were confident there had been no rain. We approached a farmer to fish on his property and, as is usual in Southland, were granted permission, so we parked and walked for 15 minutes downstream to fish back to the vehicle. The Waimea is a lovely little stream that meanders through a mixture of sheep and dairy farms.

We were fishing the standard Southland rig, a Parachute Adams with a Bismarck Nymph on a dropper set about 18 inches underneath, and caught three trout of around 2 lb before we arrived back at the car. This was a reasonable return but were hoping for better, so reviewed our options while grabbing some lunch. We decided in the end to continue fishing upstream. It was now about 2:00pm and fish began appearing. We saw several rises and takes were



Hubert with a fine trout from the Waimea

frequent, particularly in the broken water. In the next couple of hours we accounted for a further eight trout ranging from 1½ to 2½ pounds. Some were caught on the Bismarck and some on the Parachute Adams. Then the wind got up so it was time to call it a day.

The Bismarck is a great fly. (It is also known as Hubert Reichelt's Mataura Nymph and was described in the VFFA issue July 2008). It closely resembles the mayfly nymphs that are found all over New Zealand. We use it in sizes 16 and 18. It has a slim profile and when coupled with a No. 2 tungsten bead it sinks quickly. It is not too heavy however and will happily drift along behind a small dry without pulling the dry fly under. Our leaders are usually 12 to 14 feet, 5X to the dry fly, then 18 inches to the Bismarck.



Trevor's 7 lb brown, which he put back

We were rather pleased with how the day turned out so headed back there the following day. Our return visit followed a similar pattern. The best fishing was after lunch when the trout were busy on the top. So we removed the nymph and caught 17 fish, mostly on the Parachute Adams. We find it fairly common here to have better fishing after lunch than in the morning.

Our days usually start with a coffee in Gore at about 9:30am before we invade the local supermarket to stock up. Here we often run into locals who we know. Then it's off to the river, arriving at about 11:00am and fishing for about 1½ hours before we break for lunch. After lunch we fish till about 5:00pm or until the wind gets up. Then it's off to the Riversdale Pub for a pot or two, back to Gore for tea, then out again to the river for an hour or so of the evening rise. So it's all done in gentlemen's hours.



This one was a bit undernourished, so happily returned

To finish the day we often call in on Andrew Mossman, who also fishes this area at that time of the year. Andrew is invariably cooking his evening meal at 11:00pm, following his usual 12 hours or so on the lower Matura, so we find a chair and allow him to shout us a nice red or two whilst we do a debrief. Andrew brings along a superb selection of good quality wines each year and we find it necessary to reassess their quality most evenings. Last year he surpassed himself by producing a 40 year old Portuguese Port for us to sample.

Our experience in 2013 was that the fishing was a little below par for Southland, but we suspect it was only a seasonal thing. The weather had been affected by a lot of low pressure systems passing the Island and perhaps that's why the mayflies never really got going. We have often done particularly well with late evening caddis fishing, but again they were conspicuous this time by their absence. Fish sizes were about average, with lots in the 1½ to 2½ pound range. These fish usually grow well at this time of the year and by the end of summer have often put on another pound or more. This year however the weather over Christmas continued to be rather poor, and the mayflies and caddis never really fired up. It was also a poor willow grub year. Consequently the fish did not grow much post-Christmas. Even so, a below average year in New Zealand is still pretty good in comparison with most other places.



Back from New Zealand Hubert enjoyed an afternoon on the Steavenson River

Up The Duff

(Another poem from the pen of Steve Suitor)

My bones were feeling weary
And my wits were at an end
So I took a week of fishing
With old Alex and his friend.

His mate came from Victoria
But a good bloke just the same
He said his name was Mr Duff
But we could call him Graham.

We headed to the Great Lake
And at the shack we settled in
There were rods and reels and flies to check
And wagging of the chin.

We headed off to Little Pine
To fish the evening rise
They wouldn't take our well-sunk wets,
They spurned our nymphs and dries.

Next morning off to Bronte
To fish tailers from the shore,
And the trout were there in plenty
And our flies they did ignore.

As we headed home to have our lunch,
A fishless, chastened lot,
We said, "All fish are bastards"
And that was our parting shot.

Next day we fished at Tailors Bay
We thrashed Pine Tier Lagoon,
We looked at Tungatinah,
Might as well have fished the moon.

We travelled round to look at Tods
And Graham managed one,
Though me and Alex flogged with wets,
Our total still was none.

Another crack at Little Pine,
Refusing to be beat,
But they're well-named those "Untouchables"
We must admit defeat.

We made our way down to Lake Leake
And caught a fish or three,
Each night we patronised the bar,
Though we wasn't on a spree.

Now my week was nearly over
And it's back to work I go,
But I really had a good time
Though the fishing was so slow.

Mr Duff, he learned some lessons
And I thought this one a gem:
It don't matter if I break the Penn
'Cause they're still making them.



Duncan Milenkovic's delightful photo of Little Pine on dusk



Another view of the delightful Steavenson

FLY OF THE MONTH

The Beetle Bug, described by Mick Hall



In the world of fly fishing it is common for fly flickers to have a bunch of favourite fly patterns in their fly box that do not necessarily imitate any particular bug. But when these flies are placed in front of Mr Speckles, well that's another story. Great flies such as the Royal Coachman, Royal Wulff, Humpy, even Warryn Germon's Frumpy, or the Red Tag can certainly be included in the group. Among these flies are some of the most commonly sold or tied patterns in the world. I would expect that the Royal Wulff would line the banks of more streams than just about any other fly. These flies fit into a category we loosely call "Search Patterns", simply because they don't really imitate anything at all.

From early summer a lot of our mountain streams take on what I call the champagne look. The waters are clear, cool and sparkling with life, and the air is full of bugs that give off a constant hum as they go about doing what bugs do. For me this is the time to head off for a bit and check out a few streams around my home at Eildon.

At this time of the year old Speckles is more than often looking up to the surface as a source of drifting food. The tucker on offer is something of a smorgasbord, with beetles, ants, midge, caddis, mayfly, etc, making up just a part of the mix of food drifting down through the system. During the daylight hours trout are rarely in a selective feeding mode; in fact they will often have a go at anything that even resembles a feed. Hence the need for search flies.

The key to success in search fishing is to look for water with plenty of oxygen and surface movement that can act as a bit of cover for our finny mates. Bubble lines are a great indicator, as they are created by tumbling water, and tumbling water generates oxygen and cover. The current actually holds the bubbles and channels them down the stream following the centre flow of the current. The two key elements here are these - the bubbles assist in giving cover to any fish that may be lying in the run, and the current channels any floating or sub-surface food along the same line. It is common for most fly flickers to start their fly fishing lives using a searching pattern of one form or another. To do this successfully we need flies that sit well on the water and float well. I suppose the other very important aspect is that the chosen fly actually attracts the attention of old Speckles.

A very keen devotee of this form of fly flicking is a friend of mine, a young man named Bintoro. I first met him a couple of seasons ago and at that time he was, and still is, a sponge for knowledge. Bintoro spent a day with me and went on to teach himself fly tying. Today his fly box brims with example of the fly tier's art, with Royal Wulffs lined up like little soldiers alongside nymphs, caddis, and a fly that caught his eye when reading "*Tactics for Trout*" by Dave Hughes (1990), called the Beetle Bug.

Of the Beetle Bug Dave Hughes writes as follows: "When I want to fish a dry searching pattern, and I see no evidence in the air or on the water that some other dressing might be better, the Elk Hair Caddis is the first fly I reach for, usually in sizes 12 or 14. The second dressing I reach for is the Beetle Bug, again in a 12 or 14. The Beetle Bug is a look-alike to the Royal Wulff, but it produces better for me. It's that confidence factor thing again.

I fished the Beetle Bug constantly when I was young, tying it with a deer hair tail, red floss body, white calf tail wings, and coachman hackle, which in those days, given my budget, was a weepy thing from a barnyard rooster. I switched to the Royal Wulff at about the same time I began to upgrade my tying materials and abilities. I caught lots of fish for several years on the Wulff dressing.

One day, just a few years ago, Bob Borden told me about some modifications he had worked on the old Beetle Bug. He changed the tail of the Beetle Bug from soft deer hair to stiff moose fibres, dyed some fur fluorescent red for the body, and substituted white calf body hair for the crinkly calf-tail wing. "Try it" Bob told me. "For some reason it brings fish up when they won't take anything else." Well Dave goes on to say that he tried it and now finds it is one of the best things since sliced bread. If it was me who had read that little story, I feel I may have just left the old Beetle Bug lying between those pages, but for Bintoro this pattern caught his imagination and he tied up a few and took them off to one of his favourite waters. Since that time whenever I ask him that question, "What did you catch them on?" the answer that keeps coming back is: "the Beetle Bug!" Serves me right.

Mike Hugue of Badger Creek Fly Tying in New York filled me in with a bit more on the background of the Beetle Bug. It seems that Bob Borden is the owner of Hareline Dubbing and the dubbing used in his version was in fact Hareline Dubbing Rabbit Dub, Fl Red #06 and that he first put the new pattern together way back in 1970. Hugue goes on to tell us that the original Beetle Bug was made by Audrey Joy, the famous north-west fly tier at Meir and Franks department store in Portland Oregon. Audrey's fly was basically a Royal Coachman without the Peacock Herl and with a floss body.

Tying the Beetle Bug

Hooks: Sizes 10, 12, 14, light wire (an ideal hook would be the new Partridge TDH Dry FIY hook with its slightly wider gape).

Tail: Brown Bucktail, tied under the body, cut tapered to pad body (alternatively use Moose mane or body hair.)

Body: Red Floss, doped (treated with head cement) or Hareline dubbing, Fl Red #6. (As a substitute any bright red dubbing material would suit.)

Wings: White calf tail, upright and divided

Hackle: Coachman Brown

Thanks Bintoro for putting us all onto a great fly.



Yale Sacks is a friend of Paul Squires living in the USA. He recently sent us this photo of a steelhead rainbow that he had caught. Definitely a keeper.



LIBRARY NEWS

All members should remember that the Mick Martin Memorial Library is one of the most extensive collections of fly-fishing literature in Australia. It is valuable in its own right but is a great asset to members wishing to expand their knowledge or who simply enjoy sitting by the fireside and vicariously enjoying the exploits of others. In addition, the library boasts a number of videos on trout fishing. Our librarian or one of his assistants will be available prior to each general meeting to assist members wishing to borrow books or videos.

The library is divided into three parts.

- Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.
- Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.
- Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts.....	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon)	\$35.00 each
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6.....	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie	\$20.00
V.F.F.A. car stickers	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 0423 283 079.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2013 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Magazine • Hayes on Brumbys • Hookup Bait and Tackle
- J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Mountain Stream Company • Nick Taransky Bamboo Rod Maker • Pro-Angler Tackle • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill
- The Flyfisher Tackle Store • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

VFFA Meetings & Activities

April 2014

- 10 – 13 Big River trip – staying at Enoch’s Point
- 16 General Meeting on the WEDNESDAY - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: John Waters, Australian Fly Casting Champion**
- (18 Good Friday)**
- 23 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

May 2014

- 15 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: Rick Dobson

June 2014

- 1 Sunday Casting commences at the Red Tag Casting Pools, with competition for the Tom and Frank McDonough Memorial Trophy
- 6 Dinner with Partners – at the Celtic Club (Note: this is on a Friday evening this year.)
- 8 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 14 Annual Cane Makers Day
- 15 Annual Cane Day – at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 19 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: TBC**
- 22 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 25 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 29 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

July 2014

- 6 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 13 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 17 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: TBC**
- 20 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 26 Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner
- 27 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

August 2014

- 3 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 8 - 10 Annual Bullen Merri trip (To be confirmed)
- 10 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 13 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 17 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 22 Annual Dinner – Guest Speaker: TBC
- 23 President’s Casting Day - 10am to 3pm at the Red Tag Casting Pools