

FLY LINES



APRIL 2017

April Meeting with Antony Boliiancu

Our speakers for the April meeting are Antony Boliiancu and friends Werner Birkner and Bo Nikolic - all guides at the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre. At the April meeting they plan to talk about some very exciting trout fishing on the Goulburn in the last couple of seasons, along with their experiences fly fishing in Idaho and Montana. They anticipate plenty of Q & A time, so members are invited to bring along all their questions on the Goulburn and its trout fishing, because these gents will have the answers.



Goulburn glory

They are experts at fishing from drift boats, and through years of experience have developed a thorough understanding of the Goulburn in all its seasons, levels and moods.

Thursday, April 20,
8:00 pm at the
Celtic Club

For the many of us who love the fabulous Goulburn this will be a session we wouldn't want to miss.

So, mark it in your diary – Thursday, April 20, 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club.

All members are welcome to join us at 6:15 pm for dinner in the Shamrock Restaurant prior to the meeting, but **PLEASE** make a dinner booking on Wednesday, April 19, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



Rafting the tailrace

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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May Meeting - with Scott Xanthoulakis



Scott founded Wilderness Fly Fishing in 2016 because of his passion for fishing wild places.

He first learned to cast a fly at the age of twelve, and subsequently learned his craft from some of Australia’s finest fly fishers, fly tiers, guides and writers. The rivers and streams of Victoria’s north-east and Snowy Mountains, and the lakes of Victoria’s Goldfield and volcanic regions have all been the backdrop to what many called a “misspent youth”. He has certainly spent a lot of time fishing these places and gaining a wealth of knowledge and expertise that he now puts to good use.

Like for many of us, Scott’s passion turned into an obsession, and he regularly ventures into fabulous locations such as New Zealand, Tasmania and a number of Pacific Islands, including exploratory trips to ‘off-the-grid’ islands.

Nowadays Scott gains a lot of fulfilment from teaching others the finer details of fly fishing and seeing the enjoyment that it brings them. His aim is always to make those he guides into better fly fishers, and to remind them that fly fishing should always be fun.

At our May meeting Scott will entertain and inform us with a wealth of stories and suggestions, and is particularly keen that we sense the fun and excitement in fly fishing.

So add this one to your diary – Celtic Club, Thursday May 18, 8:00 pm.

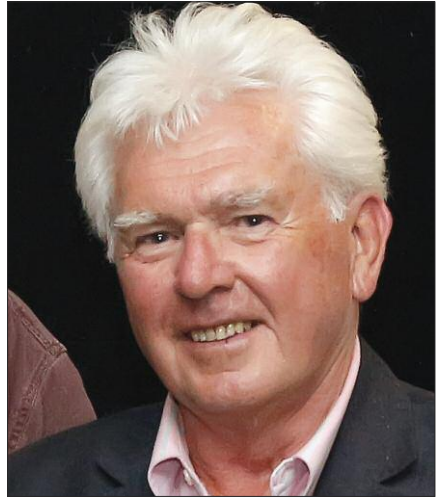
President's Message

I really am sorry I was unable to attend last month's meeting to hear Andrew Mossman speak. Not only is Andrew a long-standing and well-known member of the VFFA, he is recognised as a highly skilled fly designer and tier, and an authority on fishing the Mataura and other Southland rivers in New Zealand.

I'm told by several members who attended that Andrew was in fine form and his presentation was highly informative and interesting, as I knew it would be. Andrew and I go a long way back when it comes to fly fishing. We worked together back in the mid-1960s and discovered we had the fly bug in common. As a consequence we spent considerable time talking fly fishing, tying flies together and fishing together from time to time. I learned so much from Andrew who even then was an amazing fount of knowledge on the subject.

The high point of the past month for me was the annual trip to John Pilkington's iconic property on the Big River at Enoch's Point. What a wonderful part of the world it is, and it always surprises me when I am there that you can be so relatively close to civilization and yet feel totally remote and removed from the hustle and bustle of the outside world.

While there John sent Hamish Hughes and myself on a trip upstream and down a steep spur to a spot he calls "Over the Top", to fish water I had never explored. Remote and beautifully wild, this section of the river promised so much, but unfortunately the trout weren't ready to play. We caught a fish each and then climbed back out to the road with the aid of a simple map from John and Hamish's GPS. What an adventure. There's a report



on the weekend and some photos elsewhere in this issue of Fly Lines. Thanks John for your wonderful hospitality, and everyone else who attended for your companionship and contributions to making the trip such a great success.

Some of you may have read reports in newspapers during past weeks about developments at our home, the Celtic Club. The stories I read talked about the club possibly moving from its present site around July/August in readiness for the redevelopment of the building.

Former President Terry Rogers is keeping in close contact with the Club as things develop, and he tells me that the timing may be right but at this stage there are no firm plans in place for a move by the Celtic Club to other premises. The Club has assured us that they want us to move with them and will ensure our needs are met as the move develops. We will keep members fully informed as we get further news.

At our Council meeting in March the question of Sunday Casting during the winter was raised. Essentially, the issue is simply that over the last couple of years numbers attending Sunday Casting have been dwindling, and last year were getting so low that the organisers were becoming somewhat disillusioned.

It appears that interest in casting on Sundays during winter is waning and members just don't have the enthusiasm or the time to participate in what used to be a pleasant social gathering associated with a central element of our sport. Whatever the reasons, there doesn't seem to be sufficient support to justify continuing Sunday Casting every Sunday. In place, we are considering holding a casting event once a month during winter and making the event more substantial, with a theme or some casting tuition involved. The first of these events will be a Cane Day at the Red Tag Pool on Sunday June 4 which will be used to see how much interest there still is among members. More on this in the next month or two.

Our next meeting in April promises to be a cracker when Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre guides Antony Boliancu, Werner Birkner and Bo Nikolic will be talking about the trout fishing on the Goulburn since the drought broke. This is home territory for many of our members so hopefully we will have a good roll-up for this event.

Well, that's it for this month. I'm off for a few days fishing around Khancoban shortly, which I hope will be a nice warm-up for the annual Donger weekend at Omeo with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club. If you haven't already signed up for the weekend please contact me on 0418 265 390 and come along. The weekend coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Bairnsdale club and a

gala dinner in Bairnsdale on Friday, April 28. It would be nice to have a good contingent from the VFFA make the trip to celebrate with our friends from Bairnsdale.

Until next time, good fishing and tight lines. - Mike



CALL FOR ENTRIES
AUSTRALIAN
FLY FISHERS'
ART & CRAFT
SHOW

Closing date 31 July 2017



Organised by the
Victorian Fly Fishers'
Association (VFFA)

\$5,000 first prize
Entry information:
www.vffa.org.au/vffa-art-craft-show
Show date: 13-16 September 2017
Steps Gallery, 62 Lygon Street, Carlton Vic

The March Meeting with Andrew Mossman

It's a great pleasure for me to be here tonight. Thank you for coming. The occasion gives me the opportunity to talk about one of my obsessions – fly design.

When I started fly fishing with my dad as a young lad some 60 years ago we used the flies we could buy at sports stores - places like Hartley's and the Melbourne Sports Store. Almost nobody tied their own flies, and the flies we typically purchased and used were the Royal Coachman, Greenwell's Glory, Hardy's Favourite and of course the Red Tag. We also used March Browns and other flies available at the time, but that's all we had to use.

When we got to the river and found no trout moving and no fly on the surface then what fly should we use? Of course we used what we had used last time, one of our favourites. In my dad's case this would be a Royal Coachman, and in my case it would sometimes be a Royal Coachman or whatever else was available in the fly box. If that fly didn't work after we'd fished a couple of ripples then we would put on our next favourite fly. And that's the way we fished. My father and I learned to fish back in the 1950s and 1960s, and we never tried to match the hatch as we do today. If we went to the Goulburn and the duns were coming down we would put on a Greenwell's or a Black Dun.

I find the history of fly fishing really fascinating. The first mention that I could find was a reference to Mesopotamia in about 200 A.D. After that nothing much happened until Dame Juliana Berners wrote *A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* in 1496. 'Angling' of course is fishing with a rod. In her book Dame Juliana had 12 flies that she had developed and which she wrote about.



I bought a copy of the book when I was in London some years ago. The writing is almost impossible to read, but the 12 flies that she tied were actual imitations of naturals. In other words, they were her best attempt at imitating the natural flies that she saw on the water at that time. John Waller Hills, who wrote *A Summer on the Test* and a couple of other great books in the early years of the 20th century, said that he could trace 11 of those original 12 flies through to modern times. The important thing to note here is that these flies were exact imitations.

The next development came with Isaak Walton and Charles Cotton in the middle of the 17th century. On the screen now are pictures of two flies that are generalist flies. One is a caddis pattern that I tie, and the other is a Greenwell's Glory, which represents a dun, though not any particular dun. Of course in Walton's time it was tied as a wet fly.

Around this time 'fancy flies' were also developed, a fancy fly being one that doesn't represent anything in particular but is something that trout will take. The Royal Coachman is a good example, and

so is the Red Tag. When my dad and I were fishing in the 50s and 60s we caught a lot of fish on these flies. The Red Tag is sometimes described as a beetle imitation, though I've never seen a beetle with a hackle on it or with a bit of red wool hanging out the back. I remember as a young man that we used to argue among ourselves over what the trout take it for. These days I wouldn't have a clue what they take it for.

By the middle of the 19th century dry flies had arrived and were being used on the chalk streams in Hampshire. Halford had written his two famous books, *Dry-Fly Fishing In Theory And Practice*, and *Floating Flies And How To Dress Them*. They are indeed fascinating reading, but Halford took us back to exact imitations. He also started the cult of dry fly purism.

A few years ago I travelled to London with my wife to see our daughter, who lives there. John Pilkington, on hearing about our impending trip, asked if I'd been to the London Flyfishers' Club. I confessed that I hadn't, so he said he'd fix it for me. And he did. His friend, Dr Rodney Foale who lives in London, took me to lunch at the London Flyfishers' Club, and also arranged for me to fish his beat on the Test River, which I have written about previously.

So I ended up at the London Flyfishers'. I arrived at the club early and met with the secretary, who invited me in. He allowed me to take some photos, and the one on the screen now shows the main dining room and some of the bookshelves. The glass case shelves hold those beautiful first editions of all those famous books we know about, and one of the cabinets there contains Isaak Walton's fishing bag, dated 1643.

You can also see in the photo some small wooden boxes. These are filled with flies tied by Halford. I must say that Halford

has had a profound effect on my fly tying. He led the world in dry fly fishing and purism at the end of the 19th century and into the early years of the 20th century.

Halford was obsessive beyond our comprehension. On the screen now is a fly called a Pale Watery. Halford tied a male and female version of the dun, and also a male and female version of the spinner. Now the Mataura River in New Zealand has three main species of mayfly, and I tie one fly pattern to represent all three of these. I guess if I was a proper fly tying chap I would have a pattern for each of these three species, along with a male and female version of each. But we don't quite go that far.

The next thing that arrived in terms of fly development were the nymphs. Skues is considered the father of nymph fishing, and I'm sure we have all read his books. On the screen now is a photo of a simple seal's fur nymph that I tied in the 1950s. It is tied with olive green and black seal's fur in equal proportions and has a ginger tail. I fished it all through Victoria and New South Wales in those years and caught dozens of fish on it.

The other fly on the screen is Hubert Reichelt's famous Bismarck Nymph, so-called because it sinks. There is also a picture of Frank Sawyer's justly famous Pheasant Tail Nymph, along with a Kakahi Queen for our New Zealand friends. This fly is very similar to our Kosciusko Dun, of which there are a number of species.

Now in looking at these photos of flies, there is no way that we would confuse the tied imitations with the natural. Yet trout do. So the question is, why does a trout eat the imitation thinking that it's a natural? And this is the nub of what I'm working towards.

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Andrew's views on fly tying, triggers and trout behaviour were well received

There's all this stuff in the books today, particularly in the American books, about 'triggers'. I am absolutely certain that wings on a fly are an important trigger. If you've seen some of those pictures of a fly floating into a trout's window, and in a lot of those South Island New Zealand rivers the fish frequently sit very close to the surface so their window is very small, you will note that the first thing trout see coming into their window are the wings on the fly.

Now trout have got the most wonderful defence mechanisms, but they don't sit there and say to themselves, "There are too many legs on that pattern, so I'm not going to eat it." Rather, there will be some trigger that will lock them into taking the fly, and that's mostly what they do. There are all sorts of other triggers, such as tails, the fly's imprint on the water, how it floats, and its shape and colour. In New Zealand a pronounced thorax is also essential.

There are times when a fish takes a fly perfectly but then you get a 'boof', a term

I use when you have what seems a perfect take but immediately after the take the fish explodes and is never there. In other words, for some reason the fish doesn't take the fly. Perhaps his nose touched the tippet, or he just changed his mind or something frightened him.

Now I never fish upstream to a fish if I can help it. I'd much rather cast across the stream to a fish. On bigger rivers I never fish upstream but instead sneak up beside the fish. If you fish upstream and the fish comes to the fly his nose will touch the tippet, and then you get a boof. So it's much better to fish across the current to them.

Here is another question I have, and this happens to us all. One day you will go up the river and you will fish reasonably well and catch most of the fish that you cast to. The next day you will fish like a champion and as the day progresses you will find yourself tying on longer and longer and finer and finer tippets, and you won't catch many fish, perhaps even none. So the question remains, why do



A portrait of the artist as a young man. A fine salmon too Andrew.

fish on one day take even carelessly presented flies, and on other days they won't take them no matter how much care you take?

Have you read David Whitlock's book? What he does really well is give diagrams of the lifecycles of the various insects. He gives, for example, the lifecycle of the mayfly, which we can now all see from the picture on the screen moves in a clockwise direction. The eggs hatch into nymphs and when they're ready they rise and hatch into adults.

But how do mayfly nymphs hatch? Some hatch at the surface, some float along the bottom, some rise to the surface and then go down and then come up again, and some rise and bump along just below the surface. And when you are on a big glide in a nice clean river you will see a tiny little pimple on the water, the size of the head a small nail. As you watch it, all of a sudden up pops the two wings of a mayfly.

The nymphs come to the surface then drift along just below the surface where they are hunched over with their thorax expanding as they pump it up with air. Then they split their thorax, which breaks the surface tension, and they stick their wings up in a flash and step out of their shuck and sit on the water. Down on Little Pine they might sit on the water for some minutes and in the process get blown right across the lake. But in most rivers they just take off. In the chalk streams of England they take off straight away.

So getting back to our nymphs, here is Hubert's nymph, which is heavy and sinks. My nymph is not heavy and if I put floatant on it then it floats. When you are nymph fishing for nymphing trout you've got four or five decisions to make. Do you want your nymph down deep, or do you want it sinking, or do you want it rising, or do you want it floating just below the surface, or do you want it hatching- in which case it becomes an emerger. These are the decisions you have to make all day when you are fishing to rising fish.

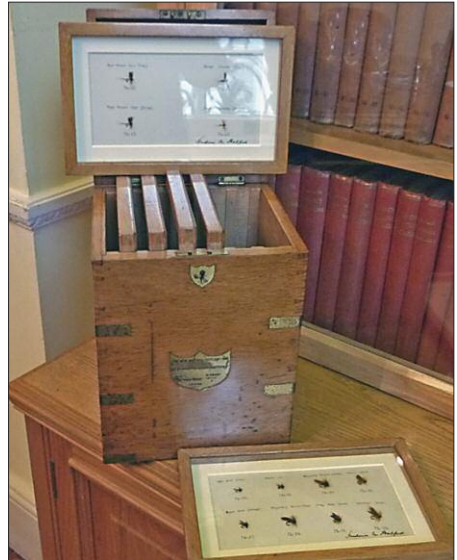
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The fly on the screen now is a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear. It was originally designed without wings and was considered to represent a hatching nymph. And it was Halford's favourite fly. But he then wrote his books and started this movement towards dry fly fishing. Well this fly, the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear, was a wet fly that floated just below or in the surface. So they put a wing on it because all good flies had wings, and then Halford put a hackle on it. Then he said, "I can't use this fly, it's really a wet fly!" So he stopped using his favourite fly because it didn't meet his definition of a dry fly.

It's one of my favourite flies, and I have had unbelievably good days with it, both here and in New Zealand. Why would you give up using your best fly? Well, I haven't quite worked that out.

This is the nub of what I'm talking about. Apart from the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear exception, flies were tied to patterns. We've all got dictionaries of trout flies and they are full of patterns. But in designing a fly you need to design it to imitate some part of the life-cycle of the insect: where it is in the life-cycle, whether it is rising or falling, whether it is crawling or floating or hatching; how it is floating – on the water, under the water, or in the surface film. So you design your flies for movement and action, and not just pattern.

Returning to that diagram of the mayfly life cycle, then depending on which mayfly and how it is hatching you might use Hubert's nymph, or my nymph, or any of four or five other nymphs. I've got a friend in New Zealand who lives down near Gore. He uses a nymph very similar to the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear that floats just below the surface. He calls it a dun, but it isn't.



Halford's flies – magnificent pieces of fly fishing history

Wayne Sanderson and I were fishing the Mataura River near Mandeville some time ago. The river was up about 18 inches, and the surface was covered with duns. It was raining, and it was cold. We had walked down to this corner and found this massive hatch going on. I reckon that at any one time I could see ten fish heads up and taking duns. So I thought, "Yes! They won't be able to resist my No Hackle Possum Dun." And I fished like a champion, though I couldn't see my fly on the surface because there were so many naturals there. There were fish heads everywhere, but because it was a backwater there was no pattern or predictability to their movements. Rather they were quite random. I felt that I fished well and deserved hundreds, but actually wound up with none. Then 10 minutes later the rise completely stopped. Not a fish showing, even though the hatch continued on for quite some time.



Soft hackle wets and spiders can be deadly

So the question was, what were they taking? Were they taking the hatching dun or the floating nymph or perhaps the rising nymph? They looked to be rising but I saw rises where there were no duns. So there I was with this enormous hatch taking place and I had all the flies I needed for it, and there were all these rising fish, so I had about 12 or 15 decisions to make - which nymph to use, and all those other things I've been talking about.

In fishing these rises you have to be switched on to what is happening, or you won't catch anything. Let me describe one night when I fished the Mataura River with a friend well down below Gore. It was summer, so we got there about 5:30 pm. The air was alive with spinners, but there were no fish moving. We walked down to the bottom of a lovely ripple where my friend got a fish on a nymph.

Then suddenly they started rising. So I put on Hubert's spinner pattern and got

five without a miss, and then a boof and a couple came off, so it was time to change the fly. But what were they on? There were still spinners everywhere and just the odd dun, so I put on an emerger and got another five, and then another boof. So I took that fly off. I saw a couple of duns go past so decided they were on the duns, and I got one on a dun.

On other occasions I have been fishing and have had exactly the same experience. In the middle of a rise they will be on duns or emergers, and suddenly they will stop and I can't catch them. Then I'll get a boof or two, at which point I always change my fly.

In New Zealand the spinners often sit on the water like a dun, and unless you really look carefully you will think that they are duns, so you put on a dun. But it will actually be a spinner. Now I don't know why it is, but trout there seem to prefer spinners. So you can be in the middle of a dun rise, catching them >>>

on emergers or duns, and then suddenly you won't catch anything because they have moved over to taking the spinners. And you might get three or four on spinners and then suddenly it's back to emergers. That might happen two or three times during the rise.

This doesn't happen in Australia, but it happens like that all the time on the Maitai and makes for some fascinating fishing.

Finally tonight I'd like to talk briefly about fishing wet flies downstream. On the screen is a photo of young Andrew in the 1960s fishing the Howqua River. For downstream wet fly fishing I used to use a 7-weight cane rod with a fast-sinking line and some flies that you will all know. In those days I was completing a university degree, so I always went up to the north-east for the opening weekend and stayed with a friend on a farm near Mansfield. And then I wouldn't fish again until November after my exams were completed.

The rivers in September were high, and you would never see a rise but the rivers were full of fish out of Lake Eildon that had been up spawning. So I started fishing downstream. The photo shows a classic piece of downstream wet fly water. The fish that had come up to spawn would hang in the faster water and would nearly always sit right down on the bottom, and they wouldn't chase. So when you cast with a downstream wet fly you had to get your fly to hover across the front of the fish. It needed to move across slowly.

I would cast downstream at 45° and then mend upstream straight away once or twice. Then I would stick the tip of my rod under the water and follow the line around so that the water was actually pushing the line down deeper. Then

when the line came around below me I would use a figure of eight retrieve. And I used to get bag limits on most opening days. On the screen are the flies that I used, most of which you would recognise – Black Matukas, Red and Black Matukas, and Robins.

I also stayed on the Delatite River about a mile below Delatite Station. The Parsons family owned the station and I used to stay with them. Old Ted Parsons was a grumpy old man. I said to him on one occasion, "I'm just going upstream a bit and will fish back down with a wet fly." He said, "You won't catch anything, and you shouldn't do it anyway because it's terrible stuff." But I immediately caught a two pounder, followed by a one pounder, and then he was really grumpy!

Finally, a few comments about spider fishing. My good friend Andrew Hood wrote an article in the last newsletter describing exactly the same method – downstream fishing, casting at 45° and then mending, and swimming the spider pattern across the current, though in this case he uses a floating line and the flies are just under the surface. You will see most of the rises and you don't strike – you just hold and wait. The darker the day the darker the fly you need to use. You get your leader to sink and you swim it across quietly, and it's no surprise when you get a fish, because you are expecting them all the time.

One final hint. When I catch a fish on a dry fly I wash the fly in methylated spirits. I keep a small bottle of methylated spirits, put my fly in it and shake it up, and all the slime comes off it. Put some floatant on and it's as good as new again. You can use one of those powders such as Frogs Fanny. With CDC flies wash them in water and then brush on the powder. They, too, come up like new.



A Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

While I applaud the initiative of the VFFA in publishing the trilogy of books *The Country for an Angler*, *Geehi to Great Lake* and the most recent, *Time Flies*, I feel compelled to write to express my concerns regarding the latest book.

Time Flies sets out to document some of the history of fly tying in Victoria and the contributions of VFFA members, past and present, to that history. In part, I believe the book does that, but I also believe there are some serious omissions.

Understandably, with a book of this type, selecting the content can be a difficult matter – who to put in and who to leave out; very difficult indeed, and potentially controversial and divisive.

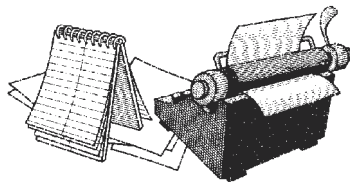
As the preface to the book says, the book does not pretend to be a collection of the best fly patterns or recommended selections by high-profile anglers, but “the most interesting flies found in the VFFA-related net”.

Despite this disclaimer, I feel strongly that many members of the VFFA who have contributed so much to the history of Australian flies and fly tying, both fresh and salt water, have not been included in the book. There are a number of fly tiers who, in my opinion, deserve to have been included in a book of this type ahead of some who were.

Yours sincerely,

Mick Hall

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Swinging wet flies using a two-handed fly rod is a great way to fish a river. You start at the top of a run and work your way down, progressively covering every piece of the water. Now you probably won't catch anything, but at least you've got the satisfaction of knowing that every fish in the river has seen your fly and refused it." (A rather cynical comment on a Spey casting blog)

I've mentioned before that two-handed rods (aka Spey rods) are gaining in popularity, both here and overseas. The growing range of models now available, the number of articles appearing in fly fishing magazines, and the proliferation of YouTube videos on all aspects of Spey casting confirm this.

But rest easy – you don't have to buy one. Countless generations of Australian fly fishers have fished for trout and other species quite successfully without ever hearing about Spey casting, let alone seeing an actual two-handed rod. But they are still worth hearing about.

Spey rods come in two types. If they're 12'6" or longer they are regarded as fair dinkum Spey rods. If they are shorter than 12 foot they are called 'Switch rods' or 'mini-Speys'. These can be cast as a single-handed rod, though they are longer than your usual single-handed fly rods and the lines used on them are heavier than normal fly lines, so you need the shoulder equipment of a Russian shot putter to do any serious single-handed casting with them. But you can pick one of these switch rods up with two hands, heave a back cast back behind you, let fly with a vigorous forward cast, and watch the line

head off into the next postcode. But the real fun is in Spey casting.

I acquired a switch rod about a year ago, my acquisition being at the bottom end of the price range – an 11 foot Greys GR50, for 5/6 weight lines. Then I discovered that you need to buy special lines to cast on these two-handers rods. And these lines are fatter than normal fly lines, so you also need to buy some bigger reels to accommodate them. Then you need to buy some salmon class Polyleaders to tie on as part of the leader system. So you end up digging deep.

And I must confess that despite the investment I'm yet to catch a fish on my two-hander gear. But there's a good reason for this – a couple of times a week I head off down to a lake about 10 minutes' drive from home to practice my casting. So there's never a proper fly attached to the business end; just a bit of red wool. And the local carp and redfin haven't shown much interest yet in red wool. But this winter I intend to make a serious attempt to connect with some trout on a couple of my favourite stillwaters.

Why would you want to get into this Spey casting caper? There are number of reasons. Rene Vaz, a New Zealand guide, compares fly fishing with golf. No golfer goes out with just one club in his bag, because he knows that by having a variety of clubs he can cope with all the likely possibilities. So too with our fishing – we need small twigs for those little creeks, soft rods for fishing the new French Leader technique, bigger rods for large rivers and lakes, and heavy brutes for

those vicious winds on Tassie highland lakes ... and two handers, too, for some special niche fishing situations.

What advantages do two-handers offer? If you want a long list then check <https://www.deneki.com/2009/04/why-we-like-spey-casting/>

In brief, Spey casting with a two-hander enables you to cast further with less effort, and there are times when distance matters. Because Spey casting is essentially roll casting you can make long casts without having to worry about your back cast, so the proliferation of trees or the cliff face behind are no longer an issue. Stiff head winds are also less of a hassle. The heavier gear will hurl big heavily weighted flies, and because your fly is always out in front of you during the actual casting stroke there's no danger of being clobbered. So the old 'chuck and duck' technique is banished. Spey casting is also physically much less demanding, especially on your shoulders.

Lastly and most importantly, Spey casting is simply a heap of fun. In those times when you're fishing but not catching, and you're making endless repetitive casts on some river or lake then making a series of graceful and

aesthetically gorgeous Spey casts is a great feeling and rewarding in itself.

Of course, the major question remains how and where we might fish for trout here in Victoria using this gear. Most of us would be aware that the primary use of two-handed rods is for hurling big wet flies across wide, fast rivers to catch salmon (in the UK and USA), monster browns (in Argentina), or steelhead rainbows (in Canada and the USA). But we don't have those rivers here, so is the Spey stuff any use?

A few weeks ago I spent a couple of hours with Robert Rowe, a member of the Calder Fly Fishing Club and a Spey casting fanatic. Robbie, as his friends call him, fishes Spey gear and Spey techniques everywhere – for snapper, kingfish, Murray cod and other natives, and of course for trout. He uses his Spey gear to fish big rivers and little creeks, lakes, beaches, estuaries and saltwater off the rocks. A favourite venue is the Goulburn River, where he fishes big wets, nymphs under indicators, and dry caddis patterns. His catches are phenomenal, and include a number of 6 and 7 lb browns.

The account of my evening with Robbie is given in this issue. I hope you enjoy it.

Lyndon

Get On Board for the Donger Weekend

The annual Donger Weekend competition with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club is on again this year over the weekend of April 29 and 30, and we are looking for members to sign up with the VFFA team.

The event takes place at the BFFC's lodge on the Mitta Mitta River near Omeo and this year coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Club which began as a regional offshoot of the VFFA. To mark the occasion, a special dinner is to be held in Bairnsdale on the Friday evening, with further anniversary events taking place during the weekend at the lodge.

Anyone wanting to sign up for the event or get further information should contact Mike Jarvis on 0418 265 390.

A Weekend on the Big River

A convivial group of members gathered at John Pilkington's iconic property at Enoch's Point on the Big River late last month for what has become one of the most popular of the VFFA's trips.

Fourteen in all attended the event, including three first-timers, and what a fine time they enjoyed. It was a great trip: excellent food courtesy of Pilks, excellent wines courtesy of everyone involved and some wonderful stories told.

The fishing wasn't the best the Big River can deliver, but most people managed to catch at least one fish, including Neil Vincent who caught his first trout on a fly, and one he had tied himself. Best fish for the weekend, around 1½ pounds, was snagged by Kossy.

But fishing somewhat paled into insignificance in the face of the fantastic camaraderie during the weekend. And this was highlighted in a couple of thank-you messages Pilks received after the weekend which made mention of how much the senders had enjoyed the weekend and particularly the friendship among the group.

Bad luck award of the weekend went to Bruce Houghton. Not only didn't he catch a fish, but he managed to take a tumble into the river, broke his rod and then had the misfortune to get stung by a bee!

But, all in all a brilliant weekend. Thanks John for the fine hospitality, and we are all looking forward now to the next one.



Mike casting on the Big River



A rare sight - a female lyre bird



Dinner at Chateau Pilks



Dining alfresco after a big day's fishing



Coffee, eggs and great company – the perfect start

VFFA Cane Day Is Back



The day when no cane rod should be left at home alone.
Bring your dear old friend and admire someone else's.

This is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends and
enjoy a pleasant Sunday morning in the park.

Come and talk to some of Australia's best cane rod builders.

A very special Hugh Maltby inspired barbecue lunch provided.
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Please come along and support the VFFA

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2017

**RED TAG POOL
FAIRFIELD PARK**

Be there 9:00 am till 1:00 pm.

For further details contact: David Grisold 0419 558 462

Spey Fishing – Robert Rowe Style

Robbie Rowe is a member of the Calder Fly Fishing Club. He is also a passionate and very experienced fly fisher for trout and other species. His largest trout thus far is a 16 lb monster brown he caught some years ago fishing one of those Snowy Mountain lakes.

About 18 months ago he was fishing for trout at Tullaroop and was frustrated by the fact that he needed a long cast but was hampered by a cliff behind that limited his back cast. Being a regular (weekly) customer at Rick Dobson's Aussie Angler store he gave Rick and salesman Anton Trusk an earful of his problem. They had a solution – try two-handed Spey casting.

Robbie took the suggestion on board, and thus began a fascination with Spey casting, Spey gear and Spey techniques that became a very productive mission. He purchased some Spey rods – 10 in fact, including a wispy little 2-weight mini-Spey rod, and nine others in increasing sizes and weights up to a hefty 10 weight two-hander. (And readers – please note that a 10 weight Spey rod is a lot bigger and heavier than a 10 weight single-hand fly rod.) Robbie uses them all, but has some favourites. A 4 weight Redington gets a lot of use, and so does a couple of his Sage rods.

Is casting accuracy an issue with big two-handers? Well, no says Robbie. Provided your gear is tuned correctly and you use correct technique with a high sharp stop of the rod you get accurate casts. And if you need really tight accurate casts then the Sage One is the ideal rod for producing these.

Robbie also purchased a pile of top of the range reels and a very impressive collection of Spey lines of all styles and brands and weights. He then took some lessons from VFFA member Bintoro Tedjosiswoyo, who is a highly qualified instructor in two-handed casting. So Robbie quickly mastered the full range of



Small Cod - Broken River

popular Spey casts – the single and double Speys, the snake rolls, and the snap-Ts.

Now Spey casting with a two-handed rod is a quite different skill to casting with a single-handed fly rod. If you naturally cast right-handed then in two-handed Spey casting your right hand, which will be the top hand on the rod grip, is essentially a pivot, and most of the casting effort is generated by moving your lower left hand sharply back into your body in the casting stroke. This is quite counter intuitive for anglers used to casting with single-hand rods, and takes some getting used to. So learning two-handed Spey casting requires some practice. Does Robbie practice? Yes – almost every weekend up on the Goulburn River. It's interesting to note that when he uses a single-handed rod he casts left-handed, but when learning two-hand Spey casting he found it better to Spey cast as a right hander.

Robbie has put his new Spey gear and developing skills to good use. He frequently fishes the Goulburn, and >>>



Some innovative trout tucker in Robbie's fly box

when he heads there, usually with close friend Rob Griffin, he loads his car up with a comprehensive collection of his Spey gear, then decides on arrival after an assessment of the conditions, which particular rods and lines and techniques he should use. He may do the traditional two-handed casting strategy of swinging big wet flies across and down, and in this case he will use a Skagit line (a very short heavy head that feels a bit like casting a lead sinker), matched with a heavy RIO tungsten tip (leader) to get the flies down deep.

Spey lines are essentially shooting heads. The fly reel is loaded with thin running line, and then the chosen casting head – the business end - is connected using a loop-to-loop connection. Robbie finds

that with this gear (using a Skagit head) he can bump his flies along the bottom of the river 'where all the big ones hang out'. He has refined his technique over many visits and is now quite expert at connecting with the major players in the trout population.

But if weather and water conditions suggest a different strategy then Robbie can either fish nymphs under an indicator or, especially on evening, a variety of dry flies. He has a particularly deadly dry caddis pattern. For these fishing styles he will connect a Skandi head onto his running line. These are much longer than the Skagit heads and have a long thin front section. Skagit heads crashland, but the longer Skandi heads can be cast to land quite delicately.



Tullaroop rainbow trout

Spey lines are certainly much thicker and heavier than the fly lines used with single-hand rods. But Robbie doesn't see the heavy landings as a problem spooking touchy trout. The leaders tied on the end of Spey heads are usually quite long, and where delicacy is needed then those Skandi lines provide this.

So how does a day on the Goulburn typically go? Robbie assures us he's into civilised fishing hours. They fish all the river from Thornton down to Alexandra, and usually arrive at their chosen venue about lunchtime. Then they have lunch and set up their Spey rods. They fish through into the evening, and on a poor day would catch perhaps six fish, whilst a good day would see 20 or more landed. Most of these, and they include both rainbows and browns, are in the 1 – 2 lb class, though Robbie reports that on average about every second trip they will encounter 'a really good one'. Good ones are fish in the 4 – 7 lb range, and between them they have caught a number of 7 pounders. They have also seen or hooked but not landed some bigger fish. Robbie's largest trout on Spey gear is an 8 lb brown from the Goulburn, caught near Gilmore's bridge on New Year's Eve last year.

But trout are not the only targets. Robbie has also caught snapper, flathead and kingfish whilst saltwater fly fishing with Spey gear. He has also caught plenty of Australian natives, especially yellowbelly and Murray cod. He even admits to having caught a number of Murray cod fishing the Yarra around the Templestowe area.

As well as fishing the Goulburn he uses Spey gear and Spey techniques on a number of lakes and other rivers. The Mitta, Broken and Loddon (for cod), Rubicon and Yarra rivers see him often, and the tiny creeks and streams in the Noojee area are also favourites. Here his wispy little 2-weight Spey rod gets a run, but where things are really tight and overgrown he will revert to using a single-handed stick. But he persists with using Spey casting tricks to keep him out of the trees, and finds that really light Spey lines (short Skagits in particular) work fine on single-handed rods. These lines load the rod well for roll casts, so good distances in confined spaces are no problem.

This last comment reflects an aspect of Robbie's personality - he is inquisitive and loves experimenting and

>>>



Millbrook -Rainbow trout

investigating new possibilities, so is constantly fiddling with different types of lines, different leaders, different types of casts, and different strategies.

He discovered, for example, that when fishing lakes where there is no current, continuous Spey casting puts twists and tangles in your running line. To overcome this problem he makes six casts right handed, then the next six left handed to unravel the right hand twists, then back to right hand ... He has also tried some RIO line swivels which are especially designed to eliminate this problem.

Robbie carries several hefty boxes of flies, and these include large and small wets, large and small dry flies, and heaps of nymphs. His favourites keep changing – he will fish successfully with a particular pattern for a few weeks, then it will seem to lose its attraction so he will try something else.

When he is fishing the Goulburn with those large wet flies he uses one of those tiny little metal hooks tied on the end of

his tippet so that he can quickly and easily change flies. He has a huge assortment of wet flies that he has found work well on the Goulburn, and will keep changing flies until he finds the one that catches fish on the day.

He is constantly experimenting with the monofilament leaders tied on the end of his tungsten tips; his latest version being a cut down tapered leader of 4 – 6 feet length, with a tippet strength of 8 – 10 lb. This enables him to retrieve wet flies hooked in rocks and sunken logs 'most of the time'.

When fishing into the evening Robbie and his mate use night vision goggles to better see what's happening. They also carry small video cameras (GoPros and Nikons) connected to their hats to record their exploits.

Of course, the question remains – why bother with Spey gear? Surely Robbie could do all of this with single-handed rods. He has several responses. First, the two-handed Spey rods give greater casting distances and thus access to more



Robbie displaying some of his fly boxes



A fine Rubicon trout taken on Spey gear

water. With his new 7-weight Sage X rod he can cast right across the Goulburn to the far bank at some points. Casts of 30 – 40 metres are readily achievable, and he tells us that this extra distance allows him to fish water that the single-hand fly casters can't reach. He also claims he can shoot Spey casts in under distant low hanging branches to reach where fish are hiding or rising to caddis.

Along with the extra distances that Spey casting provides, the fact that Spey

casting doesn't require a backcast has obvious advantages in bushy areas. And when you are confronting really gusty conditions the Spey lines are far less affected. Those heavy Skagit heads cut right through the wind.

Big wet flies are great fish catchers on the Goulburn, and some of the super large heavy wets that Robbie uses would need a very heavy single-hand rod to cast them any distance, but the Spey gear fires them out effortlessly. But Robbie also uses small wets and large and small dry flies at times, and the right selection of Spey gear will comfortably handle these as well.

Some of his Murray cod flies are 6 inches long. He has also been experimenting with large mouse flies. These are cast out and let float on the surface, then given a few sharp jerks, then left to sit before being given more twitches. Using these he's caught a number of large trout, including some from the Yarra up near Launching Place.

Robbie suggests that casting big heavy wet flies for long periods using appropriately heavy single-handed rods is an arm and shoulder wrecker. But Spey casting with two-handed rods uses both arms and fairly small arm movements. Thus at the end of a long session Robbie claims he still feels quite fresh and his shoulders are not knackered.

So Robbie, what else is on your bucket list? He has fished rivers in NSW but is yet to fish Tassie and New Zealand. He's particularly keen to visit New Zealand, and hopefully will get there in the near future.

So there it is – Spey gear used very successfully by a top angler to catch a range of species, including our favourite brown and rainbow trout. Food for thought.



Winter Steelhead

... Alan Pilkington, March 2017

Well, success at last! I caught a nice 8-9 lb steelhead fresh in from the Pacific, the first decent-sized one I've connected with in years. Having driven in steady rain to the town of Forks (on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State) from Seattle, about a four hour trip, we found all but one of the rivers blown out by the following morning. The exception was the Sol Duc, even in heavy rain a beautiful river, which was high and a bit off colour with visibility of three to four feet, but quite fishable. Flowing from rain forests in winter these Olympic Peninsula streams can rise a foot or two in a single day, and accessing water where we could fish a Spey rod was fairly difficult.

So we fished the Sol Duc, over much the same water my brother John, his son Ben and I had fished for coho salmon last summer, fishing from a McKenzie River style drift boat rather than the rubber rafts we used in summer in the lower water. My guide, Jim Kerr (raincoastguides.com) took us over one of the same stretches of water where we'd fished last August, but this time using small egg patterns hung from a strike indicator, weighted so they almost touched the bottom where the steelhead were holding. I used a 10' #7 rod with a floating line so it could be mended on the surface to get the fly drifting naturally over the fish. The water where we started our downstream float was about 15 miles from where the river enters the Pacific.

We put in at dawn and another guide at the put-in had two Atlantic salmon anglers from Boston who fished ahead of us using similar set-ups; one of them took two nice bright steelhead early on, about a half hour into the float, a great start for the day. At about 9:15 am and a mile or so below the Elbow Pool where brother John



Silver success. Alan with his magnificent steelhead

and I had success with the coho in summer, I had a barely perceptible tap-tap from a fish holding in a likely spot. Jim swung the boat across into midstream so as not to disturb the holding water, and rowed back upstream against a strong current above where the fish had tapped my fly. I cast, let the fly sink and mended the line upstream. Suddenly the line shot off downstream, quartering across. I muttered 'God Save the Queen', lifted the rod tip, and was fast to a nice fish. We moved downstream thirty yards to calmer water to fight the fish and had her in the net after five minutes or so. A lovely strong bright steelhead and a good fight with the Hardy reel singing. We then shot a couple of pictures with part of the fish still in the water (a Washington State regulation), and set her free. It was a wild hen fish Jim said, and would run 'somewhere' around nine pounds.

I later had a bit of excitement a couple of miles further downstream. In clearish, moving water, a big steelhead drifted up from the bottom in midstream, followed



A crisp morning on the river

my strike indicator for a couple of feet then bumped it with its nose! It then poised and continued upstream. Jim didn't see the fish as the light from his position wasn't good. I want to say the fish, a bright steelhead, was 20 pounds, but it was more likely 15 - considerably bigger than the coho I caught last summer. My God, I'd have had my hands full if I hooked a beauty like that! Jim said a couple of steelhead around 22 pounds had been caught the week before, so they're in there. What a thrill just to see that beautiful fish rise.

It rained heavily that night and all the area rivers were running high and dirty the following morning, including the Sol Duc, which combined with the Bogashiel forms the Quillayute, right at the lodge where we were based. The volume of the Quillayute at that junction was over 50,000 cubic feet per second! So that was it, fishing wise, as I'd only planned for two days fishing.

For those not familiar with steelhead they are sea-run (anadromous) rainbow trout naturally spawning in cold fresh water rivers entering the northern Pacific from Kamchatka to northern California. After running to the ocean as one to two year old juveniles, they spend another two or three years there before returning to their

natal streams to spawn. In this respect they are similar to Pacific salmon, although steelhead can spawn several times in successive seasons whereas Pacific salmon only spawn once before they die. Once abundant on the US and Canadian Pacific coasts, some steelhead populations are now threatened with some specific sub-species listed as endangered. Fishing for them in both countries is carefully monitored and regulated.

The winter-run steelhead are larger than those that run in the summer, evolving larger to easier handle the heavier water and get better access to the small spawning tributaries and creeks. On the Olympic Peninsula rivers the run lasts November through April,, after which the spring salmon start their run. These 'springers' are chinook (or king) salmon; they can weigh over 30 pounds and will take a fly. There is a summer run of smaller steelhead, more commonly occurring in longer rivers with the fish travelling further inland, sometimes hundreds of miles. In early fall they start to make way for the coho (or silver) salmon. Then, before we know where we are nature's miracle has passed through its cycle and it's time to fish for winter steelhead again.

The Incredible Murray Cod

... by April Vokey. This article was written by April in February 2017 for *Fly Fusion* magazine. April has very kindly given us permission to use it in this issue of *Fly Lines*. Photos are by Josh Hutchins.

When I decided to move my winters to Australia, part of me knew that I was sacrificing my love for one of the most special fisheries in the world. British Columbia's winter steelhead migration was more than just recreation for me — it was a way of life. For as long as I could remember, I'd planned my work, free time, living arrangements, conservation efforts, even my relationships, around when and where the fish would be. It seemed unfathomable to miss a week of the season, let alone all of it.

I found comfort knowing that I still had summer steelhead available to me for the other six months of the year, but for so long I had defined myself by the persistence and patience it took to pursue their cold-weather counterparts, that fishing for summer-fish almost seemed like cheating; no suffering in snow-drenched gloves, no sink-tip loop-to-looping, no purple lips waiting to be thawed by a steaming dark roast. But I knew it was either sacrifice or divorce, so winter steelhead took a backseat to my vows, with the compromise that I would visit them every second Christmas.

The first three years of the trade-off ran smoothly. A passionate saltwater angler, I was content chasing Australia's indigenous marlin, permit, kingfish, giant trevally, and others on a long list of respectable species. The ocean's mystery and vastness fed my soul with the humility and adventure I desired in all my fishing excursions, but something was still amiss. I craved the overwhelming presence of the North American west-coast's looming mountains and the veiny rivers that surged through them — rivers throbbing with pulsating waterfalls and



April is a qualified casting instructor and highly skilled caster. Here she punches out a long cast

promising back-eddies. So I fed and somewhat satisfied that craving with time on New Zealand's and Australia's trout waters.

But non-native fish didn't excite me enough, even those that had been introduced generations ago, and regularly stocked fisheries interested me even less. So I did my best to compromise by deciding that as long as a species was introduced over one hundred years ago, I would try to turn a blind eye to how it got there. The southern hemisphere's breathtaking rivers and unique ecosystems hushed my prejudice and helped me focus on the experience as a whole, rather than on just the fisheries themselves. Lush greenery lined the riverbanks, and steep cliffs held wild birds, kangaroos, wombats and other fascinating animals. As though composed of words from a fairytale, the freestone streams ran endlessly over red rock and green foliage, their pools such a deep sapphire-blue it seemed almost sacrilege that no wild trout or steelhead had ever naturally found their way there. As perfect as the browns and rainbows were, I still longed for the connection with a species that was indigenous to the waters I had such profound respect for.



A fine north – east Victoria cod, and a very happy angler

As I began to accept the fact that my options were limited, I heard tales of an indigenous freshwater monster that lurked in the depths of several Australian waterways. It was at a presentation I made to a fly club near Melbourne that my passion for indigenous species must have revealed itself through my photographs. A bearded man with tattooed arms pulled me aside to see if he might interest me in Australia's prized freshwater fishery: the Murray cod.

His iPhone screen quickly displayed many photos of Murray cod that had fallen for flies. As other members of the club walked past us the lure of our whispers and the look on my face gathered a small crowd, but there was mainly disinterest from the trout enthusiasts. I smiled to myself at how widespread this attitude is, that trout and only trout are the world's best fly rod fish. It pained me to admit that I am likely just as biased towards steelhead.

But they are, after all, an anadromous rainbow trout.

The Murray cod, rumoured to live up to 70 years, is able to reach 250 pounds in weight and almost five feet in length. It received its Australian name by way of a distant relative of the grouper/groper/cod family.

The Murray cod is a large, carnivorous, predatory fish found only in Australia. More specifically, it's found in the Murray-Darling basin, a river system that drains three states in south eastern Australia. In Australia it's the largest fish to spend its entire life in fresh water, and it has played a role in the mythology of Aboriginal tribes. Though the cod's diet is primarily other fish, they are also known to eat birds, reptiles, crustaceans, and rodents. Already excessively territorial, Murray cod show increased aggression when protecting their eggs, which is a main reason the angling season is closed during their spawning period. >>>

These fish may travel a substantial distance to spawn, but often return to the exact spot from which they left. Even more unusual, the female lays her eggs and departs, leaving the male to guard and oxygenate the eggs for several weeks during her absence. Murray cod are the only freshwater fish known to establish and defend a territory, then migrate upstream to establish and defend another territory specifically for spawning purposes.



Go big or go home. Cod flies are monstrous

The conversation at the fly club toyed with my head for a year. Big fish in small, beautiful rivers, serenity disturbed by thrashing gills and topwater frenzies? I put the word out that I was looking for someone reputable to go cod fishing with and was promptly put in touch with Cam McGregor. Cam and his fiancé, Katie Doyle, own River Escapes, a guiding operation based in northern Victoria. They met in the field while studying Murray cod, and it seemed fitting that two biologists would fall in love while Katie was working on the thesis for her PhD, the focal point of which was the diet of

the Murray cod. Spending time with not only one, but two experts had me giddy.

I promptly arranged to podcast the couple about the biology of the fish (visit www.aprilvokey.com/podcast to catch the conversation), and scheduled several days of fishing with Cam. I stayed with them at their home in northern Victoria, a beautiful property surrounded by pink sunsets and rural farmland, with a small stream trickling through it. As Cam walked me through the meadow he described what I might expect during our time fishing together: sore arms from casting huge flies, but shots at a fish that would make every second of the torture worth the effort.

We were to spend one day fishing from a raft on a nearby river, one day on foot on a smaller river system, and one day boating in a large lake with many deadheads. Cam is a fly-tier extraordinaire and I marvelled at his feathery creations. His topwater patterns sliced through the air with ease, their “plooping” frequently the only sound as we cast in the low light. Cod hold tight to logs and other structure, making casting entertaining, strategic and, of course tricky. As the sun set, activity picked up and the sound of crashing cod echoed through the hollow night. Without daylight, knowing when to set the hook became difficult, and I missed more fish than I care to admit by setting the hook at the wrong time.

The entire experience was surreal. There were no other anglers on the river, leaving us to concentrate on every isolated bend of river. We held our breaths so as not to disturb the silence; our anticipation occasionally broken by the loud boof of a feeding cod.

The angling is similar to the bass fishing I’ve done over the years. The flies were

cast towards structure near the bank. Topwater patterns had to make plenty of noise, but be left still on the surface long enough between retrieve-strips to allow the fish to engulf them. Wet flies needed a few seconds to sink to submerged logs and structure. Cam rowed slowly to allow me a fair shot at each section of habitat and I concentrated on keeping the fly from lodging itself in my body.

On our day on the stream we were the only anglers in evidence. On the day of our stillwater fishing we spotted a handful of spin-fishermen targeting cod for harvest. Cam explained that the majority of anglers in the area (including his guiding clientele) are trout fishermen seeking dry-fly action. I wondered if the less-than-overwhelming number of cod anglers about signified a shortage of people willing to fight for the species' survival.

The question encouraged me to look further into cod conservation efforts. Cod populations have declined severely over the last couple of hundred years, a result of overfishing, habitat degradation, pollution, and mining. I thought of all the effort that could be poured into the species if only more people were passionate about the uniqueness of the fishery. I searched high and low for a support organization and, apart from government management, found next to nothing.

Cam's face said it all as we toured through one of Victoria's heritage towns on our way to the stream. "Holy hell," he said. "Australia really is the only place you can find these fish isn't it? It just hit me now that there is nowhere else on earth they can be found."

His eyes sparkled a little brighter, the creases around them scrunching in thought as he realized what losing these



Another to the net

fish would mean. He held his breath as though it might interfere with his thinking. I knew what this look meant. There was a fire kindling inside of him.

That night as I sat with Cam and Katie for the podcast, Katie shared the studies from her thesis. Much of it was about the cod's diet – one of the missing links to establishing a conservation plan. I decided to throw fuel on the fire, "We could always start a cod-specific foundation," I said. Her eyes sparkled, she looked at Cam and back at me.

We sat until the early hours of the morning, strategizing on how to put the pieces together. Strangely and suddenly I felt at home, fighting again for something I believed in, for something that belonged and deserved to be where it was, for something that needed us as much as we needed it. I felt the familiar spark of a connection to an indigenous species, and it didn't even have to be a steelhead to make it feel right.



Two Takes On Fishing Tassie Together

... Rex Hunt and David Grisold



Fishing with friends

Rex Hunt:

I was taught that you should always try to learn new things and better yourself. Well, with this in mind Choco and I hired the services of Tassie guide Christopher Bassano. We are both extremely keen on fishing small streams and felt that we needed to brush up on our streamcraft. And that's exactly what we were able to do during three very enjoyable and busy days with Christopher.

We caught dragon fly leapers in the South Esk, and hopper feeders in the north-east smaller streams including the Ringarooma. We finished the trip with a wonderful master class on nymphing that took place on the St Patricks River on day three.

I am now more comfortable using longer rods up to 10 feet in length. I am more than comfortable with not using an indicator while nymphing, and I am now less likely to cop that dreaded drag with my new found casting skills.

But the real reason we go is to enjoy the wonderful outdoors with good friends. I have never been a great one for fishing alone. I have always liked sharing my experiences.

Choco and I have been close friends, through thick and thin, for six decades. There are no conditions on our friendship. That's why fishing plays such an important role in life itself. Three times a year we hire the services of a guide. We certainly could do it on a lower budget without the guides, but we prefer to hire people such as Christopher Bassano in Tasmania, Col Sinclair at Eucumbene, and Gavin Hurley for New Zealand, to take us to the best spots with the best chance of a fish rather than trying to get all the info and waste time looking ourselves.



There's no better way

David Grisold:

As Rex said, we spent three days in Tasmania with Christopher Bassano fishing in and around Launceston. Well, where do I start? Christopher is a delightful young man keen to give us his very best attention and assist a couple of old stagers with their fly fishing problems and questions.

We fished only rivers, but learnt so much, including working on our casting, mending and knots. It was a three-day master class with a champion bloke.

On our last day we spent a morning nymphing the St Patricks River with coloured indicator leaders and zero-weight hand-made carbon fibre rods. This was state of the art gear and quite expensive.

If you want to learn from a professional and very enthusiastic fly fishing guide

with a love of nature and his surrounds, then give this champion young man a call and book some time with him or other members of his team.

I personally cannot wait till next year to do it all again. Next time we'll tackle the lakes.

Report from Out West - Merri River Bream

... from Jim Blakeslee

Autumn is a great time of the year for a fisherman. The nights are cooler so you can sleep well and dream of a day casting a fly on a river somewhere.

And this year - a MIRACLE! Last week we had 62 mm of rain, a proper 'Autumn Break', to green things up while the soil is still warm. We may even get field mushrooms for a change! The dairy farmers are happy and have stopped pumping out of the rivers for irrigation, saving a packet of money in the process.

Fishermen are happy, too. The effect on the rivers has been immediate. For example, the flow of clear, cool water in the Merri has improved and the level has risen 20 cm overnight simply due to the cessation of pumping. The stimulating effect on the trout has been dramatic. Suddenly they have begun to move, searching the pools and runs for food to improve their condition prior to the spawning season. In the last week there have been ant hatches late in the day. The swallows have been busy swooping about, singing happily and feeding continuously. The trout, surely, will have to shift from eating shrimp and start looking up for their own ant banquet any day now. And then there are the grass hoppers and crickets. With all the grass around this year they have bred up in



A tricky customer

their millions! The first windy day will send showers of them onto the water and into the waiting mouths of our fishy friends!

While Warrnambool Fly Fishers wait in anticipation of an autumn trout fishing bonanza, there are other matters to deal with. This is the time for 'hunting, fishing and gathering' tucker for our Annual Fish and Game Dinner. Trout are one course on the menu. So, too, are the abalone, ducks, rabbits and hare. And bream play another, delicious part.

>>>



Strip it back slowly...



... and you might get a nice bream

Warrnambool Fly Fishers are lucky. We have some great fishing for trout in our local rivers and lakes, but we also have some excellent fly fishing in the estuaries of the Merri and Hopkins for perch, mulloway and bream. We are especially lucky to have Peter Hussey, the 'Bream Guru' to show us how and when to do it. He's spent most of his life learning the Warrnambool area rivers and perfecting his bream fishing technique. You watch him in action and just shake your head. How does he do it? He'll regularly out-catch the rest of us 10 to 1.

So recently, at the right time of the day with an incoming tide, at the best places on the Merri and Hopkins Rivers, Peter showed Adrian Jacobs and me how to TRY to catch bream.

To start with, you need an 8 weight rod, intermediate sinking line, and a size 6 green or white or orange or whatever colour BMS fly you choose tied onto a 4 - 5 kg fluorocarbon tippet. Make a long cast

and allow the fly to sink 5 - 10 seconds so you are fishing it just above the bottom, point the rod tip straight towards the fly (i.e. no bow in the line), then retrieve in short strips, with a brief pause in between. If you are doing things right, if the place, time and tide are right, if good fortune is on your side, then you will catch a lot of fish!

The Autumn run of bream in our rivers tend to be larger than the average. They are silvery, strong and delicious eating. That's why we are currently chasing them for the Annual Dinner. The trout will have to wait a few more days, but don't worry, we'll be after them next!

We hope you appreciate our efforts if you are able to join us on the 4th Saturday in July (i.e. Saturday, July 22). Hopefully, again this year we will see a healthy VFFA contingent there at the Warrnambool Racing Club venue. Until then, tight lines!
JB

FLY OF THE MONTH

Rod's Caddis



Members will all be very familiar with the justifiably renowned and highly effective Elk Hair Caddis pattern. It's a fabulous fly and has undone countless trout.

Your editor has a neighbour, Rod Lee, who is a very experienced and skilled fly fisher. Rod spends a couple of weeks in February each year fishing the lakes around Miena in the Tasmanian Highlands, and in preparing for his annual trip this year he put together a fairly simple caddis pattern to fish in the evenings. Rod's pattern is similar to the Elk Hair caddis but is a lot easier to tie. And it worked in Tassie and won him some fine trout on the trip.

Actually, on checking we find that Rod's caddis is very similar to a pattern that Bob Wyatt ties and recommends – his Deer Hair Caddis. The one difference is that Rod likes to tie his on a curved hook. Perhaps it goes to show that thoughtful anglers can quite independently come up with similar solutions to fly fishing challenges.

Materials:

Hook	Caddis or grub hook in sizes 14 and 16.
Thread	Brown 8/0 UNI-thread
Body	Hare's Ear fur or some other fairly coarse brown or grey dubbing.
Wing	White or light deer hair or elk hair

Tying Procedure:

1. Tie the thread in and run it along the shank of the hook from the eye to just around the bend.
2. Dub some hare's ear fur onto the tying thread and wind the dubbing along the shank to form the body. (A bit rough and spikey is good.)
3. Cut a small clump of deer or elk hair off a patch and level the ends in a hair stacker.
4. Place the hair on the hook shank just behind the eye so that the ends are just a bit longer than the body of the fly. Tie the hair in with some tight turns of thread right behind the eye, then tie off the thread with three or four firm half hitches.
5. Trim away all the excess non-pointy bits of waste hair to form a smallish head.
6. Add a drop of head cement and your easy Rod Lee Caddis is complete.

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



LIBRARY NEWS

A note from our librarian, Rick Dugina:

Very few members are using this valuable resource. I am looking for suggestions as to how it can be made more accessible.

Please contact me on mobile 0401 963 601 or via the email library@vffa.org.au

I am currently updating the database to bring in some great first editions. This will be displayed on the website soon. I am also reviewing the old rules around the lending criteria. We'll keep you posted.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book <i>The Country For An Angler</i> (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
Book <i>Geehi to Great Lake</i>	\$45.00 each
Book <i>Time Flies: A Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Fly Box 1932-2015</i>	\$70.00 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 2016 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Tackle Outfitters • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Essential Fly Fisher Launceston • FlyLife Publishing • FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books • Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing & Pro-Angler • J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd
- Mayfly Tackle Pty Ltd • Millbrook Lakes • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies
- Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne
- Hook Up Bait & Tackle •

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

April 2017

- 14 – 16 Easter 2017
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm
Guest Speakers: Antony Boliancu, with friends Werner Birkner and Bo Nikolic, fishing guides at the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre
- 24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 28 Friday Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club's 50th Anniversary Dinner
- 29 – 30 Donger Weekend with Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club

May 2017

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm
Guest Speaker: Scott Xanthoulakis, trout guide
- 22 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm

June 2017

- 4 Sunday 2017 Cane Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool
- 15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm
Guest Speaker: Bernard Holbery
- 19 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm

July 2017

- 1 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool – 10:00 am
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm
Guest Speakers: Simone and Daniel Hackett
- 22 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner
- 24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 31 Monday Closing date for entries in the Australian Art & Craft Show

August 2017

- 14 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 25 Friday Annual Dinner, with Guest Speaker Greg French
Well known Tasmanian fishing guide and author
- 26 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool – 10:00 am